

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 19, 2019, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Virginia Flores, a detailee of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, be granted floor privileges for the debate and action on H.R. 1158 and H.R. 1865.

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

TRIBUTE TO HAROLD THUNE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in 1906, two brothers named Nikolai and Matthew Gjelsvik arrived at Ellis Island from Norway. The only English they knew were the words "apple pie" and "coffee," which evidently they learned on the boat on the way over.

The immigration officials at Ellis Island thought that their name would be too difficult to spell and pronounce in this country, so they asked them to change their name. The names, when they got to this country, were Nikolai Gjelsvik, spelled G-J-E-L-S-V-I-K, and his brother was named Matthew.

So the immigration officials asked them to change their name, and they picked the name from the farm where they worked near Bergen, Norway, which was called the Thune farm. So Nikolai Gjelsvik became Nick Thune, my grandfather.

He and his brother worked on the railroad as they built it west across South Dakota. They learned English and saved up enough money to start a small merchandising company and then later a hardware store in Mitchell, SD. To this day, there is a Thune Hardware in Mitchell, although the family sold it many years ago.

In 1916, Nick Thune married an Iowa girl who had moved to South Dakota to teach school, and they had three sons. The middle son, Harold, will turn 100 in a few days, and that middle son happens to be my dad.

Like many of my colleagues, I send congratulatory notes to constituents for big birthdays and anniversaries. I never thought I would have the occasion to send one to my dad. I figured for this one, instead of writing a letter, I would come to the floor.

My dad is a World War II veteran. He is a member of that "greatest generation," and he shares the qualities of so many in that generation—humility, patriotism, quiet service. Dad was a Navy pilot who flew Hellcats off the USS *In-*

trepid, and he was an excellent pilot. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down four enemy planes in one engagement. As a side note to that, that accommodation was issued to him by none other than ADM John McCain, Senator John McCain's grandfather.

But my dad didn't and still doesn't talk about his own exploits. In fact, had it not been for my mom, I am quite sure I never would have known about my dad's record in World War II. I did have the opportunity to interview him for the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project a few years back, and he shared some wonderful details about his service. As usual, his focus was never on his own achievements but on those of his fellow pilots.

I also probably would never have learned what an outstanding athlete my dad was, had it not been for my mom. My dad grew up in the small town of Murdo, SD, during the Great Depression. They didn't have a lot, but there were a lot of basketball hoops around Murdo. They put them on barns, poles, garages, and my dad learned to play. In fact, he learned to play so well that he took his high school basketball team to the State championship game where, although they lost narrowly, he was named the tournament's most valuable player.

My dad had hoped to attend college in South Dakota, but there was a doctor in Murdo named Joseph Murphy who thought my dad was good enough to play at the University of Minnesota and used his contacts to get my dad up to Hibbing Junior College in hopes that the Minnesota Gophers would notice him. Well, they did. He went to the Twin Cities on a scholarship and played three seasons for the Gophers. He was the team's most valuable player in his junior year. In fact, he was high point man in Madison Square Garden on his birthday, December 28, 1940.

In another example of how things have changed through the years, my dad said that when his team came out to play for the second game that night at the Garden, you couldn't see the upper deck because of all the cigarette smoke. Some things do change for the better.

While at the University of Minnesota, my dad met a girl who served sodas at a drugstore just off campus. They were married within a couple of years while my dad was in flight training for the Navy, and they spent the next almost 69 years together.

After the war, they came back to South Dakota. My dad had been thinking about a career in the Navy, but his dad asked him to come back and run the family hardware store. My dad said that his heart sank, but he knew that is what he had to do. So he went home and went to work for his dad. The hardware store did OK for a while, but started to struggle. My dad sold it and went back to school and got a teaching degree.

All parents are teachers for their kids, but my parents were teachers sev-

eral times over. Kids usually get a break from their parents when they are at school. My dad was a teacher at my high school. He was also a coach and the athletic director, and he drove the bus. My mom was the school librarian. So I think it is safe to say that my brothers and sister and I were pretty much always under the watchful eye of my parents. I have to say that I never had my dad for a class in high school, but my brother Rich did. Rich was the valedictorian of his high school class, and the only B he got in high school was from my dad. That was my dad for you. He never showed any preference or gave any of his kids better treatment than anybody else. In fact, some of us might argue that he gave us a harder time because we were his kids. But he believed very firmly that you had to earn your achievements.

As a coach, my dad taught us about being a team player. He made it clear that being on a team was not about building your personal statistics but about making the players around you better. It is a lesson I have carried throughout my life and one that I try to live by every day.

A few years ago, the Jones County School District in Murdo named the auditorium in Murdo after my dad in recognition of his service and achievements at the school. It was particularly special since my dad was one of the volunteers who originally built the auditorium back in the 1950s. My dad would tell me the story that he was more scared up on the scaffolding of that building than he had ever been flying off a carrier during World War II.

You might think that with my dad as coach and athletic director, sports were the main focus around our house. They certainly were a big part of our lives. But my mom was determined that we would grow up to be well-rounded people, and my dad always supported her in that. They worked hard to ensure that we grew up with a perspective on life that went beyond just the latest sporting event. Mom made us take piano lessons and, during the summers, come in from outside and read for an hour every day. We complained at the time, but I know all of us today are grateful to her and my father for their investments in that.

Mom and Dad made a good team. Mom was an optimist, and Dad was a pessimist—or, as he would put it, a realist—and they balanced each other out well. We didn't have material riches growing up, but we were beyond rich in those things that money can't buy but that lend purpose, joy, and meaning to life. All of us Thune kids are very, very grateful for that heritage.

I can't close without talking about something that was life-changing for my parents, and that was their strong faith in Christ. My dad always had real discernment and wisdom in no small part because of his daily dependence upon God in his life. God blessed him with it.