

Could these words be a description of the bravery demonstrated by such heroes as Sergeant Alvin York, who is probably the most recognized veteran of World War I? Maybe these words describe Audie Murphy, the most decorated American of World War II?

No!

These words describe the man who could be Wayne County's most decorated soldier of the Vietnam War.

These are words that depict the extreme bravery of a veteran who still lives in our midst. These words describe one of our country's real heroes.

These are words contained in General Order 847 that officially awarded the Army Commendation Medal for Heroism to John O. Berry, Jr., who presently lives in the Gap of the Ridge community of Wayne County. John is the son of Willie Lee (Sloan) Berry and Johnny Berry.

He spent his childhood as most any other boy would—going to school, hanging out with his friends, listening to music, growing up with his brothers and sisters: Ted, Fred, George, Stella, Mae, Maggie, and Alene, and just generally enjoying life.

Until.

Until September 18, 1968. That's when John became a soldier in Uncle Sam's Army.

He took his basic training at Fort Knox and advanced training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. Just four short months after entering the Army, he was sent to a fire base in North Vietnam.

He had become a combat demolition specialist with Company A, 299th Engineer Battalion.

His was a dangerous job because he had the responsibility of clearing the roads of the deadly mines placed by the Viet Cong.

Thousands of American service men were killed by these mines. However, because of the sacrifice and courage of soldiers like John O. Berry, Jr., thousands of lives were saved as these demolition engineers dismantled the mines.

Specialist Four John O. Berry, Jr., served his country with dedication and commitment. That service was continually recognized as he received numerous awards and commendations. Some of those distinguished awards include:

—Two Purple Hearts (a combat decoration awarded to members of the Armed Forces who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy).

—An Army Commendation Medal with first oak leaf cluster "for exceptionally meritorious achievement in support of the United States's objectives in the counterinsurgency effort in the Republic of Vietnam Through his outstanding professional competence and devotion to duty he consistently obtained superior results. Working long and arduous hours, he set an example that inspired his associates to strive for maximum achievement. The loyalty, initiative and will to succeed that he demonstrated at all times materially contributed to the successful accomplishment of the mission of this command."

—A second Army Commendation Medal with "V" device "for heroism in the Republic of Vietnam" distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement and service.

—Two National Defense medals.

—Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross w/ Palm awarded by the Vietnam Government to military personnel who have accomplished deeds of valor and displayed heroic conduct while fighting the enemy.

Eventually John was discharged from the Army, and when he returned to Monticello,

he continued serving his country by joining the local National Guard.

Today, John lives in the Gap of the Ridge community and walks among us as one of our nation's heroes. More especially, John is one of Wayne County's heroes!

He shares that role with two of his brothers who also served in the military during the Vietnam War: Ted in the Navy and Fred in the Army.

A grateful community proudly recognizes John O. Berry, Jr., and salutes him and all the other men and women who have sacrificed more than the average citizen will ever know.

Specialist Four John O. Berry, Jr., we salute you and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your service to our country!

On Veterans Day 2011, we pray that you will be able to accept the fact that you are, indeed, an American hero!

You are our hero!

TRIBUTE TO HELEN HIERONYMUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I stand today to pay tribute to an exceptional Kentuckian, Helen Hieronymus of Somerset, KY. Helen, who recently celebrated her 85th birthday, has lived a full and successful life and still exhibits youthfulness far beyond her years.

On October 20, 2011, her birthday, Helen decided to celebrate in a rather unconventional way—she went skydiving. For those who know her, however, her great leap wasn't all that surprising. Over the years, Helen has been a vibrant member of the local community—she has served as director of the local United Way, Cub Scout den mother, and president of the Junior Women's Club, all while always entertaining her adventurous appetite. Her travels have taken her fishing in Alaska, to the Great Wall of China, and to 80 different countries around the world.

Going skydiving has been an unfulfilled desire of Helen's for many years. As a child, Helen dreamed of being able to fly. Then, about 9 years ago, Helen was further inspired after witnessing a collection of paratroopers make their way to the ground while on a trip to Paris. "I thought it would be fun," she says. And so it was.

After ascending to 12,000 feet, Helen successfully completed a tandem jump followed by a safe landing. "No problem at all," she explained. "When you come out of the plane, you do a free fall. You see the earth below you, and it's amazing down there. I would do it again."

Mr. President, Ms. Helen Hieronymus is a courageous woman who has experienced a lifetime of excitement and fulfillment. Helen's community involvement and adventurous spirit serve as an inspiration to Kentuckians everywhere, and it is my hope that she have many more adventures to come. The Commonwealth Journal, a Somerset-area publication, recently published an article highlighting Helen's life of journeys and daring parachute jump. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Commonwealth Journal, Oct. 30, 2011]

SOMERSET WOMAN CELEBRATES 85TH BIRTHDAY BY TAKING PLUNGE OUT OF AN AIRPLANE

(By Chris Harris)

How does a woman who has traveled the world, ripped the roadway on a Harley, and hunted big game celebrate her 85th birthday?

By jumping out of an airplane, naturally.

Helen Hieronymus has lived a big life, no question about it. Her name is familiar to many in Pulaski County, having touched the community in many different ways—director of the local United Way, Cub Scout den mother, president of the Junior Women's Club, and so much more.

You could say she's lived a full life . . . yet she's always looking for ways to make it even more full.

"Of course," said Hieronymus. "Why waste it?"

Hieronymus turned 85 on October 20. She had a yen to try her hand at skydiving.

Why?

"God only knows," quipped her daughter, Janie Hail, known to many Somerset High School alumni as their former English teacher, now retired. "Mine was the voice in the background saying, Mother, are you sure you want to do this?"

In actuality, Hieronymus was inspired by a trip to Paris, France, about nine years ago, where she witnessed a collection of paratroopers descend to the earth from three different heights, landing in a circle.

Hieronymus's reaction? "I thought that would be fun."

In fairness, Hieronymus had dreamed of being able to fly since she was only a child. Of course, she was smart enough not to try it herself without a little experimentation first.

"I tried to teach my brother to fly by tying a sheet to his ankles and wrists and having him jump off the porch railing," she recalled. "I was just testing it in that one (case)."

By the time she reached her 85th birthday, she'd done nearly everything else. Hieronymus reported having done a "bit of traveling." That's only if you consider visiting 80 different countries to be "a bit." She's fished in Alaska, hunted wild beasts in the field, and walked on the Great Wall of China. Even recently, friend Tommy Cate took her for a ride on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Hieronymus kept her adventurous spirit her whole life, but wasn't able to fully explore it until years down the road.

"I had responsibilities to take care of, like three children and a husband and things like that," she said. "Now they're big enough to take care of themselves."

Flying like a bird in the air, however, continued to elude her. Hieronymus had mentioned to her granddaughter that she would like to do a parachute jump. As a result, all of her grandchildren decided to chip in and buy "Granny" an opportunity to "jump out of a perfectly good airplane," as Hail put it.

Hail wasn't a fan of the idea. She constantly tried to talk her mother out of the idea, given the danger that falling to earth from 12,000 feet in the air could present.

"I'd think I had her talked out of it, but then it would come up again," said Hail, who

characterized herself whimsically as the coolly pragmatic complement to her mother's free-spirited daredevil.

"I suggested doing a zipline instead. She said that sounded like fun, that she hadn't thought of that before," added Hail, "and she calls up the next day and says she's going to jump the next day."

Hail decided that if she couldn't beat 'em, as the saying goes, that she would join 'em—on the ground as moral support, at any rate. So earlier this month, she accompanied her mother to the site of the Start Skydiving organization's site in Middletown, Ohio, where the big jump would take place.

What Hail saw when she got there didn't exactly bolster her confidence. She and Hieronymus watched as a group of skydivers went earlier in the day.

"The wind caught the chute of the last one coming in and rolled her over; it looked like a disaster waiting to happen," said Hail. "I point that out to my mother, and said, 'Did you see that?' and she responded, 'Well, she got up.'"

"I said, 'Mom, she's 20!'"

The winds picked up throughout the day; as the hours rolled along, it looked more and more like Hieronymus wouldn't be able to make the jump, but she refused to leave. After all, if she wanted to use the coupon her grandchildren had given her as a gift, it would have to be by Thanksgiving; that time in mid-October might have been her last opportunity to do so.

So Hieronymus held on to be in the last group to go up into the sky that day. The plane climbed to 12,000 feet before she was able to make the tandem jump with her instructor (they were connected to each other, but he was wearing the parachute).

"They put a jumpsuit on you and zip you up," Hieronymus explained. "Then they put the harness on you. Janie was there coaching."

Hieronymus took no apprehension with her into the airplane and left no regrets floating in the air. She made a successful jump and landed on the earthen floor no worse for the wear.

"No problems at all," she said. "I would do it again."

For Hieronymus, this was a "bucket list" item: Something she wanted to make sure and experience before she passed away, as referenced in the film called "The Bucket List." It certainly lived up to the expectations.

"When you come out of the plane, you do a free fall," said Hieronymus. "You see the earth below you, and it's amazing down there."

Her thoughts upon landing? "Oh shucks, I'm back on land."

Hieronymus laughed as she noted that she had a video of the event that she would show at her place of worship, First United Methodist Church, to entertain her friends there.

And despite Hail's skeptical nature, her mother's exploits have managed to serve as an inspiration.

"Oh my gosh, I felt younger," said Hail. "If an 85-year-old can do that, surely I'm not that old."

TRIBUTE TO EARL DEVANEY

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I rise today to give tribute to Mr. Earl Devaney, who will be retiring from 42 years of public service at the end of this year.

In an era when the American people have a record-level of distrust in government, Mr. Devaney has risen above partisanship as a staunch defender of

taxpayers and champion of government transparency.

Devaney started his career as a cop on the beat in Massachusetts. Then, Devaney went to work for the U.S. Secret Service until 1991, where he was the Special Agent-in-Charge of the agency's fraud division. In 1999, President Clinton appointed Devaney the inspector general of the Interior Department. There, he gained wide renown for overseeing the public corruption investigations that helped lead to the convictions of Jack Abramoff, a Washington superlobbyist and major beneficiary of the congressional earmark favor factory that polluted our politics for several decades. He also presided over the landmark investigation of the royalties program in the Minerals Management Service, finding a "culture of ethical failure" among public officials there, involving illegal gifts, illegal drug abuse, sexual misbehavior and more.

In his role as the chief watchdog of the Department of Interior, I got to know Earl and spent significant time visiting with him. What I have learned to appreciate about him was his honesty, integrity and forthrightness.

In February 2009, President Obama named Devaney to head the Recovery Board, which is charged with overseeing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA. In this position, he was integral to making sure that the spending in the stimulus was as transparent as possible.

At the end of the year, Mr. Devaney will be resigning from three posts: the Chair of the Recovery Board, inspector general for the Department of the Interior, and Chairman of the Government Accountability and Transparency Board, the position that Vice President BIDEN appointed him to for managing the administration's efforts to reduce government waste and to provide "concrete methods" for improving oversight and transparency of Federal funds.

I can't think of a tougher defender of the interests of citizens and taxpayers in the Federal Government than Mr. Devaney. As one of the best inspectors general, his dogged pursuits of corruption and waste in government will be missed.

In his resignation letter to President Obama, Mr. Devaney thanked the President for the "opportunities you have given me to serve my country, and I will always look fondly on my decades as a public servant."

Mr. Devaney, the American people will also look fondly on years of public service. Thank you for all you have done.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING ORONO MIDDLE SCHOOL

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I wish to offer my heartfelt and warm

congratulations to Orono Middle School in my State of Maine on being named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education earlier this year on September 14, especially as the school community gathers to celebrate this milestone next week.

Since the inception of the National Blue Ribbon School Program in 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has undergone a rigorous, selective process of identifying those exceptional schools nationwide where students attain and maintain high academic goals. Needless to say, the bestowal of this well-earned, prestigious award speaks volumes about Orono Middle School's exemplary student accomplishments—and is an accolade in which all RSU 26 school board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students—not to mention our entire State—can certainly take enormous pride.

This distinguished recognition also affords Orono Middle School with an ideal platform to share its outstanding teaching models and approaches under the vision of Principal Robert Lucy with other schools—an opportunity which aligns with the larger effort of the Department of Education to facilitate the robust exchange of the best school leadership and teaching practices.

Just as the Bangor region, where Orono is located, is the gateway to the natural wonders of the North Maine Woods and Acadia National Park, it is also a gateway to excellence in education. That is certainly the case at the university level at the University of Maine, my alma mater, as well as at the primary school level at Orono Middle School, where challenging and cultivating young minds is paramount; curiosity is prized; character is rewarded; enthusiasm is contagious; values are imparted; and an exuberant love of learning is palpable, even at times audible, and always ever-present.

Principal Lucy aptly characterized this spirit and energy when he wrote that "a visitor walking the halls hears parents conversing with teachers and students, actors exchanging lines, artists collaborating on projects, mathematicians solving team challenges, and coaches encouraging athletes. The sounds of our community make it clear that Orono Middle School thrives, largely because our students are connected to our school." And, thrive, it has, as Orono Middle School is exemplifying Maine's motto, "Dirigo" or "I Lead" and in doing so, ensuring that the seeds of hope for the next generation are firmly planted and taking root.

Orono Middle School is proof positive that our State's hallmark work ethic and can-do spirit are alive and well. Orono Middle School is a top-performing institution on State-required assessments, which teachers use to customize and improve instruction. Eighty percent of Orono Middle School's faculty have advanced degrees