

# A GREAT LEADER LOST: THE DEATH OF BRONISLAW GEREMEK

## HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 21, 2008*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is my sad duty to note the death last week of former Polish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chair-in Office Bronislaw Geremek, who was killed in a car crash in Poland. I am honored to pay tribute to a Polish patriot who had an impact far beyond the borders of his native country.

Born in 1932 to a Jewish family in Warsaw, Bronislaw Geremek was fated to confront the two great evils of the twentieth century: Nazism and communism. Having survived the first as a child, he later played an instrumental role in defeating the second.

Mr. Geremek trained as an historian a serious scholar specializing in the history of medieval France. Indeed, as many obituaries have observed, he was the very image of the professional academic, complete with pipe and tweeds.

But it was in politics and political life that he truly made his mark and where he has left his legacy. Bronislaw Geremek was a great Polish patriot who knew that his country deserved better than the communist oppression of the post-war period.

He protested the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia; he stayed in Poland when anti-Semitic purges drove thousands of other Jews away; and most of all, he helped build necessary bridges between workers and intellectuals. That bond, between these two segments of Polish society, enabled Solidarity to become the mass movement it was.

His imprisonment after the imposition of Martial Law on December 13, 1981, did not deter him from his struggle to build a truly free and democratic Poland. In 1989, he was a member of the historic "Round Table" that negotiated the peaceful transition of power. In fact, a delegation from the Helsinki Commission, that included my good friend, and now-House Majority Leader STENY HOYER, was in Poland in August 1989, and watched from the gallery of the Polish parliament when Tadeusz Mazowiecki was elected the first non-communist Prime Minister in more than four decades. Bronislaw Geremek played a singular role in bringing that democratic transition to Poland and the democratic transition in Poland helped bring democracy to all of Eastern Europe.

Bronislaw Geremek subsequently served his country in many ways: as a member of Parliament, not only as a Foreign Minister but the Foreign Minister who signed the treaty bringing Poland into NATO, and then as a member of the European Union Parliament.

As chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I would especially like to note the important role Bronislaw Geremek played when, as Foreign Minister, he served as chair-in-office of the OSCE in 1998. Few people understood as well the historical role of the Helsinki Accords and he brought to that mission an unmatched moral leadership.

Perhaps most of all, however, Bronislaw Geremek personified the best of Eastern Europe's intelligentsia intellectually curious and accomplished, outraged by injustice and im-

pelled to resist it despite the risks, and possessed of a wry sense of humor that endeared him to his colleagues.

Bronislaw Geremek's time on this earth was not merely full, but profoundly consequential. The world is a better place for his having lived. We, in the postcommunist-era, are all the beneficiaries of his passion, labor and achievements.

Madam Speaker, may Bronislaw Geremek rest in peace, honored by his countrymen and women, remembered fondly and missed by those fortunate enough to have been his friends, and invoked as a role model wherever brains and courage are sorely needed to face down tyranny.

## IN HONOR OF RACHEL FINKBEINER OF RAMSEY, MINNESOTA, ONE OF THIS YEAR'S LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE AWARDEES

## HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 21, 2008*

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Miss Rachel Finkbeiner, a high school student from Ramsey, Minnesota, who has been recognized as a statewide winner in the Library of Congress' 2008 Letters About Literature competition.

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing program sponsored by the Library of Congress Center for the Book in partnership with Target Stores. It challenges young readers to write a personal letter to an author detailing how that author's work changed the reader's view of the world or view of him or herself. More than 59,000 children in grades 4 through 12 participated this year and only 150 were recognized as leaders on the state or national level.

Rachel wrote to noted American author F. Scott Fitzgerald about her experience in reading *The Great Gatsby*. A tenth-grader at Elk River High School, Rachel showed a great maturity in her writing. As she says in her letter:

Reading *The Great Gatsby* opened my eyes on what wealth really is. Even though rich people might see the scratches on their Porsche convertibles, and the flaws in their fancy hotels in Mexico, they seem to miss the real joy of living.

Money was the one thing I wanted in my perfect life. After reading *The Great Gatsby*, my view of perfect life has changed. My dream life would be having a loving family, being thankful I get to watch a T.V. show on a scratchy black and white television, being relieved of living right above my store without the stress of commuting to work and able to look forward to a sunny day tomorrow so I could dry my laundry outside. While I may never know what the perfect life really is, I'd like to thank you Mr. Fitzgerald for showing me that in my perfect life—money should come last.

Rachel is one of Elk River's star volleyball players and clearly has a strong academic career ahead of her as well. We in Minnesota's Sixth District are proud of her accomplishments and look forward to many great things from Rachel in years to come.

# HONORING T.E. BECK ON HIS 50TH YEAR SERVING CENTRAL TEXAS AT UNION STATE BANK

## HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 21, 2008*

Mr. EDWARDS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a lifelong friend of Central Texas, Thomas Elisha Beck, known as T.E. to his friends and family. This week, we celebrate his 50th year in banking at Union State Bank, where he has served the people of Texas with pride and integrity.

In 1958, T.E. was first hired at Union State Bank in Florence. He worked just about every job possible at the bank including running the teller window, bookkeeping, posting and filing checks, and balancing the general ledger. T.E. knows the business inside and out and is widely respected for developing personal relationships with customers over the years. He is a man of his word, which is always sealed with a firm handshake.

T.E. has seen Union State Bank grow from one small community bank to six branch operations across central Texas. Currently, T.E. is Senior Executive Vice President of Union State Bank and the branch manager and loan officer at the main branch in Florence, Texas. His hard work, dedication and dependability over the past 50 years, make him an important part of Union State Bank's current and future success. If I had to say what the secret of T.E.'s success all these years has been, I would say that it comes down to one word: respect. T.E. Beck respects others, and treats them accordingly. That is one of many reasons I am honored to call him my friend.

T.E.'s single most important accomplishment is his love for and dedication to his family. As a family man, T.E. loves spending time with his family, especially his four grandchildren: Shanda, Bailey, Cade and Beau. We also rise to honor the Beck family for the supportive role they have played in T.E.'s life and success.

T.E. has also devoted much of his time to his community and numerous causes over the years. He has been a member his entire life of the Youngsport Church of Christ and treasurer since 1978. In 1992, he was president of the Florence Chamber of Commerce and received the honor of the Florence Chamber of Commerce citizen of the year. Since 1993, he has been a board member and past president of the Central Texas Children's Center in Temple, Texas. He is currently on the board of directors and treasurer of the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame headquartered in Belton, Texas.

T.E. has always loved the ranching lifestyle and has continued his father's ambitions on the ranch. Today he raises cattle, Boer goats, Great Pyrenees dogs and has several roping horses. Besides being a rancher his entire life, T.E. has been roping since he was 17 years old, when he started calf roping and later began team roping. He is a member of the Senior Pro Rodeo Association and continues to travel all over Texas to rodeos with his son Steve.

I want to personally thank T.E. for his friendship and lifetime of service to our community. He is an example of one person who has truly made a positive difference in the life of others,

and we would all do well to follow his example.

T.E., thank you for your fine example and congratulations on your 50th year at Union State Bank. We wish you all the best in the years ahead.

A TRIBUTE IN RECOGNITION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY AND HISTORIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF TWO COMMERCE ATHLETES, BRENDA VILLA AND PATTY CARDENAS, TO THE SPORT OF U.S. WOMEN'S WATER POLO

**HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, July 21, 2008*

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend two extraordinary athletes who are members of the United States Women's Water Polo Team competing in the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing, China. In addition to being first-generation Mexican American Latina trailblazers in the world of competitive water polo, both of these exceptional women call the City of Commerce, in the 34th Congressional District, their home.

As children, Brenda Villa and Patty Cardenas learned to play water polo and hone their skills at the local swimming club, Commerce Aquatics. Looking back on their introduction to the sport, Brenda, now 28, and Patty, 23, credit the City of Commerce and the club's dedicated coaches for encouraging and developing their interest in water polo.

Today, in a \$20 million facility built to Olympic specifications, the city continues to encourage young people—the future Brendas and Pattys—to participate and excel in water polo. In addition to employing two full-time and three part-time youth water polo coaches and allocating more than \$250,000 a year on its programs, the City of Commerce also covers participants' competition-related expenses. These expenses might otherwise prevent the community's economically disadvantaged youth from participating in tournaments.

After Commerce Aquatics, Brenda and Patty continued to play water polo at Bell Gardens High School.

When Brenda entered high school in the fall of 1994, the school did not have a girls water polo team. With Brenda competing alongside and against the male players, the Bell Gardens Boys Water Polo Team won four consecutive league championships and back-to-back California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Division III championships.

In the fall of 1998, following Brenda's graduation, the younger Patty entered Bell Gardens High School just in time to join the school's newly-formed Girls Water Polo Team. At that point, CIF rules prohibited Patty from playing on the Boys Water Polo Team. With Patty as part of the high school's first girls team, the female players went on to win four consecutive CIF Championships.

Following high school, both women would go on to realize their dreams of playing competitive women's water polo in college and in the Olympics.

At Stanford University, Brenda took a leave of absence to train with the Olympic Women's National Team for the 2000 Olympic debut of the women's water polo competition in Sydney, Australia. The team won the Silver

Medal. Two years later, Brenda was awarded the Peter J. Cutino Award, an honor given annually to the top female collegiate water polo player in the nation. In 2004, as a member of the U.S. Women's National Water Polo Team at the Athens Olympics, Brenda and her teammates took home the Bronze Medal.

Between Olympic Games, Brenda achieved another victory. In 2003, when she graduated from Stanford with a degree in Political Science, she became the first member of her family to earn a college degree.

Patty stayed closer to home after high school. She enrolled at Golden West Community College in Huntington Beach, California. There, Patty helped her team win the 2002 California State Championship. In 2005, Patty transferred to the University of Southern California where, for the past couple of years, she has trained on the U.S. National Women's Polo Team.

The Summer Olympics in Beijing will be Patty's first Olympic competition and Brenda's third. This time, with both Commerce athletes on the same team, they hope to work together with their other teammates to bring home the Gold.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the 34th Congressional District and the state of California, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Brenda and Patty on their incredible achievements and extending to them and their teammates our best wishes for a victorious trip to the Beijing Summer Olympics. I can assure you, regardless of how the team places, these two remarkable athletes will always be champions to their many devoted fans in the City of Commerce. They are among our hometown heroes, and we are very proud of them—in and out of the pool.