

CELEBRATING REVEREND DR. F.N. WILLIAMS' 90TH BIRTHDAY

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to honor a great force in our community in Houston, Texas, in Acres Homes. This coming Sunday, he will celebrate 90 years of age, but decades in the ministry, Reverend Dr. F.N. Williams, whose father preceded him in the ministry, whose sons have gone on into the ministry.

He is a pastor of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in Acres Homes, one of the oldest churches in our State.

He is a warrior. He is a fighter for civil rights and civil justice. He was there on the front lines when the Honorable Barbara Jordan was elected and Mickey Leland. But even before that, he was one who would lead the community on addressing their rights and the right to stand against inequality.

He was a friend of President George H.W. Bush, who happened to represent Acres Homes before we had the 18th Congressional District, which I represent. They had a relationship. They fought against drugs in that community.

And, as well, he believes in education. He believes in young people. He has a church that reaches those who are in need.

So tonight, this evening, I am delighted to honor his beloved wife and his family members, but to say to him: I salute you on your 90th birthday. Reverend Dr. F.N. Williams, you are deserving and, yes, you are a great American.

COWBOY RIDES AWAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is the final showdown scene, and while there are no swinging doors or clicking of spurs, eerie signs and sounds of silence or dust swirling behind me, I stand here today in the people's House to speak probably for the last time.

If they would let me cue the soundtrack, the king of country, George Strait, would sing: "Oh, the last goodbye's the hardest one to say. This is where the cowboy rides away."

I gave my very first speech as a Member of Congress from Texas on February 1, 2005, after I had come back from Iraq to see their first free elections ever. I went to Iraq, along with Chris Shays, a Congressman from Connecticut. Since that first speech, some might say I haven't shut up, and, well, they are probably right, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke, I understand according to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, over 2,000

times in my 14 years serving the good people of the Second Congressional District of the State of Texas—some very well received, I might add. My staff might say, however, some not so much.

They have gotten a few calls over the years asking, "Did your boss really say that?"—more often than not, "What in the world was he talking about?"

I have probably spoken more about Texas and the way we do things there than anyplace else. You, Mr. Speaker, being from Louisiana, understand how important it is to love where we are from.

And I say things a little bit different than folks up here in "Warshington." And, yes, that is "Warshington" with an R.

I am not going to relive every moment in a sad song good-bye, but there are a few things that I came here to say and do in my 14 years, and I would like to say some of those again.

First of all, thank you, thank you to the people of the State of Texas for trusting me to be their voice, their advocate here in this amazing place, the United States House of Representatives. It has been an honor of a lifetime.

I came here to advocate for issues that are important, important back home to the folks in Texas. And through the mud and the blood and the beer, I fought day and night to make sure that the interests of Texas came first. And there are a lot of them, Mr. Speaker.

I vowed that crime victims would have a voice; that those who serve and have served our great Nation in the military would receive the honors that they earn and deserve; to protect our privacy and make sure our most important right to freedom of speech was fiercely protected, protected by us in the House of Representatives.

If I look back, my order of priorities came about at an early age. I owe my career in public service to my grandmother, my mother's mother, and I can probably credit her with my outspoken opinions. She instilled in me the non-negotiable duty to serve.

That is what life is all about: to serve, to serve others. So I have. I have always been in public service.

I was in the United States Air Force Reserves. Then I taught school. That was too hard, so I went to law school, and I became a lawyer and a prosecutor in the district attorney's office in Houston, where I was the chief felony prosecutor. I spent 22 years on the district court bench in Houston, Texas, trying criminal cases, and now I am here in the United States Congress.

My grandmother educated me in the ways of the world more than anyone in my life, but unfortunately, to her dismay, I broke her staunchest Southern belief: being a Democrat. I don't know that she ever forgave me for being a Republican. Probably, she hasn't. She is still rolling over in her grave wondering where she went wrong all those years.

I was a Reagan Republican from the first time I saw Reagan speak at the 1968 Republican Convention in Miami Beach, when I was a representative from the College Students for Reagan.

My dyed-in-the-wool Democrat grandmother couldn't stand it, and she let me know, but that is one of the things I admired most about her. Well, to put it nicely, she was bluntly truthful. I never doubted what she said. And if she had told me that it was raining in my house, I would have run home and started putting plastic over the furniture.

She taught me to say: "And that is just the way it is." I think we can all agree I took that lesson pretty well.

Another person in my life who taught me a lesson or two—some hard ones growing up, I might add—was my dad, Virgil Poe. Now 93, he hasn't stopped giving me advice, and he doesn't mind giving anybody advice whether they ask for it or not. He really is the greatest man I know. A charter member of the Greatest Generation, he went off to the great World War II when he was 18. He represents everything that is good and right about our country.

He and my mom, who is also 93, have been married for 73 years. She gives me quite a bunch of advice as well. They still live in Houston, not far from where I grew up. They still go to the same church, and they set examples for our family on how to do things the right way.

They are from a generation that believed in God, country, and family, and good old-fashioned American hard work.

Although they both grew up very poor in the Depression, they never thought they were victims, but they believed that here, only here in America, could they and would they have a good life. It was from them that I learned how important it was to be an American.

We are unusual people in an unusual country, and we should be proud of that fact. Never should we apologize for who we are. We must never forget that what sets us apart from the rest of the world—it is a basic word. We use it a lot, but it has great meaning. And that word is "freedom."

The most important right we have as Americans is, really, the freedom of speech. It is first because it is the most important. It is the very core of who we are as people. Without the First Amendment, freedom of religion, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, the right to petition government, and the rest of the amendments really don't make a lot of sense.

Of course, the Second was written to protect the First. Some of my friends in Texas believe that the Second Amendment is more important than the First, but it is not. It is the Second Amendment because it is to protect the First.

Nowhere in the Constitution is the word "fair" mentioned. Speech is to be free, not necessarily fair. Fair means