

Our hearts and our prayers go out to all the families who have lost a loved one in the Nation's service, and especially to those families who have borne their tragedies so recently and whose tears are still so close to the surface.

The Senate's thoughts and prayers are also with those whose family members have been wounded and who fight now for their lives.

As a nation, we celebrate and we honor the patriotism and the heroism that have kept us free, kept us united, and kept us strong for these past two and a third centuries. It is on the shoulders of these brave legions of the fallen and their comrades in uniform, past and present, that our Nation is carried to greatness.

Technological and scientific progress is a source of pride and strength, economic prosperity a boon, and our Constitution—thank God—a blessing. But none of these gifts is sustainable without the will and the resolve to defend them, to the death if necessary.

Those we honor on Memorial Day have gone that extra mile. They have worn the uniform with pride, and they have won and kept our freedom with their effort and their sacrifice. They have fought together around the globe, in the dark, in the mud, in the dust, on holidays, anniversaries, and weekends. Some have missed the births of their children. Some have missed growing old with their loved ones. They will enjoy no more 3-day weekends, no family vacations, no backyard barbecues. But in our moment of silence, as the flags snap in front of the rows upon rows of marble markers, let us think on all that they have given for us, and be humbled.

Edgar Guest, a prolific poet of the first half of the last century, wrote many favorite poems of mine. His work was published in the newspapers, for he worked for the Detroit Free Press. His poem, Memorial Day, suggests a fitting tribute to all those we honor on Memorial Day.

Let me read a few lines.

The finest tribute we can pay  
unto our hero dead today,  
is not a rose wreath, white and red,  
in memory of the blood they shed;  
it is to stand beside each mound,  
each couch of consecrated ground,  
and pledge ourselves as warriors true  
unto the work they died to do.

Into god's valleys where they lie  
at rest, beneath the open sky,  
triumphant now o'er every foe,  
as living tributes let us go.

No wreath of rose or immortelles  
or spoken word or tolling bells  
will do to-day, unless we give  
our pledge that liberty shall live.

Our hearts must be the roses red  
we place above our hero dead;  
today beside their graves we must  
renew allegiance to their trust;  
must bare our heads and humbly say  
we hold the flag as dear as they,  
and stand, as once they stood, to die  
to keep the stars and stripes on high.

The finest tribute we can pay  
unto our hero dead today  
is not of speech or roses red,

but living, throbbing hearts instead,  
that shall renew the pledge they sealed  
with death upon the battlefield:  
that freedom's flag shall bear no stain  
and free men wear no tyrant's chain.

Mr. President, I have another statement which I must give. I see the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, Mr. McCONNELL, on the floor. I will yield to him if he wishes.

I thank the distinguished Senator for his characteristic courtesy.

#### MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 29, 1937

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, Monday next is Memorial Day. Monday next, being May 29, my memory goes back to May 29, 1937. It was a Saturday. I was working in the meat shop as a meat cutter at the Koppers Store in Stotesbury, Raleigh County, WV. It was a coal mining community. I started working there in the gas station for Koppers Store for \$50 a month. I walked 4 miles to work and 4 miles back home, unless I might catch a bread truck or a milk truck.

But on that Saturday, May 29, 1937, at 5 o'clock p.m., my two senior meat cutters at the Koppers Store in Stotesbury, WV, and I closed up the meat department and went home. I put on my best suit—actually, my only suit—and where did I go? I headed off to Sophia, 4 miles away, to the house of the local hard-shell Baptist preacher U.G. Nichols. And there I met with my high school sweetheart, Erma Ora James. May God bless her sweet memory. She was the beautiful daughter of a coal miner. This was a coal miner who helped to teach me to play the old fiddle tunes long ago: "Sally Goodin," "Mississippi Sawyer," "Arkansas Traveler," and "She'll Be Comin Round the Mountain," and so on.

At 6 o'clock that evening, Preacher Nichols pronounced Erma—God bless her sweet name—and me "husband and wife." That union, I am very proud to say, endured for 68 years, 9 months, and 24 days. So on May 29, 3 days from now, Erma and I would have celebrated our 69th wedding anniversary. That is something to brag about. Dizzy Dean said it was all right to brag, if you have done it, and Erma and I did it. Erma didn't quite go all the way. But on May 29, Erma and I would have celebrated our 69th wedding anniversary. That is something not heard about very often these days, a 69th wedding anniversary.

The Scriptures tell us that "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Well, on that blessed day in 1937—a long time ago—I certainly found a good thing. In looking back on the life that Erma and I shared, I can say, in accordance with the scriptural passage, that I must have been favored by the Lord.

"The joys of marriage are the heaven on earth," wrote the English dramatist, John Ford, five centuries ago. How right John Ford was. When I think of Erma, I still think of the beautiful

line from a song that I used to hear and play, I believe, when I played the fiddle: "She came like an angel from the sky." For almost 69 years, this angel from the sky not only tolerated me, but she was the guiding light for me. She was my teacher. She taught me how to drive an automobile. She was my banker, my accountant.

Very early in our marriage, as a matter of fact, on Sunday, the day after the Saturday evening on which Erma and I made our vows, I turned to her and said: "Here is my wallet." I think I had saved up probably \$300. I said: "You keep it. When I need a dollar, I'll come to you and ask for it." That is the way it was, and that is the way it has been throughout our 69 years.

What a job she did from the meager paychecks, and they were meager. Can you imagine. I started at \$50 a month, and by the time I married, I had advanced. I was getting \$70 a month when I married that sweetheart. She bought from this meager paycheck the things that we needed, our groceries. She paid the bills. She saved some money for a rainy day, and she gave me a monthly allowance.

Erma was my greatest critic, and she was my greatest supporter.

When I left the West Virginia Legislature to come to Congress, the other body, the House of Representatives, and this body, which also makes up the Congress, I was carrying 22 credit hours at Marshall College, now Marshall University, but she, Erma, managed our little grocery store. She took care of our two daughters, and she kept the home fires burning.

When I was attending law school while serving in the U.S. Congress, she would drive from our home at that time in Arlington, VA. She would meet me on Capitol Hill here, around 5:30 p.m., and she would give me my supper. She brought it to me in a paper bag. I would eat my supper while Erma drove me in our car to American University Law School for my classes at 6 p.m. Then she would return later that evening, 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock, to pick me up and take me to our home in Arlington.

I also said, quite truly, that Erma had put three kids through school: our two daughters and me. Erma was the mother of two most wonderful children, my daughters Mona Carole and Marjorie Ellen. Marjorie Ellen was here yesterday with me as we had lunch with some friends in recognition—one might call it celebration, but I call it in recognition—of our 69th wedding anniversary. These two daughters have grown up to become outstanding women and mothers themselves. Marjorie was here with me and with her husband, John Moore. Like me, those daughters owe so much to the marvelous and wonderful woman they called "mother."

Through the years, Erma was my constant companion. She was there with me, by my side, on the campaign trails. She was with me in 1958 when, as

a Congressman, I made a tour of the economically depressed areas of the State and other parts of the country. She was with me in April 1969, in Mexico City, Mexico, when I served as a delegate to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference. She was with me on all my trips to Europe and Asia. She was always there. Erma was always there with me at my side.

She is with me today, I know. For nearly 69 years, that woman, the greatest woman I ever met—I have met queens and great women of the world—was with me. She was always with me. She is with me now, I know. For nearly 69 years, she was my comfort in times of sorrow. She was stoic and brave. She never flinched in times of trouble.

We have lived and loved together through many changing years; we have shared each other's gladness and wept each other's tears; I have known ne're a sorrow that was long unsoothed by Erma; for thy smiles can make a summer where darkness else would be.

I quoted from the lines of Charles Jeffries, "We Have Lived and Loved Together."

This quiet, self-contained coal miner's daughter confronted demonstrators and protesters in front of our home in Arlington. She spent many evenings alone when I had to stay late at the Capitol attending the Nation's business. She always was most comfortable with the unassuming, down-to-earth West Virginia folks, back in the hills of West Virginia, like those back in the hills of Kentucky from which my friend, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, comes. She met with kings and shahs, princes and princesses, Governors and Senators, Presidents. She entertained the high and the mighty, the powerful and the wealthy of this Nation in a foreign land because it was important to her husband who served as the majority leader of this Senate and various other Senatorial offices. She did it all with an innate, inherent graciousness, incredible patience, and a soft, warm smile. She was a remarkable lady of great wisdom, but most of all, great gentleness, yet she could be tough when she saw injustice or unfairness.

I was always so proud of her. In fact, the entire State of West Virginia took pride in Erma. That is why she was named West Virginia Daughter of the Year in 1990. Oh, could we call back the vanished years. And she was named West Virginia Mother of the Year a few years later.

Marriage is a sacred institution. It is more than the result of repeating a few vows. Marriage is an oath, an oath before God. I have admired the ancient Romans so much, as did Montesquieu, because they would not break an oath. They would go to their death rather than break an oath. The ancient Romans. So marriage is an oath before God, a sacred and noble contract between a man and a woman. Read it in the Bible.

It is a glorious commitment, a commitment of love, of caring, and of sacrifice. It is a commitment that Erma

and I honored and enjoyed for almost 69 years, through the bad times as well as the good, down the rough roads as well as the smooth ones. Our life's journey was not always smooth and easy traveling. In fact, it was as bumpy at some times and as curvy as a West Virginia mountain road. But over the years, Erma and I learned that the challenge of a marriage is the ability to overcome imperfections, not just to ignore them. We always remembered our devotion to each other, despite our shortcomings and despite the difficulties we encountered along life's way.

And when Erma and I married on that blessed Saturday evening nearly 69 years ago, we were so proud and we were so poor that I could not even take a day off from work. We did not have the money for a honeymoon, so after the wedding we went to a square dance, where I played the fiddle and she danced. On Monday morning, where was I? I was back at work in the grocery store in that coal-mining camp of Stotesbury. I was back at the meat counter in a coal-mining camp of Stotesbury. Although our fortunes did change, allowing us the opportunity to celebrate our anniversary in more special ways over the years, my Erma, my Erma never changed. She never changed. From being the wife of a meatcutter at the Koppers store in Stotesbury, WV, to being the wife of the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, Erma never stopped being herself. Her enduring patience and her steadfast support were the stabilizing constants in our marriage.

Could I have made this journey without her? Could I have accomplished as much as I have accomplished—whatever that may have been—without her? I think not. The more important point is that I did it with Erma, and I would not have had it any other way. She was God's greatest gift to me.

I don't know what I ever did to deserve her, but somewhere along the line, I must have done something that was especially good. The good Lord, the King, the Lord of Hosts, smiled down on me at 6 o'clock in the evening on May 29, 1937.

So may I close with these few words that come from a poem, "An Old Sweetheart of Mine," by James Whitcomb Riley.

Is this her presence here with me,  
Or but a vain creation of a lover's memory?  
A fair, illusive vision that would vanish into  
air,

Dared I even touch the silence with the whisper  
of a prayer?

Nay, let me then believe in all the blended  
false and truth—

The semblance of the old love and the substance  
of the new,

The then of changeless sunny days—the now  
of shower and shine,

But love forever smiling—as that old sweetheart  
of mine.

Mr. President, I simply say that I give thanks to Almighty God for a long and good marriage and the richness which that hallowed institution has given to my life because of one very extraordinary woman.

May God bless her and hold her to his bosom in Heaven until I come to be with her—this extraordinary woman, the daughter of a coal miner, Erma James Byrd.

Mr. President, these are a few lines which were the favorite lines of Erma. The author's name is Isla Pascal Richardson. The lines are these:

If I should ever leave you,  
Whom I love  
To go along the silent way,  
Grieve not,  
Nor speak of me with tears.  
But laugh and talk of me  
As if I were there beside you.  
For I will come—I'll come!  
Would I not find a way?  
Were tears and grief not be barriers?  
And when you hear a song or see a bird I  
loved,  
Please do not let your thoughts of me be sad.  
For I am loving you just as I always have  
loved.

You were so good to me.  
There are so many things I wanted still to  
do—

So many things to say to you . . .  
Remember, that I did not fear death.  
It was just leaving you that was so hard to  
face.

We cannot see beyond this life  
But this you know . . . I loved you so  
Never doubt that I am with you still!

Mr. President:

Love does not die with the body  
And nothing in heaven or on earth  
Can keep apart those who love one  
another.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

#### A GREAT MARRIAGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I congratulate my good friend from West Virginia on his extraordinary reminiscence of his remarkable wife of 68, almost 69 years. I think those of us in the Senate are well aware that the marriage of Robert and Erma Byrd was one of the great marriages of American history. No two people were ever more right for each other, ever more committed to each other, or provided a better example for our country than Senator and Mrs. Byrd.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I appreciate from my heart the kind words of my dear friend, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, from our neighboring State of Kentucky. I am not sure that I was meant to have all these blessings, but I am sure of one thing: Erma was the perfect woman, the greatest woman I have ever met. And today I have no doubt that she is in Heaven. I also have no doubt that I can meet her.

Let me thank again my friend, MITCH MCCONNELL. How lovely were his words. How nice of him. I thank the Senator very much.

#### TRIBUTE TO FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT LEWIS HENDERSON II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to pause for a moment