

championship title is the impact Mike has had on the wrestlers off the mat, as he has produced not only outstanding athletes but also gentlemen.

On the occasion of hosting the 20th Richardson Memorial Tournament in his tenure, Mike's athletes returned from years past to give him tribute. I wish to review a few of those and also add to those tributes myself.

One of these young wrestlers noted that when he was a junior he broke his sternum not once, but twice. It was very difficult for him to just sit on the sidelines and cheer on his teammates, realizing he could not contribute to the success of the team. Most kids would have just dropped out at that point. Coach Ripplinger, realizing the pain of lack of participation, gave an extra effort to include this kid as part of the team. Through his encouragement, this young student learned how to persevere and, as he later noted, he made many successes in preparation for life that year even though he had no activity on the mat.

Another former student said that the coach expected us to live with dignity, honor and respect for others.

Another admitted that, when they were disciplined, the toughest thing was feeling like we had disappointed the coach because we had all the respect for him as a person and as a leader. All teachers seek respect. Very few of us actually earn it the way Mike Ripplinger has.

Those lessons were as important to the student athletes as the trophies that they earned.

When Mike was hired, his principal said, I wanted a coach who could build a strong wrestling program but an individual who could also build young men. He said this is one of the best hires he ever made. "On a personal note," he also wrote, "my son Joseph, who has found success in his personal life as an orthopedic surgeon, found out what life was all about from you and your program." Even though a three-sport athlete, he had little wrestling skill. Through your program, he found out what it was like to rise above losing. He found the encouragement and desire to keep picking himself up and going on, and from people like you he found out how to succeed.

Sometimes in our environment today we actually do not want people to display any outward religious conviction, but through Mike's demonstration he showed his goodwill, his strong moral character and his relationship with his God.

At one point, when one of his students seriously injured an arm by sticking it through a glass window, one of his other students noted that he admired a coach who was not afraid to have a team prayer for the cut student.

Mike Ripplinger is to be commended for not being afraid to help his students become better people, as well as better wrestlers.

Students of Mike recognize that he has a rare ability to make each indi-

vidual student feel like he or she is important, has value, has someone who cares. Every year, Mike helps students mature and learn. Every month, Mike gives himself to others. Every week, Mike creates a learning environment in which kids want to participate. Every day, Mike makes the world a better place. Mike Ripplinger is one of our everyday heroes.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

IRAQ AND LIBBY'S SUCCESSFUL COVER-UP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, Scooter Libby was arraigned this morning, and the Bush administration defenders continue to insist that the administration of the CIA leak was "much ado about nothing."

They say that the crime of perjury and obstruction of justice are mere technicalities, nothing to worry our heads over. Ha.

Let us leave aside the obvious hypocrisy. We all know that there was quite a hue and cry over perjury in this town 7 years ago when the President's party was on the outside of the White House looking in. Dare I say, the underlying issue at that time was just a little more frivolous than the matters of life, death and war that are at the heart of the current episode.

More importantly, of course, Scooter Libby's lies matter. Libby's lies are exactly what is keeping us from knowing the truth about the original crime, the outing of a covert CIA operative as part of a campaign to scare the Nation into a war based on the lie that Saddam Hussein was poised to use nuclear weapons on the United States.

Columnist E.J. Dionne makes the important and distressing point: the Scooter Libby cover-up was successful.

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You see, 1 year and 1 day ago, the President was reelected by a narrow margin. Why does that matter? Because Libby is stonewalling. His tall tale about having learned about Valerie Plame's status from gossiping reporters was all about gumming up the investigation just long enough so that the clock would run out on the last campaign season. It was all about ensuring that Americans went to the polls last year with very limited knowledge of this scandal.

As we analyze the legal maneuvers and intrigue, as we try to read between the lines of Scooter Libby's bizarre let-

ters to Judy Miller, let us not lose sight of the big picture. Right now, there are some 140,000 loyal, patriotic, courageous Americans who have been separated from their families and are prepared to die, all because the neocron's cabal had it in for Saddam Hussein. Over 2,000 of their fellow soldiers have already made the ultimate sacrifice, and I have no doubt that those men and women would be alive today if not for the trumped-up intelligence and the campaign of deceit.

I had the privilege of talking with our soldiers when I was in Iraq a month ago, and you could not ask for a finer, more committed group of young people. I came away from those conversations full of pride but also profound sadness, because the men and women on the front lines have dutifully entrusted their lives to cynics and ideologues like Scooter Libby. They deserve so much better. They deserve civilian superiors who are at least as honorable as they are.

Even as we never forget the lies that got us into this war, I am even more concerned about how we are going to get out. There are ways to do this while still keeping Iraq secure, while helping build its democratic institutions and its economic infrastructure. I held a hearing earlier this fall where we discussed such ideas in detail.

We can appeal to the U.N. and to NATO to establish an interim security force in Iraq. We can launch a diplomatic offensive, helping establish an international peace commission that can coordinate peace talks between Iraq's various factions and oversee the post-war reconciliation process.

But the President does not want to be part of this conversation. All he has to offer is the same old rhetoric about staying the course and completing the mission. But how do you win a war against an enemy that grows more resilient with each passing day because your occupation appears to be occupiers of their land? One military commander put it best: He said that "for every insurgent I kill, I create three more."

Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker. The current Iraq policy is a bloody, destructive, dead end. We have paid way too high a price already. It is time to honor our troops. It is time to bring them home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PENTAGON PROGRAM COSTING TAXPAYERS MILLIONS IN INFLATED PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.