

Stewart made some of the greatest pictures of all-time. I believe, Mr. President, that it's the contrast between Jimmy Stewart and so many of those who live and work in Hollywood today. It's hard to imagine anyone out there capturing America's heart the way Jimmy Stewart did, and via his countless films, still does. It's as John Meroney put it, it isn't because Jimmy played great characters. It's because of the way Jimmy Stewart lived his life.

So, Mr. President, in commemoration of the birthday of an American original, James Maitland Stewart, I ask unanimous consent that the text of Mr. Meroney's column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the column was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, May 20, 1997]

A HERO LARGER THAN THOSE HE PORTRAYED
(By John Meroney)

Beverly Hills, Calif.—James Stewart turns 89 today, and he will mark his birthday in a fitting manner—quietly at home, without the trappings of celebrity that he has avoided his entire life. It's also fitting that a man whose movies celebrate middle American values has lived in the same, rather plain Tudor-style house on a block absent the typical L.A. glitz for almost 50 years.

Mr. Stewart is not just one of the greatest American movie actors of all time, he's also probably the last cultural icon from his generation. Although it helps, working with directors like Ford, Wilder, DeMille and Hitchcock doesn't necessarily bring such exalted status. Nor does having your face projected 50 feet tall on movie screens for four decades. Many others have been that fortunate, yet are now forgotten. The parts you play, the message you carry, the life you live—that's what gives audiences what Mr. Stewart calls the "little tiny pieces of time that they never forget."

It was the director Frank Capra, an Italian immigrant who had a love affair with America, who gave Mr. Stewart the roles that stand out as eloquent and intelligent celebrations of American ideals and principles. Perhaps the best of these was found in Capra's 1939 feature "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," in which Mr. Stewart played Jefferson Smith, an idealistic young man who becomes a U.S. senator only to have his hopes shattered when he discovers that his political heroes are dishonest. In a town where politics is a serious game, he's told, players have to check their ideals at the door. When he challenges this orthodoxy, Smith learns lessons the likes of which Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas could appreciate. But in the end, Smith triumphs, justice prevails, and a political machine is destroyed.

The establishment wasn't amused. Halfway through the Constitution Hall premiere, senators and congressmen began walking out. Members of the press corps, portrayed as elite snobs with their own agendas, were outraged. The Senate majority leader, Alben W. Barkley, called the movie a "grotesque distortion, as grotesque as anything I have ever seen." Ambassador Joe Kennedy wired Columbia Pictures President Harry Cohn from London and pleaded with him to block the European distribution, fearful it would be used as propaganda by the Axis powers.

Moviegoers in America and abroad saw "Mr. Smith" differently. In France, it was the last English-language film to be shown before the Nazi ban in 1942. Audiences there

spontaneously erupted with standing ovations during Stewart's scene at the Lincoln Memorial. Observed one reporter: "It was as though the joys, suffering, love and hatred, the hopes and wishes of an entire people who value freedom above everything, found expression for the very last time."

Like some of his roles, Jimmy Stewart's life also symbolizes the American dream. Born near the Allegheny mountains in the coal mining town of Indiana, Pa., he was raised by parents who instilled in him values Hollywood couldn't corrupt. His father ran the local hardware store, which was, for Mr. Stewart, "the center of the universe." When he won the Best Actor Oscar for "The Philadelphia Story" in 1941, he remembers, "It was 3:45 [a.m.] when I got home and the phone rang. It was my father: 'I hear on the radio they gave you a prize or something. What is it, a plaque or a statue?' I told him it was a sort of a statue. He said, 'Well, send it home to me and I'll put in the hardware store window.' So the next day, I got it, packed it up, and sent it. It was there for 20 years."

Drafted in 1941—"I keep saying that's the only lottery I ever won"—Mr. Stewart became the commander of an Eighth Air Force squadron, and a genuine war hero. After flying some 25 missions over enemy territory with a copy of Psalm 91 that his father gave him in his pocket, he returned to Hollywood in 1945 as Col. Stewart, and was promptly decorated with the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross. Active in the reserves until 1968, Jimmy Stewart retired with the rank of brigadier general. Of his combat experience, and the horrors of war, Gen. Stewart once said, "Everybody was scared. You just had to handle that. I prayed a lot."

During the 1940s and 1950s, while making such popular films as "It's a Wonderful Life," "Rear Window" and "Harvey," Mr. Stewart found that his traditional conservative political beliefs were becoming increasingly unpopular among his colleagues. Hearings by the House Un-American Activities Committee and its foray into Hollywood proved troublesome for Mr. Stewart because of his staunch anticommunism. It tested his long friendship with Henry Fonda, an outspoken liberal critical of HUAC. But Mr. Fonda couldn't resist his friend's intrinsic decency, and they agreed not to discuss politics to preserve their friendship. Mr. Fonda also understood that Mr. Stewart's beliefs had not come cheap. Unlike many families here who have escaped making the sacrifices that freedom often demands, the Stewarts lost a son in Vietnam when their oldest was killed in 1969.

The authenticity in Jimmy Stewart's personal life, so evident in his film career, seems to be a rarity in Hollywood. "There was something so totally real in his own way," Kim Novak, his co-star in "Vertigo," told me. "How often can you find somebody who's spent his whole life in Hollywood but represents so much of America?"

Director Ron Howard acted with Mr. Stewart in "The Shootist," a 1976 film that teamed them with the Duke. "John Wayne was sort of a mythological figure," says Mr. Howard. "Stewart wasn't aspiring to that. He was a character for us to relate to."

The way Jimmy Stewart has lived his 89 years is an example today's celebrities—and every American, for that matter—would do well to emulate. When asked in a documentary on his life how he wanted to be remembered, Mr. Stewart answered: "A guy who believed in hard work, and decent values, love of country, love of family, love of community, love of God."

George C. Scott, Mr. Stewart's co-star in "Anatomy of a Murder," and now one of his neighbors here, summed it up best, albeit

sadly, when he told me: "They don't make them like that anymore. Hollywood misses them already, I'll tell you that."+

REPORT OF THE DISAPPROVAL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STUDENT OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP ACT OF 1998—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 128

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States; which was ordered to lie on the table:

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1502, the "District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1998."

If we are to prepare our children for the 21st Century by providing them with the best education in the world, we must strengthen our public schools, not abandon them. My agenda for accomplishing this includes raising academic standards; strengthening accountability; providing more public school choice, including public charter schools; and providing additional help to students who need it through tutors, mentors, and after-school programs. My education agenda also calls for reducing class size, modernizing our schools and linking them to the Internet, making our schools safe by removing guns drugs, and instilling greater discipline.

This bill would create a program of federally funded vouchers that would divert critical Federal resources to private schools instead of investing in fundamental improvements in public schools. The voucher program established by S. 1502 would pay for a few selected students to attend private schools, with little or no public accountability for how those funds are used, and would draw resources and attention away from the essential work of reforming the public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of the District's students. In short, S. 1502 would do nothing to improve public education in the District of Columbia. The bill won't hire one new teacher, purchase one more computer, or open one after-school program.

Although I appreciate the interest of the Congress in the educational needs of the children in our Nation's Capital, this bill is fundamentally misguided and a disservice to those children.

The way to improve education for all our children is to increase standards, accountability, and choice within the public schools. I urge the Congress to send me legislation I have proposed to reduce class size, modernize our schools, end social promotions, raise academic standards for all students, and hold school systems, schools, and staff accountable for results.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, May 20, 1998.