

three times the national average, even though the average monthly child support payment was only \$123. Moreover, this represents a nearly 1,200 percent return on the federal investment of \$18.9 million. The Commonwealth also served an additional 86,000 families by helping to locate non-custodial parents and proving paternity. In addition, last year Puerto Rico became the second jurisdiction in the country to move to a completely paperless payment system, where all families receive their support payments either by direct deposit or an electronic benefit transmission card. These achievements speak for themselves as a testament to the Commonwealth's commitment to children and to the economic self-sufficiency of our families.

With the recent mobilization of American troops to Iraq, our Child Support Enforcement Administration pushed the envelope of achievement even further. As you all know, Puerto Ricans are deeply patriotic people, and historically, our contributions to the military have also exceeded the call of duty. Puerto Rico has one of the highest per capita rates of military service in the country. When Operation Iraqi Freedom came along it was no different. More than 5,300 National Guard, Air National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve and U.S. Marine troops were called up in Puerto Rico's largest military mobilization ever. Only seven States had larger mobilizations, and more than 1,500 servicemen and women remain on active duty in Iraq and Kuwait to this day.

When called upon by our country, Puerto Ricans have always served with pride, and have consistently and willingly endured the sacrifices required to fulfill our patriotic duty. We all know that for the service men and women that are also Moms and Dads, this is a particularly difficult sacrifice, because it means saying goodbye to their children. This was where Ms. Varona stepped in. She set up a project to give these parents the peace of mind that, whether they had custody of their children or not, those children would receive all of the support that they are entitled without interruption. This project provided these children with the support to which they are entitled, even though Daddy had a different job or that they were living with Grandma now because Mommy was fighting a war.

In cooperation with the office of Puerto Rico's Governor and Puerto Rico's Department of the Family, Varona partnered with National Guard Commanding Officer General Francisco A. Márquez Haddock and Army Commander Brigadier General José M. Rosado to operate seven Family Assistance Centers in the various armories where activated personnel were being processed. Varona provided experienced agency employees to assist individuals in ensuring that the correct amount of child support would be received by service men and women's families during their deployment without interruption. This guaranteed that virtually every activated soldier subject to a support order received relevant orientation services, and if appropriate, participated in a modification and/or wage withholding initiation process. It also guaranteed that custodial parents had the opportunity to communicate changes in the temporary guardianship of their children during their deployment.

This initiative is a vibrant, living testament of Puerto Rico's strong tradition of military service. Fittingly, the OCSE changed the name of

this award, which was originally for customer service, when it found out how Ms. Varona did, indeed, go beyond the call of duty to ensure the smooth mobilization of our soldiers to Iraq with the least disruption possible to their families. Thanks to Ms. Varona's concern and commitment to our military personnel and their dependents, and her willingness to go the extra mile, Puerto Ricans were able to fulfill their vital responsibilities to their country knowing that their fundamental responsibilities to their families were being met.

AL ZAMPA MEMORIAL BRIDGE

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, within the next few months the people of my district and the San Francisco Bay Area will be celebrating the opening of the new Carquinez bridge span across the Carquinez Straits. This event will be more than the opening of a new highway bridge; it will be the celebration of a man's life, the revitalization of a community, and the ongoing building of America.

The new bridge will be named the "Al Zampa Memorial Bridge." It celebrates the life of a great American, Alfred Zampa, an ironworker, his family, his son Dick Zampa, and his grandsons, Dick and Don Zampa, who carry on his great tradition. It is my privilege to share with my colleagues the account of this achievement in the San Francisco Chronicle, August 31, 2003:

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 31, 2003]

BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

CROCKETT COUNTING ON NEW CARQUINEZ SPAN TO MAKE IT A DESTINATION TOWN

(By Jenny Strasburg)

There's big talk these days in the small town of Crockett—in its corner taverns and grocery marts—about plans for a November fireworks show, memories of a departed ironworker named Alfred Zampa and the opening of the bridge that bears his name.

The four-lane Al Zampa Memorial Bridge is nearing completion over the Carquinez Strait, the first major suspension bridge to be built in the United States in 30 years, and the longest one built in almost 40 years.

Labor Day weekend lends an appropriate bit of timing for the home stretch of a \$300 million-plus project constructed by union hands and named after a Bay Area labor legend.

For more than three years, traffic disruptions, dust and the din of jackhammers, pile drivers and earthmovers have tested residents and business owners in the unincorporated burg on the southern edge of the strait.

Now, Crockett is ready to get its freeway ramps back. But it's looking for more than just relief from the noise and detour signs. Many see the eye-catching new bridge as a welcome gateway to revitalization opportunities for the town of 3,200—home to a C&H Sugar refinery in operation since 1906.

Crockett grew up a company town. But looking forward, it has bigger aspirations.

It wants day-trippers from San Francisco and Oakland. It wants streams of out-of-town customers for its handful of art galleries, antique shops and sandwich delis.

Toot's Tavern, Club Tac and Ray's Corner Saloon—survivors of a once-teeming population of watering holes that served thousands of plant workers in a bygone era—wouldn't mind seeing a few more rear ends on their bar stools.

"Nobody stops in Crockett the way they used to. You have to go 3 miles out of your way" because of Interstate 80 off-ramp detours, said Ken McBee, who owns Club Tac on Pomona Street, the main artery.

"Crockett hasn't really been publicized," added McBee, a Crockett resident for 28 years. "Nobody knows it's here. They know about C&H, but they don't know what's around it."

During the past few years, a steady flow of iron- and steelworkers, painters, engineers and other bridge crew members, most of whom commute from other towns, have brought some business to Crockett.

Several shop owners, however, said they're still scraping by financially.

"Construction workers—that's all the business we get at lunch," whereas more highway travelers used to stop over, said Chris Choo, owner of the Pomona Deli downtown. "Access is closed here, closed there. You don't understand how hard it is to survive."

To drum up business for his bar, McBee started serving Mexican dinners on Mondays and steak dinners on Wednesdays. Ten dollars buys a New York strip or rib-eye with a baked potato and dessert.

Maybe word will spread when the new bridge opens, McBee figures, and more city dwellers will find their way to his tavern for dinner in a charming small town.

"I certainly hope so," he said. "I'm hurting."

It's clear elsewhere in town that Crockett, as soon as possible, wants a bit of the spotlight being shone on the bridge that pays tribute to the life of Al Zampa, who as a child lived down the road in the now-defunct town of Selby. His family moved to Crockett when he was a teenager.

"This truly puts Crockett on the map in a way that's never been done before," said Gene Pedrotti, who lives in Crockett and runs a store that started there, Pedrotti Ace Hardware, now located in nearby Benicia.

A tireless Crockett promoter, Pedrotti is the central organizer of a dozen bridge-opening committees that pull members from Crockett, Vallejo and other nearby towns.

For months they have worked to line up sponsors, fireworks, speeches, a parade and other events to coincide with the bridge's grand opening.

The main events are tentatively planned for the weekend of Nov. 8 and 9—though a hard-to-predict construction schedule could change that, a Caltrans spokesman warned. Caltrans is overseeing construction of the bridge, which is expected to carry 120,000 vehicles per day west bound on Interstate 80 toward San Francisco.

Pedrotti says that one of the biggest draws regionally, once the bridge-opening fanfare has passed, will be its two-way pedestrian and bicycle path.

The Al Zampa Bridge will introduce pedestrian access to the Carquinez span, closing a gap in the Bay Trail that's being developed in encircle San Francisco Bay.

Traffic could flow on the new span within days of the November opening ceremonies. The pedestrian and bicycle path might not be open for several more weeks after that, according to Caltrans.

A 5-acre landscaped park is planned for the hillside leading down to the waterfront underneath the bridge.

"I think a lot of people are going to suddenly discover Crockett when they realize there's a cool bridge to walk across on a nice summer day," Pedrotti said.

Already, town boosters have worked the name and design of the Zampa bridge into a logo that shows up on T-shirts and ball caps for sale at small businesses in town and on the Internet (www.alzbridge.com).

The same logo decorates banners on light poles in the center of Crockett.

Zampa, during his storied career, worked on both the 1927 and 1958 Carquinez spans as well as the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge, Golden Gate Bridge, Martinez Bridge and Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

He became a celebrity of sorts after he survived a fall from the Golden Gate in 1936. He landed in a safety net—at the time a new feature of bridge construction—but the net sagged. Zampa, according to his recollection in interviews, hit the rocks below and paid for the trip with four broken vertebrae and three months of hospitalization.

He returned to bridge work after a long recovery.

In Crockett and nearby El Sobrante, Pinole and other towns, Zampa was known as Al, Husky, Zamp or Gramps, depending on who was talking, relatives said. He helped form the first Little League program and coached boys' teams in the 1940s, said his son, Richard "Dick" Zampa, 67. Al Zampa retired in 1970. He died in April 2000 at age 95.

He was alive when construction began on the new Carquinez span, but he did not know it would be named for him.

"He was at the groundbreaking, and he was starting to go down-hill, to feel pretty ill," said Dick Zampa, who is first general vice president of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers Union and president of the state's District Council of Iron Workers.

Dick and his brother Gene worked alongside their father on the 1958 Carquinez Bridge.

"This is a recognition of all blue-collar workers," said Dick Zampa, whose sons Dick Zampa, Jr. and Don Zampa also carry on the family's labor tradition, as apprentice coordinator and business manager, respectively, of Iron Workers Local Union 378 in Oakland.

"It's a tremendous honor for working people as a whole," said Don Zampa, 44. "My gramps, he'd have been pretty baffled by it."

Al Zampa's story, recounted over the years by Charles Kuralt, among others, is a dramatic one. And the bridge is impressive in its own right.

A joint venture of FCI Constructors and Cleveland Bridge, the effort is multinational, pulling workers, prefabricated pieces and building techniques from Britain, Japan and other countries.

The bridge is a smaller-sister of the Golden Gate Bridge, with dual towers rising 410 feet above the water.

By comparison, the Golden Gate's towers reach 746 feet above the bay.

It's expected that the new 2,390-foot span, a replacement for the 1927 bridge, will attract visitors from around the world—though some considered that wishful thinking just a year or two ago.

"I was one of the last people to be convinced," said Sharon Clark, an agent with Signature Realty in Crockett.

Now the possibilities seem more real. "We would like to be someplace (that makes) the average Bay Area citizen say, 'Wow, what are we going to do this weekend? Let's see what's going on in Crockett.' It's feasible," Clark said.

Many mornings on the Crockett hillside, someone such as Carl Peters, 83, of Pinole, can be found parked in the lot of the Dead Fish Restaurant enjoying the view of a new suspension bridge coming together below.

"To the people here, it's a big deal," said Peters on a recent morning, standing beside his blue Chevrolet pickup and eyeing the lat-

est developments below on what he called "a new symbol for Crockett."

The retired diesel-engine mechanic has stopped by most days for about two years. "There's only one Golden Gate," he said, "but this is pretty slick."

A combination of ingenuity and humor helped the proprietors of the Dead Fish survive the challenges of temporarily losing the highway off-ramp by which most of their customers arrived, said Dante Serafini, a partner in the restaurant.

One of two full-service seafood restaurants in town—the other is Nantucket, on the waterfront—the Dead Fish is still referred to by some locals as Vera's. It formerly was Vera's Villa Valona, a family-style Italian joint. Valona has roots as the community next door to Crockett, with boundaries that are now indistinguishable.

Early residents, including Italian, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants, came to call their town Sugar City after C&H took over the waterfront flour mill in 1906.

Through the Depression most of the C&H plant workers lived in town.

Few of them do now, and the town feels different as a result, according to longtime residents such as Don Zampa.

"Less and less people are there for generation after generation. People grew up, and there's less work in the immediate area," he said. "Generations of people in Crockett worked at C&H. My grandfather was an exception."

TRIBUTE TO GAIL FRENCH

HON. KATHERINE HARRIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding public servant from Florida's Thirteenth Congressional District who demonstrated unparalleled integrity, commitment, and skill throughout her tenure as an employee of the Manatee County, Florida, Veteran Services office.

Gail French began her career in the Manatee County Veteran Services office as a receptionist over 22 years ago. She received steady promotions due to her professionalism and her selfless initiative in assuming responsibility for the most challenging of tasks. Due to Ms. French's diligence and compassion in coordinating their transportation to Bay Pines, Tampa, and MacDill Air Force Base, thousands of veterans received critical medical attention and prescription drugs. Moreover, she expertly provided additional support for our nation's heroes, such as referrals to community assistance programs, mail and copy services, and mail-outs for medical and claim support.

Throughout the years, Ms. French treated every veteran with honor, appreciation, and dignity. At the time of her retirement earlier this summer, she had truly established the gold standard for all who follow her. As a well-deserved commemoration of her years of service, she received an honorary plaque jointly from the Veterans Council and from the Manatee County Veterans Services office on June 27, 2003.

Gail French and her husband, Ronald French, enjoy the blessing of three children, four stepchildren, thirteen grand children, and one great grand child. During her retirement, Ms. French plans to devote her time to her golf game and to her family.

Mr. Speaker, as we venerate Gail French's contributions to her community, her state, and her nation, may the light of her passionate commitment to our veterans and to the public at large continue to animate our dreams and aspirations as public servants.

HE DID NOT SET STANDARDS, HE LIVED THEM

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I assume that not a large number of people read the articles we place in the RECORD, but I am sure that at least a few across the country do. I wish everyone, especially young men, would read the column Richard Cohen wrote about his father in today's Washington Post.

Many years ago, I got a degree in journalism and worked briefly both as a newspaper reporter in Knoxville and as a teacher at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria. I would guess that Richard Cohen and I are about as different in backgrounds and beliefs as any two men could be, but I greatly admire his writing. I read almost all his columns, but I believe this column about his father is possibly his best ever.

Perhaps this touched me because I was very close to my own father. But, I am going to send this column to my two sons, ages 17 and 23, with a note from me. I will tell them that I believe they have the intelligence and skills and personalities to do great things with their lives, but as Richard Cohen has written, you do not have to be rich or famous or "important" to lead a good life, and that it is far more important to be good than it is to be great.

I would like to call this column to the attention of my colleagues and other readers of the RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 9, 2003.]

(By Richard Cohen)

HE DID NOT SET STANDARDS, HE LIVED THEM

NEWTON, Mass.—Harry L. Cohen died early Sunday morning here after a long illness. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Pearl "Pat" Rosenberg Cohen, two children, two grandchildren and the sweet memories of anyone who knew him. He was 94 years old and my father.

Newspaper obituaries are generally reserved for the notable, the exceptional—people of some achievement or notoriety. My father does not fill that bill. He was a mere high school graduate who worked almost all of his life for one firm. He invented nothing, discovered nothing, wrote nothing and was elected to no office, high or otherwise. He was the most ordinary of men—but, God, I have known few like him and neither have you.

Over the years I have written several columns about my parents. I did that by way of sending them a gift and also because they were great material. My mother, 91, was born in Poland just before World War I. She came to this country as a child and she was—always in Poland and for a time in America—desperately poor. If there is a single person who embodies the glory and the promise of this country, it is my mother. It is that simple.

My father, too, has a story. His starts in some Ken Burns documentary, black-and-