

TRIBUTE TO 1998 SOUTH CAROLINA DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INC.

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 1998

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. On the occasion of its 1998 South Carolina District Conference which will be held in Orangeburg, S.C. beginning October 22nd.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity was founded at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. It is a service fraternity which employs its members to discount evil, destroy all prejudices, and preserve the sanctity of the home, the personification of virtue, and the chastity of women.

This year's conference, being held in my district, is designed to promote the empowerment of youth through education, appreciative concepts of self, a strong sense of duty, discipline, and love for all mankind.

Mr. Willie Jefferson serves as the District Director and Mr. J. Anthony Moorer and Mr. Henry L. Robinson are the co-chairmen of the 1998 conference.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the South Carolina chapters of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. for their accomplishments. And I ask that my colleagues join me in wishing them great success with next week's 1998 South Carolina District Conference.

TRIBUTE TO THE HMONG AND LAO PEOPLE

HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 1998

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, in recent years, for the first time in their long and proud history, the Hmong and Lao people were honored by Members of Congress and U.S. officials at national recognition ceremonies in Washington, DC. Many people from the Central Valley and around the nation worked to organize and participate in these historic ceremonies.

The Lao Veterans of America National Recognition Day ceremonies were held for the first time, in both 1997 and 1998, at the Vietnam War Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. They were organized by the nation's largest non-profit Hmong and Lao veterans organization, the Lao Veterans of America, Inc., of Fresno, California, which is headquartered in my Congressional district. I was honored to participate and lend support to these important ceremonies in which many people from the Central Valley participated. Indeed, it has given me great pride to join with U.S. officials and American veterans to honor the courageous Hmong and Lao soldiers and their families for their crucial role in the U.S. "Secret Army" assisting American clandestine and military operations during the Vietnam War. In attendance were many Members of Congress as well as current and former State Department, Defense Department and CIA officials associated with the Hmong and Lao people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and recognize a number of important people from the

Central Valley and across the United States who contributed to the enormous success of these national events including Major General Vang Pao, Major General Ron Markarian, Major General Paul Carroll, Colonel James Arthur, Colonel Wangyee Vang, Major Thai Vang, Captain Grant McClure, Captain Song Pao Yang, Colonel Thai Vang, Yer Vang, Chertzong Vang, Chong Bee Vang, Ying Vang, Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt and Philip Smith. The patriotic contributions of these individuals and many others, as well as the leadership efforts of the Lao Veterans of America and the Lao Family Community organization, helped to raise awareness among U.S. policymakers and the American people about the important wartime sacrifices of the Hmong and Lao combat veterans. I would, therefore, like to include in the RECORD the following article from the Washington Times.

[From the Washington Times, May 14, 1997]

HMONG VETERANS TO RECEIVE MEDALS

(By Ben Barber)

Thousands of ethnic Hmong veterans who fought with the United States in Laos during the Vietnam War will receive congressional medals when they assemble at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the first time today.

About 4,000 veterans—part of the 100,000 Hmong who came as refugees to the United States after the Communists took power in 1975 in Laos—are expected to participate at the ceremony. The Vietnam Veterans National Medal will be awarded to 2,500 people.

Several congressmen and former CIA and Pentagon officials who fought with them will present the medals, said Philip Smith, Washington director of the Lao Veterans of America.

The Hmong will then march across the Potomac River to Arlington National Cemetery to symbolize their exodus across the Mekong River to Thailand after the Communist victory in 1975.

Tomorrow the Hmong will return to Arlington National Cemetery to unveil the first war memorial to the Hmong and Lao veterans and their American advisers.

"I think it is important because I think we are going to show that we have done some critical work for the United States, and this is the first and only time we get together and show it," said Xeng Ly, 41, who served as a field medic in the war.

He said that after the defeat of the American-allied anti-Communist forces in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, he crossed the Mekong River and spent 15 months in a refugee camp at Nong Khai, Thailand, before coming to the United States. Five years later his family followed. They now live in Sterling, where three children are in school.

Part of the reason that the Hmong are coming to Washington is the fear that many benefits are going to be cut under a stringent new immigration law limiting benefits to noncitizens, said Mr. Xeng.

"Some of the Hmong are elderly and can't speak English. They can't pass the citizenship exam and will be cut off from help," Mr. Smith said.

Some of the Hmong will meet with congressmen and congressional staffers this evening.

The Hmong also want the United States to withhold most-favored-nation trading status for Laos unless it permits international human rights observers to enter the country. The Hmong who remain in Laos—an estimated 300,000—reportedly still face persecution.

The Hmong-Americans also want the new U.S.-funded Radio Free Asia to add Hmong language programs to its broadcasts, Mr. Smith said.

The Hmong served under a joint mission operated by the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense and Agency for International Development. They served as spotters for bombings for Communist forces and in other combat roles.

With the declassification of documents about the war era, from 1961 to 1973, more facts are coming out about the Hmong role.

Mr. Smith estimates the secret army could have totaled 100,000 people. By the end of the war, because of many deaths, there were many young boys in uniform fighting for the secret army.

President Reagan signed the bill authorizing the medals for the Hmong in 1986 to honor Vietnam veterans and those who served with them in Southeast Asia. But it took 11 years for the medals to be awarded because the Hmong remained, in some sense, still forgotten, said Mr. Smith.

"I think the Hmong are still suffering from the covert nature of the war," he said.

The memorial to be unveiled tomorrow in Arlington will bear the following inscription:

"Dedicated to the U.S. Secret Army; Laos, 1961-73; In memory of the Hmong and Lao combat veterans and their American advisors who served freedom's cause in Southeast Asia."

The memorial also says in Lao and Hmong language, "You will never be forgotten."

TRIBUTE TO AUSTIN CUNNINGHAM

HON. FLOYD SPENCE

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 1998

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding South Carolinian, Austin Cunningham. This retired business executive has dedicated himself to the community of Orangeburg and to the State of South Carolina.

As a young man, Austin Cunningham, went to work to help support his family when his father died. He worked during the day and went to both high school and college at night, earning a law degree from the University of Virginia in 1940. During his business career, Mr. Cunningham has been the president of five companies and he has owned two manufacturing plants in South Carolina. President Reagan recognized Mr. Cunningham for his work with the Jobs Tax Credit Program and he has been involved with the administrations of former Governor Carroll Campbell and Governor David Beasley in improving race relations in our State. He has also contributed his time and efforts in the Orangeburg area on behalf of: Crime Watch, Crime Stoppers, the People's Assault on Drugs (PAD), as well as the collaboration between South Carolina State University and the South Carolina Philharmonic, which has resulted in an annual three concert satellite series.

Due to his impressive civic contributions, Mr. Cunningham has been named as an "Outstanding Older South Carolinian," by the Lower Savannah Region Aging Advisory Committee, representing a six-country region. He is now a nominee for the State title, which will be determined in November. Also, Mr. Cunningham was recently recognized as the Orangeburg, South Carolina "Citizen of the Year" for 1998.

I have known Austin Cunningham for many years. In addition to his civic involvement, I