

City of Los Angeles, I rise to honor Jim Seeley for the 34 years of service he has given to the city as our Chief Federal Legislative Representative. As delegation Members and their staffs gather tonight to celebrate our friend and to wish him all the best in his retirement, we wanted to share with our colleagues in the House the wonderful legacy that this Los Angeles "institution" leaves behind.

Jim Seeley was born in the city he would one day represent, grew up in Los Angeles County, and made his way to Stanford University. He graduated in 1959, the same year he married the love of his life Jo Ann Browning. After a stint in Paris where Jo Ann studied at the Sorbonne, and then St. Louis where Jim did his six-month Army training, the couple settled in Washington, D.C. to build their successful careers and raise a large and wonderful family.

Following 8 years with the Department of Commerce, Jim accepted a position in the Washington Office of the State of Illinois. Assisting Illinois businesses in promoting their goods abroad at trade shows and on trade missions, Jim began to hone his government relations expertise as Deputy Director of the office serving under two Governors.

In 1976, after 7 years with the Illinois Washington Office, Jim returned to his roots when he accepted the position of Chief Federal Legislative Representative for the City of Los Angeles. Reporting first to the office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, and later directly to the Office of the Mayor, Jim has served the city and its residents with distinction under Mayors Tom Bradley, Richard Riordan, James Hahn, and Antonio Villaraigosa.

Over the years, he forged close working relationships with the Los Angeles Congressional Delegation Members and their staffs, as he led his own staff to further the federal legislative agenda of the Council and Mayor. Jim has flourished for more than three decades in his role as the city's "go to" guy in the nation's capital. Through changes in Mayors, Presidents, and Democratic and Republican House and Senate majorities, Jim has been a constant, adjusting the city's advocacy strategies to the changing times.

Jim guided the city's federal response to the Northridge earthquake in 1994, as city and county officials sought maximum federal relief to address the devastation caused by the quake. In the post 9/11 years, he has focused on homeland security and Los Angeles' efforts to improve airport security. He relished his work around the 1984 Olympics in his hometown, and has been an integral part of the effort to build our transportation infrastructure and move Angelinos out of their cars and onto subway and light rail.

For 34 years, LA congressional offices have benefited from Jim's deep knowledge of the city and the federal policies that impact Los Angeles and our constituents. We also have benefited from the pleasure of his company, as "Seeley" was always a welcome visitor. When he dropped by to touch base with staff, check up on the latest legislative rumor, or just banter with the congressional colleagues who had long since become friends, I think we all felt like City Hall was down the street—not 2700 miles away.

Jim officially retired from the City of Los Angeles at the end of March, but will continue to consult and share his vast institutional knowledge with the City of Los Angeles office. In

the meantime, he and Jo Ann, who retired last year, will no doubt devote much of their free time to their 11 children and their 14 beautiful grandchildren.

On behalf of the Los Angeles Congressional Delegation, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Jim Seeley on his retirement, and in thanking this dedicated public servant for his 34 years of service to the City of Los Angeles. We send our very best wishes to Jim and Jo Ann for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

#### CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CRESTMONT

#### HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 20, 2010*

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the First Baptist Church of Crestmont on its momentous 100th Anniversary. Just north of Philadelphia, First Baptist Church of Crestmont was the very first church to be established in the town of Crestmont over a century ago.

The congregation that founded the First Baptist Church of Crestmont originally met in the homes of two of its members. The group was formally organized into a Baptist church in October of 1910. Determined to build a meeting place for their new congregation, the members of the church worked together to begin digging the foundation with their own hands. Neighborhood children assisted with fundraising by performing concerts and organizing social events. In the early 1920's, the congregation developed plans to construct a new building for their church, which was a fortunate decision as the original building was destroyed in a fire shortly before the new church was completed. This new building housed the congregation for decades before construction began on an updated building.

As the congregation continued to grow, transitioning from one pastor to the next, the commitment to community was passed down from generation to generation. In 2008 the sanctuary was once again destroyed by a fire. The First Baptist Church of Crestmont turned to their neighbors for support as they worked to repair their church. Last September the congregation returned to worship in their newly renovated edifice and fellowship hall.

For decades, this community has provided a place for generations of children and adults alike to learn and worship together. The congregation has overcome great hardships over the past 100 years and has emerged even stronger. Although First Baptist is a small assembly, it has served as a significant, steadfast source of spiritual sustenance for its people while remaining committed to working hand in hand with the community to create a positive environment in which to raise our children and keep our seniors safe.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating First Baptist Church of Crestmont's 100th anniversary milestone and wishing the congregation many more years of community enrichment and service.

HONORING ROBERT ACREE

#### HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 20, 2010*

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Robert Acree upon being awarded with the "Lifetime Achievement Award" by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 9896. Mr. Acree was honored on Saturday, January 30, 2010 in Chowchilla, California.

Mr. Robert Acree was born and raised in Chowchilla, California. He attended Chowchilla High School, where he participated on the track team as a pole vaulter. He graduated from high school in 1965, and in 1967 enlisted in the United States Air Force.

Mr. Acree completed basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, and completed technical school as a Tactical Aircraft Maintenance Specialist at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. His first assignment was at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona where he worked on the F-4C "Phantom." In September 1969, Mr. Acree received orders to deploy to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. He joined the 558th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 12th Combat Support Group. He and his squadron kept the F-4 "Phantoms" in the air as the 558th conducted close air support for ground forces fighting the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. The squadron was also responsible for conducting interdiction and combat air patrol activities.

Mr. Acree was assigned to the 421st Tactical Fighter Squadron of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing at Da Nang, Vietnam. With an aircraft landing or taking off every 52 seconds Da Nang Air Base is considered to be the busiest base in the world. The 421st, also known as the "Black Widows," flew thousands of close air support missions and conducted interdiction and combat air activities. Toward the end of his military career, Mr. Acree was rotated to the States for one of several assignments at George Air Force Base in California. In April 1971, Mr. Acree received an Honorable Discharge from the Air Force; after only 88 days he re-enlisted back into the Air Force for 2 additional years. He served at Beale Air Force Base where he worked on the top secret SR-71 "Blackbird" spy plane. He was cross-trained in Aircraft Weapon Systems at Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado and was then assigned to George Air Force Base. He completed his tour in Udorn, Thailand, working on F-4C's.

In 1976, Mr. Acree requested a tour in Korea and served at the Kunsan Air Base. He then spent 2 years at the Soesterberg Air Base in Holland, working on the F-4 Phantom and the F-15 Eagle. In 1979, he reported to Edwards Air Force Base. While at Edwards he met his soon to be wife, Amy. They spent 4 years at Hahn Air Base in Germany and finally landed back at George Air Force Base.

In July 1988, Master Sergeant Acree retired from the United States Air Force. During his twenty-one years of service, he earned an Associate of Science Degree in Aircraft Armament Systems Technology from the Community College of the Air Force. Upon his retirement, he was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the Good Conduct Medal with five oak leaf

clusters, the Air Force Longevity Award with four oak leaf clusters, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, NCO Professional Military Education Ribbon with oak leaf cluster, National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Overseas Service Long Tour Ribbon with oak leaf cluster, Air Force Overseas Service Short Tour Ribbon with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Training Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with two oak leaf clusters, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm and device, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Mr. Acree and his family returned to Chowchilla, California after he retired. He was employed as the Utility Systems Supervisor for the City of Chowchilla. Mr. and Mrs. Acree have four sons and six grandchildren. Their two youngest sons currently serve in the Air Force. Mr. Acree is a Life Member of Chowchilla Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9896. He is serving as the vice-president of the "Sons of Thunder" bike club and is a member of "This Ain't Your Mamma's Church" biker church.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Robert Acree upon being named as a "Distinguished Life Member" by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 9896. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Mr. Acree many years of continued success.

#### HONORING COAL MINERS FROM UPPER BIG BRANCH MINE IN WEST VIRGINIA

SPEECH OF

**HON. RUSH D. HOLT**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 14, 2010*

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 1236, which honors the coal miners who perished in the Upper Big Branch Mine—South in Raleigh County, West Virginia, extends condolences to their families, and recognizes the valiant efforts of emergency response workers at the mine disaster.

On April 5, America witnessed the worst coal mining disaster in 40 years when an explosion occurred at the Upper Big Branch—South Mine. Twenty-nine miners were killed in this tragedy, and my thoughts and prayers go out to their families, friends and colleagues during this difficult time.

I also would like to commend the rescue teams who bravely risked life and limb to search for missing miners after the disaster, and thank the volunteers who supported the community through this tragedy.

I feel strongly about the concerns of the mining industry because I was born and raised in West Virginia, where my father as a U.S. Senator, was known as one of the best friends a miner ever had. There is no question that mining has been a dangerous job. Today, coal mining is rated among the most dangerous jobs in America. It does not have to be that way.

Chairman MILLER has assured me that the Education and Labor Committee will be investigating any possible health and safety violations at the Upper Big Branch—South Mine to see if laws were circumvented and miners' lives were recklessly put at risk. If that was indeed the case, those responsible must be held accountable.

Too many families have suffered the loss of a loved one in a mining disaster. We in Congress need to fully investigate the factors that led to these tragedies. We need to investigate the deficiencies in laws, regulations and enforcement that may have contributed to these disasters.

We owe it to the families of miners lost in these disasters and the miners that work every day to take action to prevent these accidents from happening again. I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 1236.

#### HONORING THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN'S MEN'S GYMNASTICS TEAM ON WINNING FOURTH NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

**HON. JOHN D. DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 20, 2010*

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Michigan's men's gymnastics team on winning the 2010 NCAA national championship.

Michigan won the championship with a score of 360.500, edging defending champion Stanford, 359.800, and Oklahoma, 357.050. This is the program's fourth national championship, and Michigan's first varsity team championship since 2005.

The national championship capped a successful season for the team, as well as individuals. Chris Cameron won the NCAA men's all-around championship and Mel Anton Santander finished third. Michigan swept the high bar, with Ryan McCarthy, Ian Makowske, and Mel Anton Santander finishing first, second, and third, respectively. In all, Michigan finished with the team championship, all-around championship, seven individuals earning all-America honors, and the Elite 88, an award given to the competing student-athlete with the highest cumulative grade point average, which went to Ben Baldus-Strauss, a chemistry honors student.

In addition to its considerable athletic achievements, the team serves as a model of community service and academic excellence. The 20-member team is comprised of individuals from 13 States and Singapore. Members study topics as diverse as American culture, English, economics, political science, biology, and aerospace, biomedical, and mechanical engineering. The program also consistently has one of the highest team grade point averages at the University and is a leader in community service and volunteerism.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the student-athletes and coaches of the 2010 NCAA national championship-winning Michigan men's gymnastics team: Ben Baldus-Strauss, Syque Caesar, Kent Caldwell, Chris Cameron, David Chan, Devan Cote, Steve Crabtree, Phillip Goldberg, Adam Hamers, Garrett Hamers, Evan Heiter, Douglass Johnson, Jr., Thomas Kelley, Torrance Laury, Joe Levine, Ian Makowske, Ryan McCarthy, Mel Anton Santander, Rohan Sebastian, Andrew Vance, and coaches Kurt Golder, Geoff Corrigan, Xiao Yuan, and Ralph Rosso.

#### 62ND ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 20, 2010*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise in recognition of the 62nd anniversary of Israel's independence. I have always been deeply moved by the duality of Israel's independence celebration, at once both sorrowful and triumphant.

On one day—Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day—Israel honors those who gave their lives defending their families, their neighbors, their communities, their people, and their country. Israel today recognizes even those who died before the state was officially declared in 1948. This year Israel honors 22,684 soldiers killed in the line of duty, and another 1,750 civilian victims of terrorism. These brave men and women died in service to the foundational belief of Israel: That in their ancient homeland the Jewish people can live in freedom.

But by the dawn of the morning following Yom Hazikaron, Israel exchanges tears of sadness for tears of joy, celebrating their official day of independence—the declaration of the State of Israel by David Ben Gurion in 1948. I know of no other country that combines such deep sadness with such unrelenting delight.

For 62 years now, Israel has stood as a vibrant democracy and a symbol of hope for millions of people around the world. For 62 years Israel has modeled a society where determination and passion, and an emphasis on social progress and education, can build a productive nation.

Madam Speaker, I have been to Israel 14 times as a Member of Congress, and every time I go I encounter ordinary citizens and government officials alike who are genuinely dedicated to living up to the ideals of Israel's independence. I am always impressed by the Israelis' intense desire to persevere. Israel deserves to be secure and prosperous, to live in peace with its neighbors, and to live free from fear and violence.

I look forward to returning to Israel in the near future, and on congratulating Israel again on its 63rd birthday . . . and its 64th, and 65th, and all the years after that.

#### HONORING DARWIN CREQUE AND HIS BROTHER, DR. LAURITZ CLUDGEMANN CREQUE

**HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN**

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 20, 2010*

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the memory of two distinguished native sons of my district, the U.S. Virgin Islands, who during their productive lives distinguished themselves in the fields of medicine, education, literature, history, and public service. It is my honor to remember the lives of Darwin Creque and his brother, Dr. Lauritz Cludgemann Creque who attended Morehouse College and who are being honored there this week with the establishment of a memorial