

Leahy will also be missed, according to Lea, who penned a poem—"Her Eyes"—that he read at her recent retirement party.

Here is what Lea wrote:

HER EYES

—for Mary Leahy, on her retirement
I asked your friends about your eyes—what color
They were, in a few short words. The answers ranged
From what I'd expect, like sparkling, penetrating,
To ones that were anything but: the earliest green
Of spring, said one, another brook trout green.
And yet the words they used around the colors
They'd chosen made a chorus: compassion, kindness,
Acceptance, faithfulness, honor. What can I add?
Only that in my knowing and loving you
These years, I've beheld within those eyes a shine
That none of us will ever quite describe:
A certain mystery flicker born of watching
Pain for years yourself, and from its kindling
In them what we, in our own crude ways, name hope.

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a bill I introduced yesterday, the Army Arsenal Strategic Workload Enhancement Act of 2012.

I am grateful to be working with seven of my colleagues on this issue: Senator KIRK, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HARKIN, Senator PRYOR, Senator BOOZMAN, Senator SCHUMER and Senator GILLIBRAND. Each of us understands the strategic contributions that arsenals make to our national defense. I am pleased that we have a bipartisan bill to put those capabilities on a firm footing for the future.

I know that the men and women at Rock Island Arsenal in my home State of Illinois deserve that firm footing. I was there just last month, seeing again for myself their good work to equip our troops.

The Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center, JMTC, employs some 1,700 highly skilled workers, at least half of whom are veterans. The JMTC is the heart of Rock Island's 8,600-person workforce, every one of them dedicated to providing our troops with what they need.

For more than 10 years now, they have made critical weapons, parts and materiel for our men and women on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan. Very often, they have produced items in a crisis, when no one else including the private sector could do it. And they have made it by the deadline and kept it affordable.

The arsenal has made things like up-armored HMMWV kits to protect against improvised explosive devices, IEDs, at a time in the war when, frankly, we were caught flat-footed by the threat. They have produced portable tool sheds so that vehicle maintenance can take place in theater instead of having to pull those vehicles off the

front lines. When the Army depleted its stock of a small but critical component for artillery repair, Rock Island stepped up to provide it on short notice.

These are the little-known, lifesaving contributions made by this arsenal.

So my colleagues and I have come together on a bipartisan basis to make sure this strategic asset has a strong future. Our bill would require the Army to create a strategic plan to ensure each arsenal receives the workload it needs to keep its workers' skills sharp. The Army does this type of systematic planning for some of its subdivisions, but not for arsenals. This bill addresses that.

Our bill also would ensure that these arsenals can compete for any military contract, defense-wide. Too often, arsenals are passed over in the contract process. But this bill will ensure these connections happen.

Rock Island's highly skilled workforce has a proven track record. It is in everyone's interest to strengthen this competition.

These two core provisions will help to ensure the long-term health of Rock Island Arsenal. They build upon a bipartisan effort last year by the Illinois and Iowa delegations to expand the arsenal's ability to enter into public-private partnerships. We have seen how these partnerships can drive innovation in new areas like titanium and metal alloys. And they cost the government nothing, all the while assisting in keeping the factory warm and these critical skills available when our country needs them when our troops need them.

I appreciated Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN working with us through the National Defense Authorization Act last year to ensure these provisions were included. I look forward to working with them this year as well.

Rock Island Arsenal is a little-known gem in our military with great importance for our country. I hope we may continue to support their critical role by advancing the ideas I have discussed today.

RECOGNIZING THE BUSH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the dedication and devotion shown by a group of men and women to their local community. The longstanding services of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department in Laurel County, KY, has been on the cutting edge of rural and volunteer fire departments in the State of Kentucky since the department's beginnings in 1975.

What is so inspiring about the individuals in the Bush VFD is that despite the obstacles placed before them, they have always persevered and prevailed. While the men and women of the department have experienced many successes and accomplishments, I think it is safe to say that these individuals

feel that their biggest achievement is the opportunity to serve and protect their fellow citizens in the face of danger.

The Bush Volunteer Fire Department was conceived of by a group of 13 local men who saw a flaw within their community. At the time, the Laurel County Fire Department presided over the Bush community, but the LCFD was over half-an-hour away. The 13 men in Bush decided that the LCFD was just too far away, and for the safety of their citizens, it was time to assemble a fire-fighting unit closer to home. The LCFD donated a 1947 K-model International fire truck, and just like that, the Bush Volunteer Fire Department was born.

Since the beginning of the department, the men and women at BVFD have sought to become the best that they could possibly be, by implementing new and innovative practices at each and every turn in the road. In less than a year since their start in 1975, the department had secured funds to develop a fire station to house its truck and equipment. Bush VFD was also the third rural volunteer department in the Commonwealth of Kentucky to receive a Class 7 rating from ISO.

In 2011, the department began a junior firefighter program to enlist the help of eager youth in the community in a safe and beneficial way. In 2011, BVFD also enlisted its first female member, Whitney Minton, who joined in alongside her father Rick. These changes, and others, have assisted the Bush Volunteer Fire Department in attaining much of the success it knows today.

I am encouraged by the passion for service of the men and women firefighters and EMTs of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department. Former Bush Chief Ernest Rudder has had the pleasure of following in his father's footsteps, Birchell L. Rudder, in working in the fire house. Ernest's son Marc joined the ranks once he had reached the proper age, and now his son Noah is anxious to be the fourth generation of Rudders to enter firefighting. The Bush Fire Department is truly a family affair for families like the Rudders.

I wonder if those 13 men who took it upon themselves in 1975 to enact change in their community ever thought their dream of a volunteer fire department would become such a huge success. Although this story is common in our country, let us not go without recognizing those who set themselves apart in pursuit of a better future, like those in the Bush community.

Mr. President, at this time I would like to ask my colleagues in the United States Senate to join me in paying tribute to the outstanding service of the many volunteers over the course of the lifetime of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department.

There was recently an article published in the Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition, an eastern Kentucky local periodical magazine, highlighting the many years of service given by the Bush Volunteer Fire Department. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that said article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition]

THEY ANSWER THE CALL

(By Sue Minton)

Imagine waking in the middle of the night with your home engulfed in a sea of black smoke, or out for an afternoon drive when you spot a cloud of smoke billowing from a distant hillside. The first call you make is to the county dispatch. Pagers buzz in pockets and on tables of volunteer firefighters, summoning them to their stations. And they always come.

Members of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department have been answering these calls for almost 37 years.

In April 1975, 13 men from the Bush community met at Providence Baptist Church for the purpose of organizing a fire department to protect the lives and property within their community.

The reason for starting the department, according to Dennis Minton, charter and current board of trustees member, was—"The Laurel County Fire Department was responding to calls in the county. It could be as long as 30 minutes from the time they received the call until they arrived at the scene (in the old Bush community). By this time, in most cases, the structure was on the ground or fully involved. The residents needed and deserved better protection within their community."

A fire department was organized and they received their first truck before they found a home.

"The Laurel County Fire Department donated the department a used 1947 K-model International," said Ernest Rudder, charter member and captain. "Because we didn't have a building, the truck was parked at different firemen's homes."

With fundraising and donations, in less than a year a two-story building was constructed off east Ky. 80 on Ky. 1803 adjacent to the "old" Bush School. To repay a proposed loan, in May of 1976 the fire department proposed a tax rate of .08 cents per \$100 on real-estate property. Today, that tax rate has been lowered to .0570 cents. The primary purpose of the loan was to pay for fire hydrants and dry hydrants, which were installed throughout the district.

This move paved the way for the district to receive a Class 7 rating from ISO. "We were the third rural volunteer department in the Commonwealth of Kentucky to be granted this rating," Rudder said. "This move also substantially lowered insurance rates for some homeowners."

Under the leadership of its first chief, Kenneth Smith (1975 to 1984), the department grew in manpower and equipment. But, at 3:43 a.m. on June 20, 1984, members of the fire department responded to a blaze at the last place they would have expected their own station.

Daybreak found the firefighters still on the scene, and the realization was sinking in they had lost their building and all their equipment.

The loss of the building was a major blow for the firemen and the community, but the Bush residents were never without fire pro-

tection. Other departments in and outside the county volunteered their service and equipment.

"One of the trucks brought to the fire by Laurel County Fire Department stayed until we got a new truck," Rudder said. "Bell County Fire Department also sent a tanker for us to use."

In January 1985, the community and county were invited to a dedication and open house for the newly rebuilt fire station.

The new station grew both in size and membership from 13 charter members without a fire truck or station into a roster of 42 active volunteers, seven of whom are EMTs; three Class A pumpers; and two tankers.

Bush Fire Department proudly protects more than 10,000 people living in an area of 35 square miles and operates out of two stations—Fire Station No.2, opened in 1993, is located on east Ky. 80 in the Lick Fork community. "Congressman Hal Rogers gave the dedication address," Rudder said.

Six chiefs were elected to command the department over the years; the current is Phillip Williams, and the longest serving chief was Don Minton (1999 to 2010).

The fire chiefs, along with their men, have one thing in mind: "to serve and protect the Bush community." And this they are doing by continuing their training and recruiting new members.

In 2011, the department initiated a junior firefighter program.

Also in 2011, Whitney Minton became the first female member of the department, joining her father, Rick, a sergeant.

In volunteer fire departments, and for many in close-knit rural communities, it is natural that one generation would follow the next on the department roll.

And it was a given that Marc Rudder would follow in the footsteps of his father, Ernest Rudder.

Marc Rudder knew that he would grow up to become a firefighter. "Being able to watch the firefighters help the people of the community in their time of need played a major role in the factor of me wanting to be a fireman," Marc Rudder said.

"I feel that the fire department is something that I have always known," he added. "I always played 'fireman' as a child. I did not know childhood without the fire department. I got to play with small toy fire trucks and big real fire trucks."

"Yes, he has been interested in all things fire or EMS since he was just a small child," Ernest Rudder added. "Like he said, his first toys were fire trucks, ambulances and police cars. It is just natural that he would want to be a firefighter."

"Marc was with me at the fire department meetings from the time he was a small boy," he added. "He was around the volunteers and he learned as we did."

At that time, the fire department didn't have a junior firefighter program, so Marc could not join the department. But by the time he was 16 years old, he was taking classes with the other firemen. "When he could 'officially' be on the roster, he was ready to be certified with his required 150 hours of training," his father said.

"One of my first jobs was as an EMT with Ambulance Inc. of Laurel County," Marc Rudder said. "And I feel this was due to the influence the fire department had on me."

His exposure to the volunteers at Bush Fire Department has, in a round-about way, given him that experience that is now his life's career.

Rudder, who is the State Fire Rescue Training Area 13 Coordinator with the Kentucky Fire Commission, said the knowledge he learned at the Bush Fire Department has helped him each day in his job.

"I feel that coming from a volunteer department serving a rural community has a

great benefit over many other people that I work with across the country."

He coordinates an office that provides training and assistance to 67 fire departments in eight counties in southeastern Kentucky. His office is also an assisting agency to the fire departments in the area for any information that they might need to better serve their communities. Rudder has studied at the National Fire Academy in Maryland and also serves on committees across the region, state, nation, and world.

The fourth generation of the Rudder family, Noah, can't wait to follow in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, grandfather and father.

His great-grandfather, Birchell L. Rudder, was an original member of the board of trustees, being elected in 1975, elected chairman of the board of trustees in 1979, and served as chairman until 1996, but remained on the board until his death in 2002.

Noah Rudder, a seventh-grader at North Laurel Middle School, has been coming to the Monday night meetings like his father, Marc, for a long time. He is just waiting until he is old enough to become a junior firefighter.

"I like to go to the fire department because I know all the people and they are like family to me. And I enjoy learning about firefighting and seeing the equipment," he said.

"Incidentally, Noah is an authority on all things having to do with 9/11," his grandfather added.

Also, Noah's aunt, Dawn, and her husband, Frank Kilby, are members of the Laurel County Volunteer Fire Department.

"The department is comprised of members from all walks of life and everyone brings something to the table," Ernest Rudder said. "During an emergency, we are all business. We are a department of friends and neighbors. But we are always willing to welcome another member."

"We like what we do. We volunteer our time to help people when they need it. It's giving back to the community. And the department has an excellent relationship with the community. They visit schools to present fire-safety programs, allow children to climb onto their fire trucks, and participate in local parades and other civic functions."

From its earliest beginnings, the Bush Volunteer Fire Department has realized the importance of training for this most hazardous job. Proper training ensures that the best interests of the citizens are being served and they are able to return to the station without the life of a firefighter being harmed or lost.

Requirements for being a certified firefighter in Kentucky are the same, but Bush requires each member to obtain at least 20 additional hours of training a year.

"Many of the members are certified or currently obtaining emergency medical technician training, which requires more training every two years," Marc Rudder said.

"This training will enable the EMTs to provide medical care to the community and assist the EMS agency."

Because of the extensive training Bush Fire Department members receive, they hold the honor of being five-time Kentucky Firefighter Olympic Champions, having won the title in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993. The team retired undefeated.

"Firefighters have become more aware of the dangers of being firefighters, EMS workers and police officers since 9/11," he continued. "Many new training requirements have come about since Sept. 11, 2001, and I believe the people who want to be firefighters realize the dangers and the great responsibility that being a firefighter entails. I imagine all the

fire departments have gotten better and train harder because of 9/11."

Every firefighter is by law a "peace officer" and duty-bound to report anything unseemly they come across.

In the post-9/11 world we live in today, firefighters are expected to do even more to safeguard the lives of residents in their districts. They must be able to address all hazards, not just fires.

As "first responders," firefighters can provide information to emergency-response agencies that have not yet arrived on the scene. They can determine the situation and decide what resources are required, whether it be an ambulance, law enforcement, hazmat team, or an arson investigator.

House fires kill and injure thousands yearly, and cost many more their valued possessions and memories.

"The activity report for 2011 has Bush Volunteer Fire Department responding to 102 calls," Ernest Rudder said. "Thankfully, only nine were structure fires. We had several grass fires and about five or six vehicle fires. The vast majority of our calls these days are to assist Ambulance Inc. of Laurel County with automobile accidents or to answer and investigate residential smoke or fire alarms."

Rudder said it would be hard to designate the most dangerous fire the department had responded to over the years. "But the Blackwater Church fire was really big with a roof collapse. The big fires in the city of London that we've assisted with and the fires at Chaney Lumber were big and dangerous. We've never had anyone seriously hurt, but recently, on a mutual-aid fire with Laurel County, two of our men were knocked down when the garage doors and ceiling fell on them. Luckily, there were several other firemen there who pulled them to safety."

TRIBUTE TO KENTUCKY WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of a group of men from the Commonwealth of Kentucky who all acted bravely and valiantly during their time of service in the United States Armed Forces in World War II. Glenn Combs, Toleman Combs, Mansell Stone, Benjamin Garrison, Walter Garrison, Rufus Miller, Earl Hobbs, and Elvy Roberts, who are all from different towns and hollers in Clay County, KY, each has a fascinating story of his experiences while in the military. And it is my hope to share a few of those with you today.

When the United States of America decided to enter the Second World War, we did so with an insurmountable level of patriotism, dedication, and determination to defeat the Axis Powers. Men were going to extreme lengths to enlist and answer the call to serve their country, and protect freedom and democracy in the foreign countries around the world in which it was being tested.

Earl Hobbs, one of the men in this group of eight, had learned that he was just 2 pounds shy of the minimum weight required by the U.S. Army at the time of his enlistment. Upon hearing this news, he hurriedly ran to the nearest convenience store and purchased 3 square pounds of bananas. He gobbled them down right there outside the grocery, every last one of them.

Later that day he passed the physical, including the weight requirement, and was an official member of the U.S. Armed Forces. It was instances like Earl's that truly inspire me; instances of men and women going to such great lengths to secure their freedom and the freedom of the ones that they love.

Earl's action that day so long ago was just one of many from what we call the "Greatest Generation." Men and women alike across the Nation assumed new and unfamiliar assignments and positions that they may not have been comfortable with, all for the cause of defending liberty and securing freedom. We must look to the veterans of not only the Second World War, but the veterans of all the Nation's conflicts and struggles, with the utmost respect. We must not take for granted the inalienable rights we have so passionately fought to gain and maintain, and we must never forget those who have made the greatest sacrifice made by many on behalf of those rights.

I truly cherish the opportunity to stand on the floor of the U.S. Senate today to speak on behalf of these eight men and relate a true story of a local Kentucky "Band of Brothers" who decided to honor God and country and selflessly serve all those who inhabit this great Nation.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in commemorating the great contributions of Glenn Combs, Toleman Combs, Mansell Stone, Benjamin Garrison, Walter Garrison, Rufus Miller, Earl Hobbs, and Elvy Roberts to the cause of freedom.

In July of 2011 there was an article published in the Manchester Enterprise, Clay County's local newspaper, which featured the truly unique journey these eight World War II veterans have experienced in their lifetimes. I ask unanimous consent the said article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to appear in the RECORD as follows:

[From the Manchester Enterprise, July 28, 2011]

A CHAPTER IN WWII HISTORY

Note: This week's feature story covers eight individuals who aided their country to take part in World War II. This story was graciously sent in by Ted Garrison.

After a thorough debate on the world situation, expressing their personal opinions and obligations for a month, they made a decision. They would honor God and country, and defend the Republic of the United States in WWII.

Glenn and Toleman Combs, Mansell "Dude" Stone, and Benjamin and Walter Garrison enlisted in the U.S. Army. Another of the Garrison brothers, Theo, wanted to join, but he was informed that it would be more important to the war effort for him to remain at home and continue to mine coal.

When I first began my research on this small group, I thought Rufus "Jamup" Miller and Earl Hobbs were with them. I found that they entered the military at a different date, but these men (as did so many others) endured enormous hardships during their service, so I decided it necessary to include them in this brief history of patriotism and uncommon valor.

The small group of recruits departed Manchester on October 16, 1940, to be inducted into the military at Ft. Thomas, KY. Walt Garrison was 18 years old at that time. Walt and a friend from Kentucky earned the top scores for expert riflemen in their company. Later, Uncle Walt laughed and blamed snow for causing him to lose to his friend by one point the day they were at the rifle range.

Toleman Combs, Ben Garrison, and Walt Garrison were assigned to Anti-Tank Company of the 10th Infantry Regiment attached to Lt. General George S. Patton's 1st Armored Division of the 3rd Army. Glenn Combs was assigned to Headquarters training and was a Glider Wing of the 82nd Airborne Division.

I believe we should mention that Capt. Elvy Roberts, born on Beech Creek in Clay County, commanded a Glider Wing in the 101st Airborne at Normandy. He also participated in two parachute jumps there. Elvy Roberts made a career of the U.S. military and led the 6th Army as a Lt. General in Vietnam.

The 10th Infantry, with other Army units, including segments of the 101st and 82nd Airborne, were stationed in Iceland. The troops weren't informed that this location was actually a staging area in preparation for the Normandy invasion. Normandy was one of the most important events of WWII. They shipped out of Iceland bound for an unknown destination. After arriving offshore, the 10th Infantry Regiment stayed aboard ships during the first three days of the battle. Their orders were to wait until inclement weather cleared enough to move the tanks and anti-tank guns onto the beaches.

The day before the landing, in the pre-attack briefing, they learned the location was Normandy, and details of the mission were revealed. At that time, they were unaware that their friend, "Dude" Stone, was in the initial attack on the German-held beaches. Soldiers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne had already fought a fierce battle, starting June 3, 1944. "Dude" had gone in with a glider wing. There were 200 men in his wing, and only nine survived.

10th Infantry Regiment and other units prepared to attack. The Anti-Tank company departed the USS Republican by landing crafts and stormed the beach on June 6 at 6:30 AM. Uncle Walt said, "The scene was terrible, but we had a job to do. We could see fortifications blown apart, tank wreckage, and the bodies of American airborne troops lying on the beach."

I asked him if he was afraid when they hit the beach, and he answered, "No, but I was very angry when I saw how the Germans had treated our soldiers." American troops had sustained approximately 6,036 casualties during the first hour of the invasion and over 2,400 at Omaha Beach alone, but they had gained a toehold.

American troops were able to fight their way over the beaches and hundred-foot high cliffs to move ahead a few miles and dig in for approximately 24 hours, thus securing the area. This was a process they repeated, moving the line forward. During these advances, Uncle Walt and a soldier of German ancestry performed sniper and reconnaissance duty for their company. On one occasion near the Modelle River in France, A-T Company came under mortar and rifle fire from a small town. Walt and Wolfgang split up and worked their way toward each end of the village, firing on the enemy positions as they moved in. When they were close, Wolfgang yelled to the enemy troops using the German language, telling them they were surrounded and ordered them to surrender.

Approximately 150 German soldiers surrendered. There was at least one SS Trooper with them. Walt and Wolfgang referred to that episode as their Sgt. York Trick!