

really—would do well to study the life and accomplishments of an exceptional leader, the former mayor of Rockford, IL, John McNamara.

John died on September 30 at the age of 81. As Rockford's mayor from 1981 to 1989, he helped guide Rockford through a national recession, which crippled the manufacturing industry in his city. When he took office, Rockford's jobless rate stood at 11.5 percent. Eighteen months later, it had ballooned to nearly 25 percent, the highest unemployment in the Nation. For the first time since the Great Depression, the city's population declined. The New York Times reported that Rockford was "bleeding away its jobs and its people."

Speaking with a Rockford Register Star reporter in 2006, John McNamara recalled those times. He said: "People would come into my office to tell me about their situation. It was very heart-wrenching and emotional. It hit you in the gut."

John McNamara steered Rockford through those dark years with a strong leadership style and an irrepressible, infectious sense of optimism. He believed in Rockford's people and possibilities, and he inspired others to believe in them, too.

By the start of his second and final term in 1985, the city's economy was on an upswing. While part of the improvement was due to a broader, national economic recovery, much of Rockford's rebound was the result of bold decisions by McNamara to overhaul the city's government.

He professionalized the mayor's office and realigned the city's finances. He worked to create opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. He made smart investments in infrastructure to create new jobs and attract new industries to Rockford and to diversify and strengthen the city's economic base. He spearheaded the resurrection of downtown Rockford.

He helped to establish a local tourism bureau and an arts council. He committed public funds to turn an old Sears Roebuck building into the Rockford Museum Park, home to the Rockford Art Museum, the Discovery Center, and the Rockford Dance Company.

He worked for social justice for all of his city's residents. In a city where the school district had twice faced lawsuits for racial discrimination, he made racial healing a priority. He told his children that his favorite day of the year was Martin Luther King Day; he loved the inspiration he drew from visits to African-American churches. He established a Mayors Task Force on Homelessness.

He was famous for his blunt speaking style and his booming voice, which echoed throughout city hall. He was funny, with a loud laugh. In his days as mayor, he stood 6-foot-4 and weighed about 180 pounds, tops. People used to marvel that such a big laugh could come from such a thin frame. He greeted people with a big hug and a big smile. He listened.

He was a Democrat who didn't believe that any political party has a monopoly on good ideas. He was elected by Democrats and Republicans, and he appointed people from both parties to serve in city committees. One of his favorite sayings was: "If you can't make a friend, don't make an enemy."

A Republican who served during his years as mayor, current Rockford Alderman Frank Beach said: "John was a strong man [who] loved our community—a man of integrity, a man that put shoe leather to his convictions."

He motivated and inspired people, and he was energetic and tireless.

Rockford was John's adopted hometown. He grew up in Whiting, IN, where his folks ran a small mom-and-pop grocery. He had two sisters. In his school, he was class president. He also played football, basketball, and baseball, and he was on the bowling team. He earned a bachelor's degree from Notre Dame University and a law degree from the University of Michigan.

In 1965, on a blind date, he met Barbara Runkle, a young woman from the northern suburbs of Chicago. They ate at a diner and walked around Chicago. The next day, he drove 60 miles to see her again. He made that same 60-mile drive to see Barbara every day for months until they married on June 26, 1965.

John and Barbara were married for 55 years and raised six children, three daughters and three sons, including Rockford's current mayor, Tom McNamara.

Shortly after their wedding, John did a tour of duty in Vietnam as a captain in U.S. Army intelligence and earned a Bronze Star. After his military service, he passed up a chance to practice law in downtown Chicago and moved to Rockford to work as an assistant public defender in Winnebago County. He said his work in steel mills and factories during college and law school pushed him toward a practice in which he could help people.

He had public service in his blood. His father had served on the city council and school board in Whiting, and two of his uncles were mayors. John's own career in public office started in 1974, when he was appointed by Rockford's mayor to fill a vacancy in the city's Third Ward. He ran for reelection the following year, winning a 4-year term. He took a year off after his term ended and, a year later, announced that he would run for mayor.

If you asked him what accomplishment he was most proud of as mayor, John didn't mention new buildings or economic development deals. He was proudest that he had helped the people of Rockford believe in a better future during a dark time. He was proud that he chose not to seek a third term, instead endorsing his protege, then-city administrator Charles Box, who would go on to become Rockford's first Black mayor, serving for three terms.

John remained active in Rockford's civic life. He joined William Charles In-

vestments Ltd. He also worked part-time for Rockford University; as the liberal arts college's first vice president for development, he helped save it from going under during tough times. In 2009, I was honored to nominate John to serve on a Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, an independent, bipartisan panel formed to advise Congress and the U.S. Secretary of Education on making college more affordable. He just never stopped trying to help people.

I will close with this story. On a chilly spring day in 1978, when John was serving on the city council, he helped save the life of a man who jumped off the State Street Bridge. John was in the Rockford Register Star building when he saw the man teetering on the bridge's railing. He took off running, but by the time he reached the bridge, the man had already jumped into the frigid Rock River. With the help of another man and a 16-year-old boy who happened to be passing by, John pulled the man out of the river. The only casualty was the new suit he was wearing, a bit of a luxury for a defense lawyer with six young children.

John McNamara later told a columnist: "I was shaking all the rest of that afternoon—not because I was cold. You just hate to see a guy get that despondent."

That was John McNamara in a nutshell, willing to act boldly yet humbly to give someone else hope. He was a class act who led by example, and he was my friend. Loretta and I offer our condolences to John's wife Barbara, their six children—John, Kate, Dan, Mary, Nell, and Tom and their spouses—and to John and Barbara's 16 grandchildren. He loved them all deeply. He will be missed.

#### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EMERGENCY NURSES ASSOCIATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Senator WICKER, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Emergency Nurses Association. Made up of 51,000 members from all across the globe, the Emergency Nurses Association, or ENA, is the only professional organization dedicated to advancing excellence in emergency nursing and is the world's premier organization for emergency nurses.

Founded in 1970 to set standards for best practices in emergency nursing care, the ENA has provided continuing education programs for emergency nurses, as well as a united voice for nurses involved in emergency care.

Among its accomplishments, ENA has worked successfully to raise awareness and improve outcomes for the Nation's trauma patients. For Americans aged 44 years or younger, traumatic injuries—including car crashes, falls, head injuries, burns, and firearm injuries—are currently the leading cause of

death. Working to improve outcomes for those who have suffered a traumatic injury, ENA offers courses for emergency nurses that provide them with the knowledge, skills, and hands-on training needed to deliver high-quality trauma care. ENA's trauma nursing core course is one such course. Since its inception in 1986, this course has been taken by more than 1 million emergency nurses and is now considered the gold standard for the education of nurses in lifesaving trauma care techniques.

ENA was also at the forefront of supporting the MISSION ZERO Act, or the Military Injury Surgical Systems Integrated Operationally Nationwide to Achieve ZERO Preventable Deaths Act. When this legislation was signed into law last year, it created an innovative program allowing military trauma teams and professionals to work in civilian trauma centers to ensure the highest quality trauma care in both peace and war.

Finally, ENA has been the leader in raising awareness regarding the issue of workplace violence directed towards emergency nurses and other emergency department personnel. At the State level, it advocated for stronger criminal laws to hold those who assault healthcare workers in hospitals accountable for their actions. At the Federal level, ENA has fought for tougher workplace standards to ensure that hospitals provide a safe working environment for their employees.

On the occasion of the Emergency Nurses Association's 50th anniversary, Senator WICKER and I ask our colleagues to join us in extending our deepest gratitude to the ENA and all its members for their commitment to improving the quality of emergency care that has and will continue to save the lives of millions of Americans across our country.

#### USHER SYNDROME

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to talk about a genetic condition called Usher syndrome. Usher syndrome is a rare genetic disease that affects at least 25,000 people in the United States. Usher syndrome causes deafness or hearing loss, as well as a retinal disease that progressively leads to blindness. Some children may be diagnosed at birth, while others are diagnosed at later stages of adolescence, affecting education, employment, and quality of life.

Usher type 1 individuals are born deaf and then learn, often before adolescence, that they are also losing their vision. Usher type 2 individuals are born with moderate to severe hearing loss and then in the prime of their adolescent lives are told that they are losing their vision. Usher type 3 are usually diagnosed during adolescence, leading to the slow loss of both hearing and vision.

At present, there are no treatments or cure for Usher syndrome, but that

could change with awareness and support. Finding a cure has never been more urgent or more achievable. Promising research and positive clinical trials are occurring right now at universities, medical centers, and private laboratories across the country.

Even though there is currently no cure for Usher syndrome, I am proud that Oregonian researchers are leading the way searching for treatments and therapies. The Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health & Science University—OHSU—is conducting the first human study of gene therapy for Usher syndrome, and researchers at the University of Oregon are generating animal models that represent the genotypes of the major Usher patient groups—both necessary steps towards the development of effective treatments. It is a privilege to serve a State that is home to such cutting-edge research into Usher syndrome.

To accelerate this research, the Usher Syndrome Coalition, including Emily Creasy from Oregon, is raising public awareness. Last month, on September 19, they helped recognize the 6th annual Usher Syndrome Awareness Day. The day fell near the autumnal equinox, which marks the start of days that contain more darkness than light, a powerful metaphor for the threat of Usher syndrome. I am proud to support the Usher syndrome community and am committed to doing what I can as Oregon's senior Senator to support researchers hard at work finding treatments and, hopefully, a cure. I am committed to working with my colleagues to raise awareness regarding this disease, and I applaud the hard work of the Usher Syndrome Coalition in making Usher syndrome research a priority at the National Institutes of Health.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO VIC BIRD

• Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize Mr. Vic Bird on the occasion of his retirement. Vic has been a champion for the Oklahoma aviation community for nearly two decades. He most recently served as the director of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission for 18 years, the longest serving director in Oklahoma history.

You would never know it, but back in 2002, Vic Bird was a newcomer to aviation. Nevertheless, there is no one in State government who worked harder to make Oklahoma the aviation capital of America. Vic Bird led the charge on numerous State legislative initiatives that brought aviation employers to Oklahoma, and the proof is in one number. Today, aviation and aerospace is Oklahoma's second largest industry, with an annual economic impact of \$44 billion.

Throughout his tenure at the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, Vic has been a true friend to general aviation, supporting pilots and airports. Vic Bird

was instrumental in making sure Oklahoma State law protected pilots at public-use and military airports by keeping dangerous structures from being built too close to airport infrastructure. Vic Bird promoted airports as anchor institutions supporting economic development and job growth in communities across Oklahoma and joined me in an aerial tour of general aviation airports across Oklahoma back in June 2017.

Before I conclude, I want to highlight two of the awards and recognitions Vic Bird has received that speak volumes of his commitment to aviation. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association awards the Joseph B. "Doc" Hartranft Jr. Award to an individual in government service who has made significant contributions to the advancement of general aviation. Vic Bird was the first and only nonelected official to receive this award. Vic Bird is also the first and only Oklahoman elected to serve as chair of the National Association of State Aviation Officials.

Vic Bird has remained an unwavering passionate advocate for aviation and aerospace in Oklahoma. I know I join his family and all that know him, in thanking him for his years of service and contributions to Oklahoma and our entire aviation community.

Congratulations on your retirement.●

##### TRIBUTE TO DEAN A. COLLETT

• Mr. LEE. Mr. President, today I offer my recognition of the great service of Dean A. Collett to countless Utah students. His service has spanned over six decades, starting in the fall of 1956 when he first walked through the doors of Highland High School. Today, at the age of 92, even through the difficulties of COVID-19, Dean sits at his desk making personal phone calls to each of his students, ensuring nothing less than their academic success. He is a true servant of the people of Utah and one who deserves the highest of honors.

Dean Ashton Collett was born on September 30, 1928, to Richard G. Collett and Amy Ashton Collett in Salt Lake City, UT. Richard Collett was a successful banker, but due to the economic turmoil of the Great Depression, the Collett family, with all five of their children, would move frequently around Salt Lake City looking for work, a hardship that would follow Richard and Amy for much of their lives. From those moments as a child, Dean would dedicate his entire life helping to support his family, working to keep food on the table and later taking care of his mother until her passing. Dean spent his youth working as a paper boy, doing yard work for hire, and later working as a grocery store cashier at Table Supply in the avenues of Salt Lake City.

As the family kept relocating in search of work, Dean attended Emerson Elementary School, Ensign Elementary School, and Washington Elementary School. He progressed through