

[The Lawrence Journal-World, May 27, 2005]

FEDERAL JUDGE VANBEBBER DIES AT 73
RULINGS INCLUDED OKC BOMB CASE, SOUTH
LAWRENCE TRAFFICWAY, PHELPS

U.S. District Court Judge G. Thomas VanBebber died Thursday. He was 73.

"He was an indomitable spirit . . . a wonderful judge," said Steve McAllister, dean of the Kansas University School of Law.

VanBebber, who lived in Overland Park, called in sick Wednesday.

"He died peacefully in his sleep, sometime between 6 and 6:30 a.m.," said Ralph DeLoach, clerk/administrator for the U.S. District Court of Kansas.

"He was respected not only by his peers, but by all court staff who worked for him—highly respected," DeLoach said.

VanBebber was perhaps best known for sentencing Michael Fortier, a key witness for the prosecution in the Oklahoma City bombing trial that led to convictions of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

Fortier admitted knowing about the plot to bomb the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and choosing not to warn authorities.

VanBebber sentenced Fortier to 12 years in prison and ordered him to pay \$200,000 in fines.

Fortier's attorneys appealed the sentence, arguing it was excessive given his cooperation with prosecutors. A federal appeals court upheld the sentence.

Other VanBebber rulings:

1997—Issued an injunction halting work on the proposed South Lawrence Trafficway until after completion of an environmental impact statement.

1999—Denied the Rev. Fred Phelps' attempt to sue Shawnee County Dist. Atty. Joan Hamilton for allegedly prosecuting him in an attempt to limit his anti-homosexual picketing.

2004—Denied an attempt to force Washburn University to remove a statue from campus that some considered anti-Catholic.

The sculpture, entitled "Holier Than Thou," depicted a scowling, heavyset clergyman wearing ceremonial headgear that some said was shaped like a penis.

"The court cannot conclude that a reasonable observer would perceive the university's display of 'Holier Than Thou' as an attack on Catholics," VanBebber wrote in his ruling.

VanBebber grew up in Troy, Kan. (population 1,000). He earned a bachelor's degree from Kansas University in 1953; a law degree in 1955. In 2001, he received the KU Law Society's distinguished alumnus award.

He practiced law in Troy until 1959, when he became an assistant U.S. attorney. He returned to private practice in Troy in 1961, serving as Doniphan County attorney from 1963 to 1969. He was elected to the Kansas House, serving one term from 1973 to 1975.

He served on the Kansas Corporation Commission, from 1975 to 1979.

VanBebber was appointed a federal magistrate in 1982. Seven years later, he was appointed to the federal bench by President George H. W. Bush.

He served as chief judge from 1995 to 2000, assuming senior judge status on Dec. 31, 2000.

"He was a wonderful judge and an even better person," said U.S. Chief Judge John W. Lungstrum, who lives in Lawrence.

"He was a great student of history and literature," he said. "He had a tendency to relate to anecdotes and people he knew while growing up in Troy—I say that not to imply that he was homespun in character; I say it because he related to small-town values in a way that brought a lot of wisdom and common sense to the bench. He was truly brilliant."

Lungstrum succeeded VanBebber as the federal court's chief judge in Kansas.

As a child, VanBebber contracted polio and often relied on crutches and, in recent years, a wheelchair.

"He was in pain every day, but he never let on that there was a problem." Lungstrum said. "His courage and stoicism were tremendously inspirational to the court."

VanBebber is survived by his wife, Alleen, an attorney.

CONFERENCE ON THE DEEPENING CRISIS FOR HAITIANS

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for an important conference taking place today—the Conference on the Deepening Crisis for Haitians. This conference will bring together members of the Haitian American community, the academic sector, non-governmental organizations, and representatives from the U.S. and Haitian governments to discuss key issues facing Haitians.

While Haiti has recently celebrated more than 200 years of independence from French colonial rule, the citizens of the island remain vulnerable to poverty, poor health, and political chaos. Tumultuous events in the past year and a half consisted of violent uprisings, the departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, massive floods in May displacing tens of thousands, and Tropical Storm Jeanne in September leading to more than 3,000 deaths in the ensuing floods. Sadly, Haiti has not been able to recover from these recent disasters and many Haitians are living in terrible conditions. This is why I have urged Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to grant Temporary Protected Status to Haitian nationals living in the United States. With thousands of people killed in the natural disasters and hundreds of thousands left homeless, Haiti is temporarily unable to handle the return of nationals. Haitians already in the U.S. should be allowed to remain in peace and security in the U.S. while the island recovers.

Today, the Organization of American States General Assembly is meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The Organization's Secretary General, Jose Miguel Insulza, has pledged to raise the subject of Haiti at the OAS during the session. While this is a welcome sign, it is the least of what will be needed if Haiti is to emerge from its deepening crisis. The international community and the United States must get serious about finding a way out of the expanding abyss so that Haiti can once again move forward.

We all would like to see a brighter future for Haiti, and I hope this conference will serve to explore many views. Respect for human rights, freedom, and the rule of law must be established in the poorest nation in our hemisphere. Our Haitian constituents and their relatives are counting on us to help bring Haiti out of its volatile situation. I am pleased to support the Conference on the Deepening Crisis for Haitians, and I commend the Conference for hosting this dialogue.

A TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH J. COLEMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE NEW YORK STATE TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Elizabeth J. Coleman, who has dedicated her life to the fight for civil rights, and has broken down numerous barriers along the way. Ms. Coleman's legal career has focused on ensuring access for all Americans to a fair and unbiased justice system, one through which they can realize the entirety of their constitutional rights. This principle has guided her throughout her years of service, from work on behalf of indigent consumers in Georgia to her national work for the Anti-Defamation League, and most recently during her stint at the New York State Trial Lawyers Association (NYSTLA), where she was an outstanding Executive Director and General Counsel.

Ms. Coleman has also held many additional posts and has been involved in many endeavors over the years. She was elected Chair of the Board of the National Women's Law Center in 1996 and served in that capacity until 2003. President Clinton appointed Ms. Coleman Vice-Chair of the President's Export Council in 1994 and a United States Delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. More recently, the National Organization for Women's New York City chapter honored her in 2003 as a Woman of Power and Courage. Last year she was honored by New York Women's Agenda as a STAR, an honor bestowed upon women who represent the spirit of New York, provide leadership in business and in the community, and are role models for other women. I can think of no more worthy recipient of such recognition than Ms. Coleman.

As Elizabeth Coleman leaves NYSTLA, she embarks on a new mission, but one with the same goals in mind. She will continue her advocacy for civil and social justice through foundation work and community organizing. As she begins the next chapter of her life, I thank her wholeheartedly for her tireless work, and I wish her the very best in the years to come.

HONORING MAYOR EULINE BROCK

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service and commitment of Mayor Euline Brock. Ms. Brock has established herself as a leader and true servant to my hometown Denton, Texas.

Mayor Brock was recently presented the William J. Pitstick Regional Cooperation Award from the North Central Texas Council of Governments. The award recognizes individuals who have promoted good, strong leadership and spirit of regionalism in solving multi-jurisdictional problems.

Since first elected Denton's mayor in 2000, Mayor Brock has become a lead spokesman

for promoting regional and inter-jurisdictional cooperation. In addition to her mayoral duties, Ms. Brock serves on the prestigious Texas Municipal League's Legislative Committee and was recently appointed by the U.S. Council of Mayors to serve on the Energy and Environment Committee.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I stand here today to recognize an individual, a friend, who has dedicated her time as the Mayor of Denton not only to her constituents but also has reached out and assisted those outside her district as well. It is with the service and commitment of individuals such as Mayor Brock that ensure the continual growth and close relationship of North Texas communities.

RECOGNIZING THOMAS "TOM"
ENGSTROM OF LAKEPORT, CALIFORNIA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chief of Police Tom Engstrom of Lakeport, California, as he retires after 37 years of dedicated public service.

As a young man in his early 20s, Chief Engstrom was determined to lead a life devoted to protecting his fellow citizens. He began his service in 1968 when he joined the Phoenix, Arizona Police Department. Several years later he moved to California and was promoted to Sergeant with the City of Turlock Police Department. In 1980, at just 33 years of age, Sergeant Engstrom was selected as Chief of Police for the City of Newman becoming the youngest Chief of Police in the State of California. Over a decade later, Tom and his family moved to Lakeport, California where he was selected by the Lakeport City Council to serve as Chief of Police.

For the past 11 years Chief Engstrom has made numerous contributions to his community, enabling the people of Lakeport to live in a safe environment. He has dedicated much of his time towards implementing various educational programs throughout the community including Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and Gang Resistance Education & Training (G.R.E.A.T). With these outreach programs, Chief Engstrom has been able to educate and promote awareness of these important issues to Lakeport citizens of all ages.

Chief Engstrom has also played an active role in creating other law enforcement programs and patrol units including the Canine Program, School Resource Officer Program, Personal Watercraft Patrol and Bicycle Patrol. He is responsible for the creation of the New Police Facility and for raising \$1.5 million in grants for the Lakeport Police Department.

The Chief earned his Bachelor of Art's Degree from the University of San Francisco in Public Administration. He continued his education and graduated from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Tom and his wife of 38 years, Cindy, are the proud parents of seven children and 12 grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, it is appropriate that we thank Police Chief Tom Engstrom for all that he has done to protect

the citizens of Lakeport, California, and extend our best wishes to him in retirement.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MS. THELMA STINSON, PRINCIPAL OF LILLIE C. EVANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a truly great role model and a truly great educator—the late Ms. Thelma Stinson, former Principal of the Lillie C. Evans Elementary School located in Miami's Liberty City community in my Congressional District.

Her passing away provides us with the sobering thought of the dignity of the human spirit and the fragility of life. Even though she was sick with cancer, Ms. Stinson often went straight from the hospital to her school because she felt so deeply about helping her students. By every measure, she was enormously successful.

Ms. Stinson started working for the Dade County School Board in 1968 as a librarian, then as a special-education teacher and assistant principal before becoming Principal of Lillie C. Evans in late 2000.

Under her leadership at Lillie C. Evans, the school proudly rose from an F-graded school in 2001–2002 to an A-graded school in 2003–2004. "The school's turnaround is a testament to her leadership and her commitment," said district spokesman Joseph Garcia. Ms. Stinson also reached out to the community by ensuring that parents were also schooled in the basic skills of reading, math and the sciences through regular sessions at night. Simply put, Ms. Stinson literally bridged the gap between her school and her students' homes, making parental involvement an essential part of the teaching and learning process.

In spite of the odds, Ms. Stinson truly demonstrated to all those called upon by public service that excellence and achievement are never beyond the reach of those willing to make the commitment and dare to dream what seems to most people to be the impossible. She was a source of light—more like a beacon in the night—in our community and in the lives of student and adults alike. It is impossible to measure the impact of a person like Ms. Stinson, for her legacy will live on in all the young lives she touched, for whom she created new possibilities and new opportunities that, without her special touch, would never have existed.

It is sadly inadequate to say that she will be sorely missed. I extend my deepest condolences to her mother Ceola Thompson, brother Errol Thompson, sister Esther Blackshear, daughter Twyla Hilton, her grandsons, her friends and her students.

PENTAGON MEMORIAL FUND

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer the thanks of this body to a democratic friend,

Taiwan, the Republic of China, for their recent generous gift to the Pentagon Memorial Fund.

9–11 scarred our souls and forever changed the way we view enemy attack and the security of our Nation. The Pentagon is known globally as the place our military policy is created and recommended for implementation. It is a prominent part of the government commanded by the Chief Executive and maintained by the United States Congress.

The targeted component of the surprise coordinated attack there shocked and appalled the civilized nations and people on the planet. This Nation lost 184 souls across the river on that day. The sight of smoke coming from the Pentagon is a picture seared in my memory from that day, seen as I ran out of the U.S. Capitol.

Part of the salve applied to our national injury is in honoring the memory of the 184 men and women who perished on 9–11. So, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I thank Taiwan for their part in helping to immortalize their memory by contributing to the Pentagon Memorial Fund. And I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD the Washington Post story announcing the generous contribution.

[From the Washington Post, May 5, 2005]

TAIWAN AIDS PENTAGON MEMORIAL FUND

The government of Taiwan has donated \$1 million to the Pentagon Memorial Fund, according to James L. Laychak, the fund's president and chief executive. About \$6.5 million has been raised to finance the memorial, which is to be built with private funds. Families of victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon began a fundraising drive in April 2004 with a goal of \$30 million—\$20 million for construction and \$10 million for a maintenance fund. Taiwan's gift is the second for \$1 million; the first came from the Anheuser-Busch Foundation.

"The donation does not simply represent our offering of support for the victims of 9–11," said David Tawei Lee, a government representative, in a prepared statement, "but also express our appreciation for the symbols of freedom." The memorial on the Pentagon's west lawn will have 184 cantilevered benches, one in memory of each of the victims of the terrorist attack.

HONORING THE AVIATION FEATS
OF ROBERT "HOOT" GIBSON

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Robert "Hoot" Gibson, a resident of my hometown of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, who recently broke two aviation speed records.

Hoot flew a Raytheon Premier I jet into the record books on September 22, 2004, when he flew from Seattle, Washington, to Las Vegas, Nevada, at 499.65 miles per hour and from Las Vegas to Wichita, Kansas, at 540.53 miles per hour. The previous records were set in a Cessna Citation jet in 1991.

Hoot is a former astronaut who made 5 Space Shuttle flights and commanded 4 of them. A retired Navy captain, he now flies commercial jetliners for Southwest Airlines.

Hoot's accomplishments in the aviation arena are exceptional, as well as inspirational.