

RECOGNIZING UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS WORLD WAR II VETERAN JOSEPH DEMARCO'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional constituent from my district, Joseph DeMarco. Throughout his life, Joe has embodied a selfless and fearless spirit, resulting in a life rich in stories and memories. I commend Joe for his service to our country and thank him for his great sacrifices and honorable legacy. As he celebrates his 100th birthday, I would like to recognize Joe and wish happiness for him and his family.

A Pennsylvania native, Joe was born and raised in South Philadelphia and still considers it to be "The best place around". A born fighter, Joe picked up boxing at a young age, facing the world without fear. He embodied this spirit in every aspect of his life, and following the attack on Pearl Harbor, decided without hesitation to serve his country. Remarkably, Joe was still only 17, meaning he had to forge his parents' signatures to join the United States Marine Corps. Joe began Boot Camp at Camp Lejeune, but his training was cut short after his father found him and made him come home. Unfettered in his mission, Joe reenlisted 6 months later when he turned 18. He went back to Camp Lejeune and completed boot camp. Joe excelled in the Marines—his lifelong love of fighting served him well in the Marines. Growing up boxing taught him to never back down from a fight, a lesson he carried boldly throughout his time in active duty.

At the start of his service, Joe was sent aboard a ship originally headed for Guadalcanal. However, the ship was redirected to the Panama Canal out of fear of an Axis attack on the horizon. While in Panama, Joe was stationed on watch duty, where he had a remarkably close encounter during a Japanese ambush. This ambush killed a Marine who was on his previous post, a solemn reminder of the danger constantly lurking in the seas. After Panama, Joe was sent to Texas. Once a few years passed, he once again boarded a ship to go to Guadalcanal, but was suddenly redirected back to Panama, on the same track as his first ship years before. Joe stayed in Panama for about another year, serving his country honorably. Despite the discipline and service Joe embodied daily, he never lost his youthful spirit from his days in South Philly. Joe remembers how in Marine Corps, his Sergeant would catch him shooting dice and make him clean the entire barracks with a toothbrush.

Upon returning home to South Philadelphia, Joe worked as a presser in a tailor shop, relishing trips to Atlantic City and attending weekly dances with friends. It was at one of these dances that he met his wife, with whom he raised two daughters and a son. His family faced hardships, including the early passing of his son and daughter. Joe is currently survived by his daughter Paula.

He worked in the garment manufacturing industry for many years. He also worked selling beer at the Phillies games and worked as a waiter at night. He loves Phillies sports, espe-

cially baseball and football. He enjoys trips to Atlantic City to play craps, and he loves to gamble (for better or worse). He also loves the classic crooners, with the greats like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Nat King Cole constantly on play.

I remain deeply appreciative to Joe DeMarco for his life of service and sacrifice for our community, district, and country. His commitment to his fellow neighbors, veterans, and service members alike is a testament to his character and spirit. I am more than honored to recognize him today and wish him nothing but the best for his 100th birthday and the future beyond.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND KATHY COOPER LEDESMA

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Reverend Kathy Cooper Ledesma upon her retirement as the Co-Senior Pastor of the Hollywood United Methodist Church (HUMC), in Los Angeles, California.

Reverend Kathy Cooper Ledesma received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Occidental College in 1982 and a Master of Divinity from the Claremont School of Theology in 1988. Upon completion of her education, Kathy began her service for the California Council of Churches, specializing in education and public policy. Under her outstanding direction as Board Chair, she accomplished several statewide projects on welfare reform faith-based childcare, and interfaith relations. In 2005, Rev. Cooper Ledesma brought her tremendous leadership skills to the University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture where she worked as a project specialist on issues related to faith communities and preschool for all, earning the Boutillier Award for Distinguished Ecumenical Service.

Rev. Cooper Ledesma is an elder and leading force in the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church, as well as a dedicated member of Hollywood 4WRD, a coalition supporting our unhoused neighbors. As one of the founding leaders of the Homeless Task Force of the Hollywood area faith entities (LA VOICE), Kathy welcomes all with unfailing compassion and limitless kindness, providing hygiene packs and meals for the unhoused population, ensuring that everyone is served both physically and spiritually. Her extensive work with the LGBTQ+ community during her time as the Chair of the Community Advisory Panel of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention Unit has helped countless people, as has her service as the Co-Chair of the Bishop's Task Force on Children and Poverty and a member of the Los Angeles County's Safe Surrender Task Force.

Founded in 1909, the Hollywood United Methodist Church has provided unwavering support and spiritual guidance to its congregants for over a century. Serving the Los Angeles United Methodist Church congregation since 2006, Rev. Cooper Ledesma has worked tirelessly to build faith and spirituality in the heart of Hollywood. For over thirty

years, the HUMC has offered supportive services and pastoral counseling for persons and their family members living with HIV/AIDS. The church's installation of the enormous Red Ribbons of Love on both campuses, a universal symbol of awareness and support for those living with HIV/AIDS, shapes the sanctuary to be a place of "hope and love." Kathy's bright spirit cultivates a vibrant and inclusive congregation that celebrates diversity. Under her leadership as Co-Senior Pastor, the HUMC has excelled in outreach towards young urban professionals, progressives, and families with children.

Rev. Cooper Ledesma is a loving mother of two adult children with her late husband, Rev. Rene Ledesma, and a devoted member of the community.

After over four decades of service, it is an honor to pay homage to Rev. Kathy Cooper Ledesma for her contributions to aiding the unhoused population and promoting faith inclusivity. It has been a great privilege to work with Kathy over the years and see her tremendous impact on the community. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this remarkable, well-respected reverend in California's 30th Congressional District, Rev. Kathy Cooper Ledesma.

CONGRATULATING LUPITA MURILLO ON HER WELL-DESERVED RETIREMENT

HON. JUAN CISCOMANI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lupita Murillo on her well-deserved retirement after nearly five decades of dedicated service with KVOA News 4 in Tucson.

During her time at KVOA, Lupita's specialized crime reporting made a significant impact on the Tucson community.

Her remarkable career began in Weslaco, Texas, where she broke barriers as south Texas' first Hispanic female broadcaster.

Beyond her journalistic accomplishments, Lupita has been a tireless advocate and volunteer for organizations such as Las Familias, the People With AIDS Coalition of Tucson, and the Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

Lupita will be missed, but her lasting impact on KVOA will continue to inspire future generations of journalists and community advocates throughout southern Arizona.

I am proud to represent trailblazers like Lupita in my district.

RECOGNIZING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION DRAGOON AND THE SOUTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN—THE SECOND D-DAY IN FRANCE AND THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

HON. MARK E. GREEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the upcoming 80th

Anniversary of Operation Dragoon and the Southern France Campaign—The Second D-Day in France and the liberation of Southern France.

Operation Dragoon began on 15 August 1944 and the subsequent Southern France Campaign lasted until 14 September 1944. The 7th U.S. Army under Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, commanded the VIth U.S. Corps under Major General Lucian K. Truscott, II, comprised of three of the Army's most combat-experienced divisions—the 3rd Infantry Division commanded by Major General John Wilson "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, the 36th Infantry Division commanded by Major General John E. Dahlquist, and the 45th Infantry Division commanded by Major General William W. Eagles, and Corps troops; the 1st Airborne Task Force commanded by Brigadier General Robert T. Frederick, the Canadian-American 1st Special Service Force commanded by Colonel Edwin A. Walker, and French Army B, later to be renamed the 1st French Army, commanded by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) teams were inserted in the months to link up with French Forces of the Interior (FFI, of the Resistance) prior to prepare for the invasion. The landing forces were ably supported by the Mediterranean Allied Air Force under Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker and the Western Naval Task Force under Vice Admiral Henry K. Hewitt, conducted the second largest amphibious landing in Europe on 15 August 1944.

The primary objective of Operation Dragoon was to threaten the southern flank of Nazi forces fighting in northern France. Further objectives were the seizing of the ports of Toulon and Marseille to provide critical logistical support for Allied forces fighting in the whole of France, the introduction of French forces into France, and the stationing of Allied Air Forces in Southern France, to better support combat operations.

Allied military personnel from France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Greece, and Poland participated in Operation Dragoon and provided critical air and naval support to open the second front in Southern France. 885 ships and landing craft, carrying nearly 1,375 smaller landing craft, with their crews, carried 151,000 troops, 21,400 trucks, tanks, tank destroyers, prime-movers, bulldozers, tractors and other vehicles to the beaches. Included were 40,850 French personnel and 2,610 vehicles of the 1st French Army. 444 aircraft sorties and 408 glider sorties delivered 6,488 paratroopers, 2,611 glider troops, 213 pieces of artillery, and 221 vehicles to the target area.

The 1st Airborne Task Force successfully landed near Le Muy, La Motte, and Les Arcs causing serious disarray in German command channels which prevented a rapid coordinated response to the main force landings. Draguignan fell on 16 August. The 1st Special Service Force cleared the offshore islands of Port Cros and Levant to secure the southern flank of the assault. Landing on the morning of 15 August all units successfully overwhelmed German defense and expanded the beachhead. The 3rd Infantry Division cleared the St. Tropez Peninsula, liberating the villages of St. Tropez and Cogolin after landing at Ramatuelle, La Croix-Valmer, and Cavalaire-sur-Mer. The 45th Infantry Division liberated Sainte Maxime and the 36th Infantry Division

liberated St. Raphael. Fighting through the Maures and Esterel hill masses all units reached the Blue Line, the point where the beachhead could no longer be threatened by enemy counterattack. On 17 August the Truscott's VIth Corps launched its aggressive pursuit of German forces and through the speed of its advance prevented the establishment of defensive positions east of the Rhône Valley. The Corps' Task Force Butler, following the historic Route Napoleon through the Maritime Alps, the 36th Infantry Division, and 45th Infantry Division rapidly moved north in an effort to flank and trap the German 19th Army withdrawing up the Rhône Valley with the 45th Infantry Division liberating Barjols and clearing the Valensole Plateau, TF Butler and the 36th Infantry Division liberating Sisteron, Gap, and Grenoble. The 3rd Infantry Division, attacked west along the Argens valley along the Route Nationale (RN) 7, guarding the northern flank of French forces reducing Toulon and Marseille and blocking a possible German counter-attack, in the process liberating Le Luc (in cooperation with the 45th Infantry Division and French Armored Command Sudre)—a vital road junction on RN 7, Brignoles, and numerous communities along the approach to Aix-en-Provence including Vauvenargues and Saint-Marc-Jaumegarde abutting Mont St. Victoire. While Task Force Butler, then the 36th Infantry Division with attached units from the 45th Infantry Division, fought in the Montélimar Battle Square north of the city of Montélimar from 21 to 29 August, the 3rd Infantry Division continued to press against 19th Army rearguard forces, liberating numerous communities including Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Lançon-Provence, Salon-de-Provence, Orange, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Bollène, Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Valreas, Pierrelatte, La Garde-Adhemar and culminated at the important city of Montélimar on 28 August. French Army B liberated Toulon and Marseille on 28 August, taking 1,825 casualties but taking 11,000 Nazi prisoners.

On 29 August the 3rd Infantry Division established contact with the 36th Infantry Division near the villages of Sauzet and La Laupie northeast of the city. The 1st Airborne Task Force and 1st Special Service Force continued to guard the 7th Army's right flank from any German attack from Italy and reduced German forces in the Maritime Alps along the Italian Border—liberating the French Riviera cities of Cannes, Nice and Grasse.

The 19th Army continued its withdrawal towards Lyon, seeking to establish a coherent defensive line to oppose 7th Army's rapid advance, which drove first towards Lyon and then shifted its axis to Dijon. The 7th Army liberated Lyon on 3 September and continued to press northeast to reach the Belfort Gap, the traditional approach to the Rhine River Valley. The 3rd Infantry Division liberated Besançon on 7 September after a tough 3-day fight. The speed of the 7th Army advance prevented the 19th Army's anchoring its defense on Dijon, it therefore withdrew towards the base of the Vosges Mountains. Approaching the Vosges, the VIth Corps' three divisions faced stiffening German resistance. The 3rd Infantry Division liberated Vesoul on 12 September and by 14 September the Corps' three divisions were positioned near the towns of Fougères, Luxeuil, Lure, and Villersexel. French forces made contact with elements of the 3rd Army near Dijon on 11 September. With this junc-

ture of 3rd and 7th Army forces the Southern France Campaign came to an end. The 6th Army Group was activated on 15 September and transferred from the Mediterranean Theater to GEN Eisenhower's European Theater of Operations. French forces under 7th Army control were re-designated the 1st French Army and became a separate command under 6th Army Group control.

Under the aggressive leadership of LTG Patch, MG Truscott, and General Delattre de Tassigny U.S. and Allied forces of the 6th Army Group and its supporting air and naval support severely damaged the German 19th Army and during the 30-day Southern France Campaign moved over 400 miles from the landing beaches in Provence to link up with General Eisenhower's forces fighting their way from Normandy on 11 September 1944. Over $\frac{2}{3}$ of France were liberated in the space of one month. French Forces of the Interior (the Resistance) contributed tremendously to Dragoon's success providing critical intelligence in the preparation for the landings and with countless small unit actions which harassed Nazi forces throughout the campaign. In the 30-day campaign to liberate Southern France the U.S. forces suffered 4,500 battle casualties and 5,300 non-battle casualties Nazi forces are assessed as having 7,000 killed in action, 21,000 wounded in action, and 131,250 prisoners of war.

Medals of Honor were awarded to the following 3rd Infantry Division soldiers during the Southern France Campaign: SSG James P. Connor, 15 August in Cavalaire-sur-Mer, SSG Stanley Bender, 17 August in La Londe-les-Maures; T/5 Robert D. Maxwell 7 September in Besançon; 2LT Raymond Zussman on 12 September in Noroy-le-Bourg, and 1LI John J. Tominac on 12 September in Vesoul. Among the Distinguished Service Cross recipients was a young SSG in the 15th Infantry Regiment, Audie Murphy, whose action came near Ramatuelle on 15 August and who would go on to become the most-decorated soldier and best-known soldier of WWII. Other Medal of Honor recipients were 2LT Stephen R. Gregg from the 36th Infantry Division on 27 August near Montélimar and 2LT Almond E. Fisher of the 45th Infantry Division on 12–13 September near Grammont.

Unit awards included Presidential Unit Citations to the following 3rd Infantry Division units: 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment for its performance in Montélimar on 27 August embroidered Montélimar and the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment for Besançon 6–7 September embroidered Besançon; and to the 36th Infantry Division the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry 15–16 August embroidered Southern France and the 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment 26–29 August for fighting embroidered Montélimar; and Cannon Company, 442nd Infantry Regiment for the full campaign embroidered Southern France.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the entire House of Representatives join me in congratulating and thanking the surviving veterans of Operation Dragoon and the Southern France Campaign on the occasion of the upcoming 80th anniversary of this highly successful operation which liberated Southern France and played a critical role in the Allied victory in Europe in WWII.

CONGRATULATING JAMES W.
THOMPSON

HON. EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize James W. Thompson for his record-breaking catch. A native of St. Simons, 21-year-old James set a new state record for an almaco jack caught on July 28th.

Measuring in at a whopping 27 pounds and 8 ounces, it broke the previous record by 4 pounds. This is no small feat. The almaco jack is known for its strength and stamina, humbling anglers who do not take it seriously. With this catch, James proved that he is a skilled fisherman.

This is the third time in the past year alone that the record for almaco jack has been broken. It is a reminder that Georgia's coastal waters provide exceptional fishing for anglers of all ages.

It's important that we maintain the health and biodiversity of Georgia's waters, so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy one of our states' favorite pastimes.

CELEBRATING ROBERT WATTS'
90TH BIRTHDAY

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Robert Watts on his 90th birthday. Known as Bobby to many, Mr. Watts is revered for his commitment to the Buffalo community, his entrepreneurial spirit, and his selfless service to our country.

Born on September 2, 1934, Mr. Watts grew up in Buffalo, New York with his parents, Luther and Lola Watts, and his five siblings. After graduating from Seneca High School, Mr. Watts enlisted in the United States Navy in 1951. Stationed in Korea, Mr. Watts served his country with pride until his honorable discharge in 1959.

After his service in the military, Mr. Watts returned to his hometown of Buffalo. Here, he worked diligently at Bethlehem Steel, Curtiss-Wright Corporation, and New York State Thruway Authority and the Department of Corrections. Mr. Watts' exceptional work ethic and commitment to service shone through in every role he held.

Embracing his entrepreneurial ambitions, Mr. Watts opened the Stadium Liquor Store at the corner of Best Street and Jefferson Avenue, by the historic War Memorial Stadium, the then-home of the Buffalo Bills. For nearly 15 years, Mr. Watts' store was a community fixture, providing outstanding service to thousands of loyal customers and fans.

Following his time as a business owner, Mr. Watts joined the NFTA as a bus driver. He always engaged in friendly conversations with travelers, bringing a smile to passengers' days. After a long and successful career, Mr. Watts entered a well-deserved retirement in 1999.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Mr. Watts is deeply committed to his faith. As

a lifelong member of the Pilgrim Baptist Church, Mr. Watts is a cherished friend and mentor to all who attend the church.

Today, Mr. Watts is a devoted and loving husband, father, and brother. He continues to be an inspiration to all who know him, sharing his compassion and dedication to serving others. Please join me in celebrating Mr. Robert Watts on his 90th birthday and thanking him for his service to our country and to our Buffalo community.

CONGRATULATING DEA TUCSON
OFFICE FOR BEING RECOGNIZED
AT THE U.S. INTERDICTION CO-
ORDINATOR AWARDS

HON. JUAN CISCOMANI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the DEA's Tucson District Office EG-46 for their recognition at the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator Awards.

Strengthening border security and immigration enforcement, while ensuring public safety, is a must for our border communities.

These brave men and women put their lives on the line for us every day, serving on the frontline and ensuring the safety of our communities.

Their hard work and dedication are vital in combating cartels, stopping the flow of drugs, and protecting the citizens of southern Arizona.

In 2023, the Tucson District Office EG-46 conducted 45 drug and drug conspiracy investigations.

One of their major efforts was the DEA Initiative "Operation Overdrive" in April 2023, during which this dedicated group arrested approximately 80 percent of their identified targets.

They seized 1.1 million fentanyl pills, 26.4 pounds of fentanyl powder, and 42 pounds of methamphetamine—equating to 4.26 million deadly doses of fentanyl and 78,000 deadly doses of methamphetamine.

I am truly grateful for the relentless efforts and their commitment to protecting our community.

I thank them for their service and dedication to protecting our Arizona's District 6.

TRIBUTE TO FAIRFAX HIGH
SCHOOL'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Fairfax High School in Los Angeles, California upon its 100th Anniversary.

Fairfax High School first opened its doors in 1924, welcoming students onto its campus. It was named after Lord Fairfax, an inspiring mentor and friend to future U.S. President George Washington. The school's first Principal was Rae G. Van Cleve, who served until 1938. Originally designed as an agricultural and mechanical school that taught "practical" skills, programs on the 28-acre campus in-

cluded architecture, forestry, agronomy, and landscaping gardening, as students in that area lived in what was then a largely rural part of Los Angeles. In a few short years, and after the gymnasium and a fine arts building were added, the high school was already an established, esteemed institution in the Fairfax area of Los Angeles.

During World War II, many Fairfax students and alumni joined the war effort by enlisting in the military, selling bonds and holding recycling drives. In the 1950's the school had a large Jewish student body and Modern Hebrew classes were taught. The 1960's and 1970's saw many foreign languages being offered including Latin, German, Hebrew and Chinese. While most of the original campus facilities were demolished in 1966 due to new seismic standards, the iconic rotunda and historic auditorium were spared by preservationists and retrofitted. In 1981 the Fairfax Magnet Center for Visual Arts opened and remains the only visual arts magnet in the Los Angeles Unified School District and in 1984, Dr. Virginia Uribe founded Project 10 at Fairfax High School, the nation's first on-site program that welcomed and supported LGBTQ+ students in a school setting. In the mid-1990's, a group of local theater artists held the first Melrose Trading Post flea market to support art, community and small business. Because of its success, the weekly marketplace now hosts hundreds of unique vendors featuring local dancers, musicians and thespians, and works with Greenway Arts Alliance to support Fairfax High School's leadership and arts programs.

For a century, Fairfax High School has provided thousands of students with an excellent education. The school has produced notable alumni across many fields, including well-known late actors Mickey Rooney, Carole Lombard, and Ricardo Montalban, former Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, molecular biologist and public health advocate Marion Nestle, and former Los Angeles Clippers basketball player Craig Smith.

I ask all Members to join me today in honoring Fairfax High School upon its centennial celebration. The entire Los Angeles community joins me in thanking the school for the outstanding educational opportunities it has provided for the youth of California's 30th Congressional District.

RECOGNIZING STEVE STIRLING

HON. EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 9, 2024

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and thank Steve Stirling, who is retiring as CEO of Medicine for All People (MAP) International.

MAP International is a Christian, non-profit, global health organization that provides medicine and health supplies to those in need.

This organization is headquartered in Atlanta and does amazing work worldwide. Steve has successfully led this organization since 2014.

Steve has an impressive leadership background in both the non-profit and corporate spaces, and he brought that valuable experience to MAP for over a decade of loyal service.