

In fact, Jennifer, who goes by J.P., was part of Team Merkley before there was a Team Merkley.

In 1998, J.P., who had a passing interest in international affairs, called me out of the blue to ask for an informational interview when I was head of World Oregon. So we got together, and I was immediately impressed by that conversation. So I immediately recruited her for a project that we had funded to archive 50 years' worth of World Oregon's records.

It takes somebody with a real organizational mind and energy to accomplish that kind of task, and once we saw her at work on our team, I knew I would have to do everything I could to keep her with us, and she ended up staying with us in many different roles—from bookkeeper to office manager to programming speakers on international issues.

But we couldn't keep her forever because the international world called to her. The Peace Corps called to her, and she started a new chapter in her life of service when she joined the Peace Corps and headed to Albania as part of the first group of volunteers to reenter the country after civil unrest broke out in 1997.

During her 2 years in Albania, she worked with civil society organizations and with children living on the streets and survivors of human trafficking. She worked on enrichment programs to help at-risk Roma girls, a minority population in the country. She secured \$65,000 to increase participation of disabled citizens in municipal decision making.

Her time in-country was so transformative that after her Peace Corps stint ended, she remained in Albania for another year, working as deputy head of mission for a transnational project to combat child trafficking in Kosovo, Greece, and Albania. In that role, among a whole host of great accomplishments, J.P. struck a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with the Albanian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, which led to the opening of child protection units—child protection units that are still in place and operating to this day.

I can only imagine how many young children have led better lives because J.P. helped open those centers.

So Mary and I arrived here in 2009 and started on this adventure of serving in the Senate, and we pondered: Who can fill this key role, this essential role of scheduling? Who would be the bridge between our office life and our family life? Who would be the extraordinary individual who would serve as a hub for the entire team?

And then we suddenly realized that J.P. was back from Albania and that she was right here in Washington, DC, continuing her terrific work on human trafficking at the Labor Department. It is pretty important work, and we were not sure we could pry her away, steal her away, from that to be on our

Senate team, but, fortunately, we held our breath and she said yes, and we are so lucky to have had her with us this last 14 years.

It was J.P. who initiated my "Good Morning, Oregon" meetings. Every Thursday while we are in session, we open the doors of our conference room to welcome Oregonians who happen to be here in DC for a discussion and a good cup of Stumptown Coffee.

It was J.P. who initiated our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to address unconscious bias, to work to ensure greater inclusivity, to better integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of our team's work, internally and externally.

It was J.P. who organized our annual staff retreats, both in Oregon and in DC, with unique exercises, including this last year's Scrollathon that made us all ponder our key mission and shared commitment to public service.

And when COVID upended life as we knew it, she stepped in, took charge, and innovated new human resource strategies and helped our team pretty seamlessly transition to the scary world of Zoom and Skype and Teams and other countless tools to ensure we could continue to function on behalf of the people of Oregon.

It was J.P. who strived, year after year, to set the atmosphere of competence and graciousness and supportive connectedness as team members navigated the challenges of both our work life and our home life. She loved nurturing team members as they sought to grow and thrive in their careers.

And I think you would be very hard-pressed to find a member of my team over the past 14 years who did not, at some point, go to J.P. for insight or sage advice.

Over time, J.P. grew in her career, taking on ever-newer and expanded parts of our team work. She was no longer doing the day-to-day scheduling, but was our deputy chief of staff, keeping our whole operation running smoothly.

Now, life often travels in circles. J.P. was an integral part of my team at World Oregon; and after serving in the Peace Corps and returning from Albania, she again became an integral part of my team here in Washington, DC.

And now, J.P.'s life is completing a circle. Seventeen years after her Peace Corps work in Albania, she is returning to help the Peace Corps thrive in the position of Executive Secretariat in the Office of the Director. And I could not think of a better person to help organize that team leading the Peace Corps. Their mission is to help build a better world for all, and my dear friend, my family member, J.P., is just the right person to undertake that mission.

J.P., I cannot begin to thank you enough for all you have done in each chapter of service throughout your life: your service at World Oregon, your service in the Peace Corps, your service

following up in that extra year in Albania, your work at the U.S. Labor Department combating human trafficking and, of course, here in the Senate as a founding member of our team. Thank you for all of that terrific work. And we know that the work you are going to continue to do to contribute to making the Peace Corps an incredibly effective organization will be a significant way to help build a better world. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session to be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING TOM EMBERTON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last month, Kentucky lost a statesman, a model gentleman, and one of the key mentors of my early career. Former Kentucky Court of Appeals Judge Tom Emberton of Edmonton, KY, passed away this October in a tragic house fire, a sudden and devastating loss for the entire Commonwealth. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Tom's legacy of public service and paying tribute to his extraordinary career.

Tom was born and raised in south central Kentucky and prioritized service to that distinctive community from the outset of his career. He served a 4-year tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force then returned to the Commonwealth for an undergraduate degree at Western Kentucky University and a law degree from the University of Louisville School of Law. Not long after, he moved to Metcalfe County to serve as county attorney, beginning his long work on behalf of the region.

I first got to know Tom a few years later when, upon returning to Kentucky after a stint in Washington, DC, I got involved with his 1971 gubernatorial campaign. Four years prior, Louie B. Nunn had become the Commonwealth's first Republican Governor in two decades, and Tom bet he could build on his success to bring another four years of conservative leadership to the Commonwealth. Tom's campaign was instructive for me; he traveled all across Kentucky, including to deeply Democratic strongholds, to preach the Republican policies that most Kentuckians agreed with but, historically, did not vote for. Ultimately, Tom couldn't pull out a win that year—my future colleague in the U.S. Senate Wendell Ford was elected—but he earned respect from leaders and voters across Kentucky.

Tom was undeterred by his electoral loss and returned to Metcalfe County

to continue his work on behalf of his neighbors and build his law career. In recognition of Tom's outstanding service to the Commonwealth and ability to breach partisan divides, a Democratic Governor appointed him to a vacancy on the Kentucky Court of Appeals in 1987. Voters reelected him to that position twice, and his peers appointed him to serve as chief judge of the court of appeals, a position he held until 2004. By the time of his retirement, the entire Kentucky legal community recognized this once-upstart conservative as a widely revered senior statesman.

Throughout the course of his career, Tom made sure to expand the scope of his service beyond the courtroom and the ballot box. He maintained lifelong involvement with the WKU community, serving with distinction on the school's board of regents and as the WKU Alumni Association Board President. He received repeated recognition from community organizations based in and around Metcalfe County, including the local chamber of commerce and area development district. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet even named Thomas D. Emberton Bridge in Metcalfe County in his honor.

Along the way, Tom and his wife Julia Lee built an amazing home and family in Metcalfe County. His two children, Laura and Tom Jr., five grandchildren, and recently arrived great-grandchildren were the light of his life. I had the pleasure of visiting the Emberton family over the years and reminiscing with Tom about his campaign days and discussing the current state of politics and policy in the Commonwealth. He and Julia Lee also built a special relationship with my wife, Elaine, that all of us have cherished for many years.

I was shocked to hear of Tom's sudden passing last month in a fire, when he heroically saved his wife's life and perished inside his home. Elaine and I are mourning alongside the entire Emberton family and hope they can find some solace in this difficult time. On behalf of the entire Senate, I honor Tom for his service to Kentucky and offer prayers to the Emberton family as they memorialize Tom's incredible life and career.

TRIBUTE TO HOLLIS ALEXANDER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, following a decade of service as Trigg County Judge-Executive, Hollis Alexander is retiring. He has spent 35 years in service to his constituents in a variety of roles and is now looking forward to spending more time with his wife, children, and grandchildren. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Hollis for his work on behalf of Kentucky and honoring him for his service to the Commonwealth.

Hollis got his start in public service through his work with the Cadiz Police Department, which he led as chief for nearly two decades before entering

elected office. Through his career in law enforcement, he became a well-known face to Trigg County locals. His work also caught the eye of statewide leaders, and when Trigg County's previous judge-executive stepped down to take a seat in the State senate, Kentucky's Governor appointed Hollis as his replacement.

Though originally a Democrat, Hollis joined scores of other Kentucky elected officials to switch his party registration and better reflect the conservative values of most of his constituents. Since his original appointment in 2013, Hollis won reelection twice—first as a Democrat, then as a Republican—and earned the trust and confidence of his neighbors.

Hollis lists Trigg County's fiscal strength as one of his proudest accomplishments in office. Through his successful stewardship of county revenues and expenses, he was able to upgrade local government facilities and equipment. Hollis has left Trigg County's government better than it was when he found it, making a mark on his community that his neighbors will feel for years to come.

Judge Alexander says he is looking forward to spending more time with his family—and especially his four grandchildren—after he takes a step back from his current role at this year's end. I know he certainly deserves it after three-and-a-half decades of fine service to Trigg County. On behalf of my Senate colleagues, I wish Hollis the best of luck in the next step of his life and express my deep gratitude for his service to Kentucky.

TRIBUTE TO HARRY BERRY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after 20 years of service as Hardin County judge-executive, my good friend Harry Berry is retiring. Over the past two decades, he has built a Kentucky-wide reputation for steadfast leadership and selfless service. Today, I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in thanking Judge Berry for his work and wishing him well in his retirement.

Harry took a circuitous route to public service in Hardin County. A Missouri native, he spent much of his early career in the Washington, DC, area, working with the CIA, Army, and other defense agencies to coordinate engineering projects around the world. When Harry decided to retire from that role, he and his wife Jill chose Hardin County as their new home; the county was close to Jill's parents in Hopkins County and offered robust services to the former military personnel who settled in the area after service at Fort Knox.

Harry is a self-described introvert who prefers to approach the world with the quiet, analytical approach he developed as a military engineer rather than the bombast common in politics. Still, he has a keen eye for organization and development, honed through 20 years in the Army and, upon moving

to Hardin County, spotted several local issues he thought he could try his hand at improving. His first run for public office was unsuccessful, but after living in Hardin County for only a few years, he won the county judge-executive race in 2002. He was the first Republican to ever occupy the office.

Twenty years later, Harry says his retail politicking has improved. But his real accomplishments in office have been largely behind the scenes: sound financial management, improved hiring and public services, upgraded government facilities, and extensive economic development spurred by his steady, capable leadership. Under Harry's purview, Hardin County has grown at a quick clip, leveraging its close connections to the Fort Knox military installation to foster new business and growth.

Beyond his public service, Harry has grown roots in Hardin County that will continue to deepen in his retirement. He has leaned into his community's extensive slate of organizations dedicated to caring for veterans, including the Disabled Veterans Association, the VFW, and the Military Officers Association. He promotes philanthropy and volunteerism through the Lions, Masons, and Shriners. As Harry takes a step back from elected office, I am sure these organizations will welcome his interest and energy.

Few leaders can move to a new community and, within only a few years, win an election to be that community's chief elected official. Fewer still can do so without any experience in public office. But Harry did so seamlessly and, 20 years later, has become an indispensable part of Hardin County government. I know I speak for many Kentuckians when I say I am sorry to see him leave this role but thankful for the two decades of service he dedicated to our Commonwealth. On behalf of my Senate colleagues, I congratulate Judge Harry Berry on his well-earned retirement.

TRIBUTE TO LARRY FOXWORTHY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Fleming County Judge-Executive Larry Foxworthy is stepping down after 20 years of work on behalf of his constituents. His keen management of Fleming County's finances and efforts to shore up government services have left a deep mark on his community. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Judge Foxworthy for his sound leadership and congratulating him on his retirement.

Larry and his wife Joyce are both lifelong residents of northeastern Kentucky's Fleming County, part of a region of the Commonwealth noted for its rolling farmland and historic small towns. Larry has dedicated himself to both preserving that area's heritage and charting a course toward a more vibrant future. As the county has grown in population and economic development over the past two decades,