

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

A TRIBUTE TO BISHOP EUGENE J. BLOUNT

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute and to honor Bishop Eugene J. Blount. Bishop Blount has, from an early age, always placed a devotion to community betterment and a passion for Christ and his church at the forefront of every endeavor he has undertaken.

Bishop Eugene J. Blount, in 1990, joined the Elim International Fellowship, where he introduced a renewed enthusiasm for the scriptures and an appreciation for the supernatural, serving in the prophetic ministry as one of the "King's Seers" and as Chief of Staff in the full time ministry under the leadership of Archbishop Wilbert S. McKinley, where he molded and implemented the mission of the church.

Bishop Eugene J. Blount, an outstanding and well-respected member of the Brooklyn clergy, will undoubtedly prove to be a tremendous asset to the Bedford-Stuyvesant community as he is consecrated as a Bishop of the Elim International Fellowship.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Bishop Eugene J. Blount for his extraordinary accomplishments and to congratulate him on his consecration at the Elim International Fellowship.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Bishop Eugene J. Blount.

HONORING IWAN SHULJAK

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Iwan Shuljak of Cleveland, Ohio who passed away October 6, 2008. This record stands as first published in the *Ukrainian Weekly*, November 2, 2008, written by Andrew Fedynsky. In addition to this beautiful narrative of the life of Iwan Shuljak, I fondly remember his warm smile and welcoming heart. He will be missed by his family, friends and the entire Ukrainian-American community. May his generous and loving spirit be comfortable at its final resting place.

"This is a fairytale, only the story is true. And because it's true, it ends with death, but it's a fairytale and therefore has a happy ending. It's about an elderly man who devoted his life to Ukrainian Culture and how the global village cared for him.

I first met Iwan Shuljak in the early 1960s at the Plast Scouting Home in Cleveland where he was the live-in caretaker. Twenty-five years later, he was still there when I returned to Cleveland to become director of the

Ukrainian Museum-Archives (UMA), which had purchased the building from Plast.

In 1987 the UMA was adrift. Having been in the Tremont neighborhood for a century, the Ukrainian community left for the suburbs after highway construction demolished half the houses and nearby factories were closing. UMA leaders had either passed away or retired. And so, a staggering collection of memorabilia, documents, books and artifacts was sitting neglected in an aging wooden building in a neighborhood where the major industry had become arson and insurance fraud.

Mr. Schuljak lived in a spare room on the second floor. Invariably, he sat on the porch reading or prowled the streets of Tremont to let people know the UMA was viable and someone was caring for it. In the winter he shoveled the snow; in the summer, he mowed the grass; throughout the year, he cleaned and was there to welcome the occasional visitor.

I was 39 years old and ready for a change after nearly a decade on Capitol Hill. My father had been UMA director and I felt an obligation to help preserve his legacy. And so, with old friends like Ihor Kowalysko and new ones like Vlodko Storozynsky, we started working on the collection and raising the profile of the institution.

At the age of 76, Mr. Schuljak welcomed the changes and made appropriate accommodations. He announced that he was now restricting his garlic to weekends only and told me that I was to avoid it altogether. People were noticing, he said, and we had to present a certain image.

Before long, the world around us changed dramatically: communism collapsed and Tremont began gentrifying. The arsonists went to jail, and urban pioneers were restoring historic buildings, opening art galleries, coffee shops and restaurants. Developers built townhouses and condominiums. And the UMA was part of all that, with young volunteers and board members. Throughout, Mr. Schuljak was a mainstay: not only a caretaker, but also an advisor, a confidant and a beloved figure in the neighborhood.

He had a thousand stories: you know the guy at the Friendly Bar with no fingers on his left hand? Back in the 1930s, the NKVD demanded he turn his gold over to the state. He didn't have any, he said, so they chopped off a finger and kept on until they were finally persuaded he was telling the truth . . . The macabre punch line: the joke was on them! He had the gold all along, and it's still there, buried in the ground. The guy hated the Communists so much he wouldn't give them the satisfaction.

Well, Mr. Schuljak, the son of farmers, hated them too. When communism came and with it collectivization and famine, he became a "class enemy." Arrested and brutally interrogated, he carried scars the rest of his life where a Chekist cracked his skull with a revolver, depriving him of hearing in his right ear.

Once the Terror subsided, Mr. Schuljak was released to work on the railroad. When the

Nazis invaded in 1941, he, along with 2 million other Ukrainians, was forced to work in the German economy. His blue and white OST patch identifying him as a slave is now part of the UMA collection. When the war ended, Mr. Schuljak wisely decided to immigrate to America. There, he maintained contact with his family, exchanging letters and phone calls, sending them money.

As he reached his mid-80s, Mr. Schuljak was slowing down and the village in Cleveland began to pay attention to his plight. Daria Sopka, who worked at the UMA, signed him up for the Cuyahoga County Passport Program for the elderly. Lida, a young immigrant from Lviv, assisted Mr. Schuljak with everyday needs, shopping, etc. At MetroHealth, nurses, doctors and Ukrainian interpreters knew him by name.

Then in January 2007, he slipped and broke his leg. The leg healed, but at 95, he could no longer live unassisted and Myron Pakush—also with the UMA—arranged for him to be admitted to Avon Oaks, a nursing home owned and operated by the Reidys, Ukrainian Americans from Lorain County.

Not having heard from him for some time, Mr. Schuljak's family became concerned and called. When they learned what had happened, they immediately offered to take care of him in Ukraine. Well, Avon Oaks is a gracious and caring community and he had regular visitors, especially Father John Nakonachny from St. Vladimir's Cathedral, but it was still a nursing home and Mr. Schuljak was ecstatic at the prospect of "going home."

But there was a problem: he had never become an American citizen and since Ukraine did not exist when he was born, he wasn't a citizen of that country either. So he couldn't get a passport.

I explained the situation to Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S., Dr. Oleh Shamshur, who directed his consular office to help. To establish that Mr. Schuljak had been born in what is today Ukraine, his relatives retrieved his birth certificate from 1911. He also needed an updated "green card." Alerted to the urgency of his case, the Department of Homeland Security turned things around in less than a week. Ukraine's honorary consul for Ohio, Andrew Futey, and Roman Andarak at the Embassy in D.C. did the rest and earlier this year, Mr. Schuljak became a Ukrainian citizen. In June, accompanied by Ihor Mychkovsky, he arrived in Kyiv to meet his relatives. His life had come full circle.

Because he was nobody's responsibility, Mr. Schuljak became everyone's. People all over helped out, making amends, in a way, for how brutally he'd been treated in the first half of his life and repaying him in part for his dedication and selflessness. He died on October 6, and is buried within walking distance of where he was born."

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