

HONORING FRAN AGNES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, at this hour, the men and women of our Armed Forces face great dangers in the Middle East. We are thinking of them and praying for them in the challenges they encounter. As a nation, we have faced many conflicts before, and we have relied upon the bravery, skill, and honor of our military personnel.

Today I am honored to share with my colleagues and with the American people the example of a remarkable man named Fran Agnes, who served his country and his fellow veterans and their families for many decades.

I know his name is familiar to many of my colleagues and to anyone who has worked on veterans issues. I am sad to report that Fran Agnes passed away on February 9 of this year. He was surrounded by his loving family.

I suspect that if Fran were here today at the start of this new war, he would say, "Make sure we are prepared to take care of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen we send over there. They need to know, and their families need to know, that we will be there for them."

Today, I want to pay tribute to Fran Agnes and discuss a bill that bears his name. I am especially honored that Fran's family members and friends are here in Washington, DC, today.

I don't recall exactly when or where I met Fran, but it is a sure bet that he walked up to me, shook my hand, smiled, and said: "You don't know me, but I'm Fran Agnes and I want to help you help veterans."

Boy, he wasn't kidding. As I look at the things Fran worked on over the years, that is exactly what he did.

For example, 7 or 8 years ago Fran started talking to me about the importance of making honor guards available at the funerals of veterans. We talked about the nearly 30,000 World War II veterans who pass away every month—who take with them an important part of our history. Fran was upset that we as a nation were allowing veterans to be laid to rest without the appropriate honors.

We discovered that the military was relying more and more on volunteers to perform funeral honors. And more often than not, the volunteers themselves were older veterans who struggled to meet the demand. We found case after case of families all across the country who couldn't find an honor guard to present a flag with the words "On behalf of a grateful nation" at the funeral service of a veteran. We even had a case at Arlington National Cemetery where a local family could not secure an honor guard for a veteran.

Fran asked me to get involved in the issue. We worked together to come up with legislation to require the Department of Defense to provide honor guards for veterans' funerals. We worked with the American Ex-Prisoners of War. Fran was an enthusiastic member of the organization and served as its national commander. We built a coalition of veterans service organiza-

tions in support of the legislation. Senator PAUL SARBANES, Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI, and Congressman LANE EVANS joined the effort and provided important leadership.

The Department of Defense opposed our legislation. With Fran's encouragement, we set out to address the DoD's concerns. Ultimately, we offered an amendment to the Defense authorization bill, and it was agreed to unanimously. Similar legislation passed the House of Representatives. Together, we succeeded in changing the law and ensuring the Department of Defense would provide honor guards when requested by a veteran's family. Fran Agnes raised this issue and touched a nerve all across our country. And he helped change the law for veterans. That is just one example of Fran's service.

Fran was also the visionary leader behind the campaign to create the Takoma National Cemetery for Washington's veterans. He was its greatest champion, and I worked closely with him to authorize and build it. Fran loved Takoma. Washington State veterans are proud that when Fran was taken from us last month, the Takoma National Cemetery was there to welcome him home with full military honors.

Fran Agnes lived a life of service to his family, to his fellow veterans and to his community. He coached Little League baseball for 20 years. He was responsible for building ballfields for young Washingtonians in both the Spokane and Everett areas. He was involved in both the Elks and the Eagles.

I was fortunate to know and work with Fran Agnes. I was blessed by his support and friendship. Washington State is a stronger community because of Fran Agnes, and veterans in my State had no greater friend or advocate than Fran.

As I mentioned, Fran passed away on February 9, 2003, with his loved ones at his side. At his service a few days later, his family was joined by the veterans community, the State of Washington, and a truly grateful nation to pay tribute to Fran as he was laid to rest in his beloved Takoma National Cemetery.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Tony Principi sent a moving letter to Fran's wife Marlene Agnes. The letter from Secretary Principi states, "Fran's service to America is legend in the veterans' community. He and all the men and women of his generation will long be remembered for their monumental struggle and decisive victory. However, Fran's service and sacrifice at Bataan, and later as a prisoner of war, were as great as any American has ever been asked to endure."

I ask unanimous consent that the full letter appear in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Several years ago, my father passed away. He, too, was a World War II veteran. It wasn't until after my father's death that we discovered his letters

and writings from the war. My father was like most veterans of his generation who did not talk about their experiences. Fran was like that, too. I saw Fran many times over the years. He came to Washington with the American Ex-Prisoners of War. I saw him at veterans events all over my State. If I attended a veterans event, you can bet Fran would be there—proudly wearing the maroon coat of the American Ex-Prisoners of War.

In all the time Fran and I spent together, he never asked me to do anything for himself. It was always things for other veterans and their families. He asked me to help the widows of our veterans. He asked me to support the POWs' lawsuit against the Japanese companies that profited from slave labor during World War II. He would ask about helping another veteran who might be having a problem with the VA.

Fran Agnes did not boast of his service. He didn't complain to me about injuries or problems from his time as a prisoner of war. Fran would call my office just to check in. He usually didn't have a request. He would just call and say, "I know you're working for us. Keep it up."

Because Fran, like so many veterans, did not boast of his own accomplishments, I want to share them with the Senate today. I cannot let this moment pass without sharing some of the things about Fran that he didn't talk about.

Fran Agnes was born in 1922 in North Dakota. His father was an Irish immigrant who moved the family to Wenatchee, WA, for a WPA job during the Great Depression.

Fran graduated from high school and enlisted to join the war effort. In 1941, he was stationed with the 20th Pursuit Squadron in the Philippines. He was captured early in 1942.

Fran Agnes endured the Bataan Death March—a 100-mile forced march conducted without food or water. During the march, men would drop out of column due to fatigue, dehydration, illness, and injury. This "disobedience" would cause the Japanese guards to rush up, shouting commands in Japanese to get back in the group. When that approach failed, shots would ring out, killing those who would not or could not rise.

Many of those failing to obey the order to march were killed instantly by sword-wielding Japanese soldiers who were guarding the men on the march. Seventy thousand Americans were forced on the Bataan Death March. Only 54,000 made it to the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps that awaited the survivors. Fran turned 20 years old on the Bataan Death March. He survived and was detained at Camp O'Donnell, which was used as a holding station.

Most prisoners stayed there for about 50 days. Eventually, it would house 50,000 men. Conditions there were grossly underequipped for the volume of men passing through its gates. For

example, there were only two water spigots available for all the prisoners. The men were fed tiny portions once a day.

Fran spent 6 months at Camp O'Donnell before being moved to Camp Cabanatuan. Fran spent an additional year at that camp. He worked mostly in the hospital—helping other POWs survive their imprisonment.

Finally, Fran was transferred to Japan where he was kept at the Hiro Hata POW camp and forced to work slave labor. He was held 30 miles from Hiroshima. He would later describe the atomic bomb that signaled the end of World War II and the end of his 3½ years of captivity.

On September 2, 1945, the men at the Hiro Hata prison camp conducted a liberation ceremony. The men gathered together and sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Fran Agnes returned home to the United States weighing approximately 100 pounds.

Most of us can only imagine the horror that men like Fran Agnes endured as prisoners of war at the hands of the Japanese. After a short stint back at home in Wenatchee, Fran re-enlisted with the Army Air Corps before it became the Air Force. He served in the Air Force for two decades and retired at the rank of Captain. Fran worked for Washington State for 25 years.

Fran had a big family as well. In addition to his wife Marlene, he had three daughters: Rose, Sonya, and Kathleen. I spent a few minutes with Fran's daughters yesterday, and in each of them, I was reminded of their father. Fran also had two sons, David and Gregory, as well as 13 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

Fran was involved in numerous veterans service organizations, particularly the American Ex-Prisoners of War, which is holding its winter meeting here in Washington, DC, this week. Fran served as national commander of the American Ex-POWs in 1990 and 1991. He was also chairman of the Governor's Advisory Action Committee in Washington State. Fran was chairman of the Tahoma National Cemetery Group in Washington.

I think it is appropriate that we memorialize Fran's many sacrifices and his great service to our Nation. Today, I have asked my staff to work with the Tahoma National Cemetery, with the Agnes family, and with the Washington veterans community to discuss naming an appropriate place at Tahoma after Fran Agnes.

In addition, I call upon my Senate colleagues to join me in support of the Francis W. Agnes Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2003. This legislation clarifies who is eligible for POW benefits through the VA and ensures our POWs can receive care for a number of ailments related to their captivity. The legislation is important to all POWs, and a similar measure has been introduced in the House of Representatives.

Fran wouldn't ask us to single out his fellow Pacific theatre POWs for

health care, but I know he would take special pride in the passage of this legislation because it is so important to our prisoners of war who survived such harsh treatment at the hands of the Japanese in World War II. I encourage all of my colleagues in the Senate to support the Francis W. Agnes Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2003.

Fran Agnes was a great American. I was blessed to know him and work with him. Veterans everywhere were blessed to have him as a fellow soldier and airman. With his passing, it is time we acknowledge his service and commit his memory to our history as an example to us all.

Even though I can't call upon him for his guidance and support, Fran will always be there for me. After all the time we spent together—and all the efforts we worked on together—I feel that I know what he would want me to do. And I pledge to continue to work very closely with veterans from my State and with his family to build on his legacy.

I hope this tribute captures for the Senate the many contributions of a true patriot. Mr. President, Fran Agnes called himself a survivor. We—those who knew him and his life of service to others—call him an inspiration.

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

THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS,

Washington, DC, February 13, 2003.

Mrs. MARLENE AGNES,
Everett, Washington.

DEAR MRS. AGNES: On behalf of America's 25 million veterans, please accept my sincerest condolences on the death of your husband, Fran. Although I am aware that mere words cannot ease your sorrow, or that of your children and grandchildren, be certain that my thoughts and prayers are with you.

Fran's service to America is legend in the veterans' community. He and all the men and women of his generation who answered America's call during World War II, will be long remembered for their monumental struggle and decisive victory. However, Fran's service and sacrifice at Bataan, and later as a prisoner of war, were as great as any American has ever been asked to endure.

Fran was an American patriot who served his country twice-over. Once in a uniform of its military services, and once-again as a pillar of the Nation's veterans constituency. As National Commander of America's Ex Prisoners of War, Fran's leadership bore the same indelible hallmarks that distinguished his wartime service . . . exemplary ability, great honor, unflinching courage, and true compassion. His contributions at once strengthened our Republic and enriched the lives of its citizen-soldiers who, like him, had borne the burden of captivity.

Quite simply, Fran was an ordinary American who served in extraordinary ways. He represented the best of what it means to be an American, and our Nation is lessened by his passing.

Mrs. Agnes, we who were privileged to know Fran, mourn with you and your family.

Sincerely yours,

ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. In the last Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred August 24, 2000 in Allentown, PA. A 24-year-old man, Michael Gambler, shot a 15-year-old at a party after the teen touched him on the arm. According to witnesses, partygoers suggested the teen was gay and teased the victim and Gambler prior to the shooting. After the teen touched his arm, Gambler retrieved a shotgun and shot the victim in the forehead.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

ASSASSINATION OF SERBIAN PRIME MINISTER ZORAN DJINDJIC

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to honor a man of courage, conviction and integrity who was recently taken from his people and this world in the most brutal and shocking of circumstances.

On Wednesday, March 12, Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was slain in Belgrade, assassinated, gunned down, leaving his Belgrade office. He was, tragically, only 50 years old, and was taken from us long before his time. To his wife Rizica and his two young children, Jovana and Luka, I extend my deepest condolences.

I had the pleasure of meeting Prime Minister Djindjic in 2001, during a visit to Belgrade. He was best known to Americans and the international community for his central role in the downfall of former Yugoslav dictator, Slobodan Milosevic, in October 2000. It was Djindjic who, in 2001, took the principled decision to render Milosevic to the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, where he is at this moment facing trial for genocide and crimes against humanity.

It was this courage, this stand for integrity, that won Prime Minister Djindjic not only the respect of the international community, but the love and admiration of the people of Serbia, whom he helped to free from the grips of dictatorship, oppression, and cruelty.

Prime Minister Djindjic was someone who fought for the needs of his people. He devoted his life to the fight for progress, reform, and democracy, and a better life for the people of Serbia. Ultimately, he gave his life for that fight.