

FOR THE RECORD
(By Arie Dekker)

Congress's day-to-day proceedings and debates can be found immortalized in the official Congressional Record. The record's nearly 2,000 books, comprising more than 150 volumes, line the brick walls of the Senate Library and preserve the words of presidents, ambassadors, legislators and Bert Caswell, a 54-year-old Capitol tour guide from Baltimore.

Caswell may seem like an odd addition to the Record of floor speeches, inaugural addresses, scholarly essays and research studies. But his unflinching patriotism as captured in his accessible and unpretentious poetry is consistently submitted to honor America's diverse heroes.

"I never thought I was a writer," Caswell said. "I thought writing was punctuation and spelling, and I can't do either."

But when former Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) resigned from the Senate to run for president in 1996, Caswell was so moved that he wrote the poem "The Measure of a Man" in Dole's honor. After the poem was casually distributed around Capitol Hill, then-Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) officially inserted it into The Congressional Record.

"And from that moment, my life was changed," Caswell said.

Caswell had written only two poems before and has since composed more than 500 in tribute to lawmakers, presidents, veterans, entertainers, athletes and others. About 20 of his poems have wound up in The Congressional Record, after having been submitted by members from both sides of the aisle.

In memory of Sean Taylor, the football star who was recently killed by intruders in his Miami home, Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-Fla.) submitted a new Caswell poem to the Record on Dec. 4 entitled "Taylor Made." Meek's spokesman Adam Sharon said Caswell and Meek talk as friends practically every day about their comings and goings. He said Meek is impressed with Caswell's "big heart" and willingness to go above and beyond his regular duties—not only writing poetry, but giving Capitol tours to special visitors like wounded veterans and children from the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"The congressman finds that extremely commendable," Sharon said.

Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) submitted a Caswell poem last month to honor Gunnery Sgt. Angel Barcenas, a Marine whose legs were amputated last year after sustaining injuries in Iraq. Barcenas had previously served Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush on Marine One, and he recently led a group of Marines, police officers, and firefighters in a formation run to ground zero in New York City.

"Poetry has been a medium for not only documenting history but also upholding the principles that have made our nation great—principles such as courage, honor and perseverance," Sessions said in an e-mailed statement. "I applaud Bert for using his gift of poetry to honor America's bravest."

Listening to Caswell talk about his poetry is like taking a crash course in American history and culture. He has written about sports legends, political leaders, war veterans, firefighters, entertainers, civil rights leaders and Holocaust survivors.

"I write about heroes, people that inspire me," he said. "I really am impressed with the people who have power and fame, and yet they wield it and they make the world better. And that's what it's really all about."

Caswell's subjects include sports stars Steve Young, Cal Ripken Jr. and Mario Andretti; civil rights leaders Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr.; reporter David Bloom; entertainers Bob Hope, Jason Alex-

ander and Tom Hanks; Congressional Gold Medal recipient Dorothy Height and former astronaut and Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio).

Caswell wears his patriotism on his sleeve. He makes an ideal tour guide, welcoming Capitol visitors with instant anecdotes about their home states' or cities' contributions to the greater national identity. He will seriously discuss their college sports teams' strengths and vulnerabilities, impersonate California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R), or crack jokes about the highest court in the land not being the Supreme Court, but rather a basketball court up the street.

Caswell has worked for the Capitol Guide Service for 21 years, although he did not plan it that way. As an all-American lacrosse star, he played on the national champion University of Maryland team in 1975. Before becoming a regular contributor to The Congressional Record, he was listed in NCAA record books as a top scorer at the 1975 Division 1 lacrosse tournament. He later coached the Maryland team for five years.

He earned two graduate degrees from Bowie State College, one in education and the other in administrative management. He then taught high school physical education and science for about 10 years.

In addition to being included in The Congressional Record, Caswell's poetry has been presented at official ceremonies and posted in government buildings. Several of his poems are posted in the amputee ward at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. One of his poems is on display in a memorial to the police officers who were killed when a gunman entered the Capitol in 1998 and opened fire.

"I see more in three months than most people see in a lifetime," Caswell said, drawing a connection between his job as a tour guide and his passion for writing about American heroism. He said working at the Capitol exposes him to people from around the world and also gives him a unique first-hand view of lawmakers, who he says are underappreciated for their service. He is currently compiling his poetry for a book that will include anecdotes about the many famous people he has encountered in Washington.

"I have had the privilege of getting to know Bert during my time in Congress," said Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.), who has inserted three of Caswell's poems into the Record this year. "As a Capitol Hill tour guide, [Caswell] is instrumental in sharing the rich history of our beautiful Capitol Building."

Caswell writes his poetry on a small laptop so he can write wherever and whenever inspiration strikes. His writing process is simple: He records what's on his mind, lets it sit for a while, and returns typically only once to double-check his work. He said the average poem takes no more than 30 minutes to complete.

"Mostly everything the first time comes out great," he said. "And then I go back and tweak it. Normally the first draft's pretty good."

He does not have a favorite poet or style of poetry. He actually avoids reading other poetry to keep his own work pure.

"I don't read other people's work, hardly, because I don't want it to change my words," Caswell said.

HONORING AND APPRECIATING
AMERICA'S FIRE FIGHTERS

HON. JOHN CAMPBELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to

support H. Res. 695, a resolution calling for the creation of a "National Fire Fighter Appreciation Day". I introduced this legislation to celebrate and honor the brave men and women of America's fire departments. Since 1735, professional and volunteer fire fighters have been an invaluable facet of our communities, towns, and cities. Ever vigilant, this Nation's fire fighters respond quickly to emergencies of all kinds and protect and save lives each and every day. From the earliest days of Benjamin Franklin's Union Fire Company to the famous fire departments of New York City, Chicago, and Boston, every fire station in this country has a proud history and tradition of distinguished service. Today, over one million fire fighters answer the call of duty and perform extraordinary acts of selflessness and valor without hesitation.

In my district alone, the Orange County Fire Authority serves 22 cities with approximately 1,000 fire fighting personnel protecting over one million residents. Southern California's beautiful, yet volatile environment is prone to natural disasters, flash floods, and wildfires. Every year, Orange County fire fighters place themselves on the front lines of these disasters and tirelessly work day and night to rescue endangered residents and prevent damage to cities and land. Recently, we watched as these fire fighters joined those from several other southwestern states to successfully battle the wildfires that raged across Southern California in October. I commend the tremendous bravery of Orange County fire fighters and am proud to honor each one today on the Floor of the House.

As internal and external threats facing this country change constantly, the role of the fire fighter has also modified and expanded. Not only do fire fighters defend our homes and buildings from fire, the highly trained personnel of the fire department provide emergency medical services, hazardous material response, special rescue response, and terrorism response. Whether it be a daring rescue of a family trapped in a burning house, preventing a forest fire from spreading, responding to the scene of an accident, or providing medical assistance at the location of a terrorist attack, fire fighters significantly impact the lives of Americans every day. And, in some cases, fire fighters have paid the ultimate price and given their lives to protect their surrounding communities. We will never forget these fallen heroes.

In light of the exceptional service of fire fighters across this nation and with full recognition and great respect of their quiet courage and valor, I ask that you join me in support of this resolution to express the desire of the House of Representatives for the establishment of a "National Fire Fighter Appreciation Day" to be observed annually. While we can never thank these men and women enough, this proposed national day of honor is a fitting tribute to those that keep sentinel watch over our lives and property.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to honor America's fire fighters today.

WILDLIFE FOREVER CELEBRATES
20 YEARS OF HABITAT AND
WILDLIFE PRESERVATION

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. RAMSTAD. Madam Speaker, Congress has devoted considerable resources and effort to protecting the environment over the past few decades.

Wildlife Forever, based in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, has been a visionary partner in our nation's efforts to conserve America's wildlife heritage through conservation education, preservation of habitat and management of fish and wildlife.

Today, I rise to salute Wildlife Forever as it celebrates its 20th anniversary and thank all the members and volunteers for all they do to protect our precious environment.

Since 1987, Wildlife Forever has provided funding to more than 800 projects in all 50 states through private special interest conservation groups, state game and fish departments and federal agencies. Species that have received direct benefit from Wildlife Forever grants include the American bald eagle, billfish, black bear, blacktail deer, bluebirds, bluegill, Canada geese, catfish, coyote, crappie, ducks, elk, gray whale, great gray owl, grizzly bear, herons, kestrels, largemouth bass, Massasaqua rattle snake, moose, mule deer, muskie, otter, peregrine falcon, pheasant, prairie chicken, quail, ruffed grouse, salmon, sea bass, Sonoran pronghorn, songbirds, striped bass, trout, trumpeter swan, walleye, white-tailed deer, wild turkey—the list goes on and on.

Partnerships are key to Wildlife Forever's success. Project highlights over the last 20 years include: Acquisition of 32,340 acres of land for public recreation; Wetland Restoration of more than 29,400 acres; Construction and placement of more than 9,224 bird and waterfowl nesting structures; Research utilizing radio telemetry and global positioning system with elk, grizzly bear, white-tailed deer, black bear, bighorn sheep, moose, goshawks and coaster brook trout; 125,747,367 public impressions with a 'Stop Invasive Species' message; Stream improvements and riparian repair of over 240 miles; Land Management practices including controlled burns, prairie restoration, shrubbery plantings, and reforestation efforts of more than 325,310 acres; Fish hatchery support producing a yield of 30,371,109 fish stocked in public lakes and streams; Placement of more than 130 Watchable Wildlife interpretive signs.

Madam Speaker, our Nation sends its thanks and gratitude to Wildlife Forever President and Chief Executive Officer Doug Grann and his entire team for all they do to protect the environment.

TRIBUTE TO CRYSTAL CITY IN
ZAVALA COUNTY, TEXAS

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the historic 100 year anniversary of

the founding of Crystal City in Zavala County in the great State of Texas.

In 1907, two land developers, Carl F. Groos and E.J. Buckingham, set about developing this town on the site of the 10,000-acre Cross S Ranch, which they purchased in 1905. In 1908 the arrival of a railroad set the foundation for the city's development as a processing, packing, and shipping center for vegetables, and in particular the locally grown spinach.

Originally named for its crystal clear artesian wells, today Crystal City is known as the "Spinach Capital of the World." Texas Governor James V. Alfred bestowed the title on the city after the First Annual Spinach Festival was held there in 1936. Staking claim to its spinach status, Crystal City is also home to a larger than life statue of Elzie C. Segar's Popeye. The well known sailor that is "strong to the finish 'cause he still eats his spinach" also serves as the Annual Spinach Festival mascot. Crystal City's landmark Popeye statue was erected in 1937 and dedicated "To All the World's Children."

The Spinach Festival centers on the agricultural heritage of the region and is held every second weekend in November. The three day festival attracts over 60,000 people to Crystal City and celebrates the production and consumption of spinach. Throughout its history, the festival has been recognized in issues of National Geographic, Texas Highway, and Texas Monthly magazines, and by the publishers of the Special Event Industry and Event Business News. In 1945 the California Packing Corporation, later the Del Monte Corporation, built an extensive canning plant just northwest of Crystal City.

Today, Crystal City still serves as the center for Texas's "Winter Garden" region, an area named for its year-round production of vegetables by irrigation.

This community of over 7,000 people has a historically significant past. During World War II, Crystal City was home to the largest alien internment camp housing American civilians of German, Italian and Japanese ancestry. On November 1, 1947, more than two years after the end of World War II, the Crystal City internment camp was formally closed.

In the 1960s, Crystal City was also at the center of the beginning of the Mexican-American civil rights movement. In 1969, a conflict arising from the ethnicity of cheerleaders resulted in 200 Mexican-American students staging a walk-out from the high school, that soon spread to the middle and elementary schools. The U.S. Department of Justice became involved in the dispute and ultimately negotiated a settlement that paved the way for bilingual education and better testing programs.

Crystal City's rich—and sometimes turbulent—past has made it what it is today, a shining example of a truly American community.

I am proud to represent the people of Crystal City and to recognize the city upon its 100th anniversary.

TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, many insurance companies excluded terrorism events from their insurance policies, leaving businesses vulnerable to the threat of future terrorist attacks. In response, Congress passed the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act, TRIA, in 2002 and extended it in 2005 to create a federal backstop to protect against terrorism related losses.

As a result, TRIA has helped make terrorism insurance available and affordable to businesses, particularly those in our major urban areas. If TRIA were allowed to expire at the end of this month, many major development projects across the country would come to a halt, putting many jobs and economic development opportunities at risk.

Although I am disappointed that the stronger House version of this legislation did not get enacted, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2761 so that this important program will continue for years to come.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL ON THEIR 2007 5A STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with tremendous pride and personal pleasure that I rise today to honor St. Paul's Episcopal School on their 2007 5A Alabama State Football Championship.

In 1947, William S. Mann founded St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile, Alabama. St. Paul's began with a class of 20 kindergartners and has grown to an enrollment of more than 1,600 students, making St. Paul's the largest Episcopal school in North America. While perhaps best known for their outstanding faculty and top-notch college-preparatory curriculum, St. Paul's is also fast becoming acknowledged around the State for having one of the best athletic programs as well. In fact, just last year St. Paul's was recognized by the Birmingham News as having the best overall sports program in the entire State of Alabama.

First-year head coach Mike Bates led the 14-1 Saints to his school's first-ever football State championship. Even though St. Paul's has a rich and proud history of winning championship trophies in many other sports, this most recent honor on the gridiron brings the number of State championships won by St. Paul's teams to three this year. Madam Speaker, these three championships mark the school's 134th, 135th, and 136th respectively in St. Paul's storied history.

Indeed, the St. Paul's Saints proved they are a team of champions in their victory on December 7, 2007, at Legion Field in Birmingham as they defeated Briarwood Christian in a thrilling 14-13 victory.