

truth that dissent in Cuba is regularly and brutally repressed; that political prisoners are regularly incarcerated in institutions that deprive them and their fellow inmates of basic life necessities; and most importantly, that the people of Cuba, like all people, long for liberty and the opportunity to take care of their families and loved ones free from repression by their own government.

Dr. Biscet embodies the hopes and dreams of 11 million Cubans; we are here today to honor his efforts and his fellow Cubans' hopes and dreams by introducing this bill, which would award Dr. Biscet a Congressional Gold Medal for his tireless work on behalf of the Cuban people.

It is our desire that this gesture will serve not only as a signal of hope to Dr. Biscet, who—charged with “insulting symbols of the fatherland,” “public disorder” and “instigation to commit crimes”—sits today in the notorious ‘Cuba Si’ prison as a symbol of the Cuban regime’s oppression, but also as a signal to that government and those like it around the world that we are watching, and that liberty ultimately always prevails.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING HENRIETTA BELL WELLS

• Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today I wish to pay my respects to one of my constituents, Mrs. Henrietta Bell Wells, who passed away on February 27, 2008.

Mrs. Wells was the last surviving member of the famous debate team from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, whose story is told in the recent film “The Great Debaters.” She was a remarkable woman whose early success in challenging gender and racial barriers was followed by many years of faithful service. She will be missed but certainly not forgotten. Her life is truly an inspiration.

I ask that an obituary that was published in The New York Times yesterday be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

[From the New York Times News Service, Mar. 12, 2008]

(By Douglas Martin)

Henrietta Bell Wells, the only woman, the only freshman and the last surviving member of the 1930 Wiley College debate team that participated in the first interracial collegiate debate in the United States, died Feb. 27 in Baytown, Texas. She was 96.

Her friend Edward Cox confirmed the death.

The story of the team, called the Great Debaters in last year’s movie of the same name, began in 1924 at Wiley College, a small liberal arts college in Marshall, Texas, founded a half-century earlier by the Methodist Episcopal Church to educate “newly freed men.”

Melvin B. Tolson arrived at the all-black school that autumn to teach English and other subjects. He also started a debate team.

Tolson, who would win wide distinction as a poet, saw argumentation as a way to cul-

tivate mental alertness. Wiley was soon debating and defeating black colleges two and three times its size.

In 1930, Tolson decided to break new ground. He managed to schedule a debate with the University of Michigan Law School, an all-white school. Wiley won. Other debates with white schools followed, culminating with Wiley’s 1935 victory over the national champion, the University of Southern California.

Tolson’s stunningly successful debate team was portrayed in “The Great Debaters,” directed by Denzel Washington. Describing the cinematic young debaters in The Chicago Sun-Times, the critic Roger Ebert wrote, “They are black, proud, single-minded, focused, and they express all this most dramatically in their debating.”

In the fall of 1930, Henrietta Bell, who would later marry Wallace Wells, was a freshman in an English class taught by Tolson. The professor urged her to try out for the debate team, because she seemed to be able to think on her feet. She was the first woman on the team.

In an interview with The Houston Chronicle in 2007, she said the boys “didn’t seem to mind me.”

But the work was far from easy. Bell attended classes during the day, had three campus jobs and practiced debating at night. The intensity of debating was reflected in Tolson’s characterization of it as “a blood sport.”

But the hard work paid off. In the interview with The Chronicle, Wells declared, “We weren’t intimidated.”

Henrietta Pauline Bell was born on the banks of Buffalo Bayou in Houston on Jan. 11, 1912, and raised by a hard-pressed single mother from the West Indies. When riots broke out in 1917 over police treatment of black soldiers at a World War I training camp, the family’s house was searched. Wells recalled being unable to try on clothes in segregated stores.

She did not debate in high school but was valedictorian of her class. She earned a modest scholarship from the YMCA to go to Wiley, Episcopal Life reported.

In the spring of 1930, Bell, her teammates and her chaperone arrived at the Seventh Street Theater in Chicago. It was the largest black-owned theater in town, because no large white-owned facility would host a racially mixed audience, according to an article in The Marshall News-Messenger. Wells remembered a standing-room-only crowd.

She wore a dark suit and had her hair cut in a boyish bob. In an interview with Jeffrey Porro, one of the screenwriters of “The Great Debaters,” she felt very small on that very big stage. “I had to use my common sense,” she said.

She remembered Tolson urging her to punch up her delivery. “You’ve got to put something in there to wake the people up,” he had said.

Wells told The Chronicle, “It was a non-decision debate, but we felt at the time that it was a giant step toward desegregation.”

She debated for only one year, because of the need to work for money. She kept up with drama, which Tolson also coached. After graduating from college, she returned to Houston, where she met Wallace Wells and married. He was a church organist and later an Episcopal minister. She worked as a teacher and social worker.

Wells advised Washington on the movie, using her scrapbooks as visual aids. She urged him to play Tolson, something he at first was not inclined to do. He called her “another grandma.”

Wallace Wells died in 1987. Wells left no immediate survivors.

Her advice to today’s students was straightforward: “Learn to speak well and learn to express yourself effectively.”

She learned this lesson directly from Tolson, whom she called her crabbiest and best teacher. He was known for issuing intellectual challenges immediately upon entering the classroom.

A typical salutation: “Bell! What is a verb?”•

TRIBUTE TO THE DRAKE UNIVERSITY MEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM

• Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here today to commend the Drake University Men’s Basketball team on its outstanding and unexpected success this past season. Drake is a school of less than 5,000 students in Des Moines, IA. Today the Drake community is experiencing basketball success the likes of which it hasn’t seen in over 35 years. Coached by Keno Davis, the Bulldogs won the regular season Missouri Valley Conference, the Missouri Valley Conference tournament and earned a berth to the NCAA tournament. They were picked to finish ninth in the conference and instead roared to a 28-4 overall record. It was only the second winning season the Bulldogs have enjoyed in the past 20 years. And it’s the first time since 1971 that they will play in the NCAA tournament. Drake also finished the regular season ranked 20th in the Nation and beating a tough Illinois State team by 30 points in the MVC tournament final. It’s been a long drought, but the Bulldog nation, from Iowa to Washington, DC, to California, could not be prouder.

This upstart team has quite a story. Two starters, Adam Emmenecker and Jonathon Cox are former 3-year walk-ons who recently earned basketball scholarships. They are also incredibly successful academically. Drake started off the season well and won the mythical State championship by beating the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa. They snapped a 20 game losing streak at the University of Iowa. Drake also had great success in Missouri Valley Conference play. The Bulldogs cracked the Top 25, too, and traveled to Butler University and beat the eighth ranked team on their home court.

This Drake team exemplifies what it means to be a student-athlete. Five Drake players, Adam Emmenecker, Josh Young, Klayton Korver, Brent Heemskerck, and Jonathon Cox were named to the MVC’s scholar-athlete team. Four of the five Bulldog starters have a GPA above 3.0. In addition, Emmenecker was named the ESPN Scholar Athlete of the year for NCAA Men’s Division I basketball, with a 3.97 GPA and four majors.

It goes without saying that behind a great college team are great coaches and administrators. Keno Davis is in his first year as a head coach. He’s been named the Missouri Valley Conference Coach of the Year, and Sporting News Coach of the Year. Just 36 years old, Keno learned from his father, Dr. Tom Davis, who retired as Drake’s head coach in 2007, and was a longtime head coach at the University

of Iowa. I have great respect for the Davis family, and I'm so glad that they have rebuilt the Drake program. Keno and his wife Krista became parents during the season, too. Assistant coaches Chris Davis, Rodell Davis and Justin Ohl have obviously spent hours fine-tuning their talented and intelligent team.

I also need to congratulate Drake's president Dr. David Maxwell and Athletic Director Sandy Hatfield Clubb for their support of the men's basketball program. They have helped rebuild Drake's basketball program while maintaining high academic standards. We all know how hard that is in college sports today. Drake is a shining example of how a team can win on the court and in the classroom.

Dolph Pulliam, a member of Drake's one and only Final Four team, has served as an inspiration to the current Bulldogs. Dolph and his team played Lew Alcindor, known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar today, and UCLA back in 1969 and only lost by 3 points. Since his playing days, Dolph has remained in the Des Moines area, working for the university and broadcasting their games on the radio. And he is quite a presence with his huge smile and blue leather suit. I know he has influenced the current Drake players, thanks to encouragement from Dr. Tom Davis to help them all rekindle the fires of great basketball.

So I want to again extend my congratulations to the Drake University men's basketball program, and to their students and fans who've never lost faith in them. It has been a joy to watch their success, and I hope that they continue winning during March Madness. I also hope that these young men will serve as an example to the young people in Iowa, to show that it is entirely possible to maintain high academic standards and winning ways on the court.●

IN TRIBUTE TO BYRON JANIS

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to the accomplishments and inspirational life of Byron Janis as he approaches his 80th birthday later this month.

I learned about Mr. Janis's upcoming milestone from his good friend Dick Thornburgh, the former Attorney General of the United States. Mr. Thornburgh was a key advocate during the administration of George Herbert Walker Bush for enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and I was proud to be the chief sponsor of the ADA in the Senate.

A Pennsylvania native, Mr. Janis is renowned as one of the world's most talented concert pianists. In addition, his perseverance is a source of inspiration to countless Americans. By the age of 20, his virtuosity at the piano was so extraordinary that he performed a sold out debut at New York's famed Carnegie Hall.

Later, Mr. Janis was chosen to be the first individual to represent the United

States in a cultural exchange with the Soviet Union. Remarking on this mission, The New York Times wrote that "if music could replace international politics, Byron Janis could consider himself an ambassador."

In the decades since, Byron Janis has dazzled audiences worldwide. He has performed for numerous U.S. Presidents, and has been honored with countless awards from around the globe.

However, perhaps Byron Janis's greatest contribution to America lies not in his musical talent but rather in the example he has set of an individual responding to adversity with grace and courage, and with a truly indomitable spirit.

In 1973, he was diagnosed with arthritis in his hands and wrists, which could have ended his career as a pianist. But Mr. Janis refused to be stymied or stopped. As he put it, "I have arthritis—it doesn't have me."

He continued to play for 12 years before disclosing his arthritis at a White House performance. That same day, Mr. Janis assumed the role of Ambassador for the Arts for the Arthritis Foundation.

Through his continued performances and other appearances, he has raised awareness as well as funds to support the foundation's noble cause. To this day, audiences continue to be captivated by Byron Janis's musical talents, even as they are impressed by his amazing persistence in the face of adversity.

March 24 will be Byron Janis's 80th birthday. And this year also marks the 60th anniversary of his debut at Carnegie Hall. Across all those years, his determination, courage, and selfless service have embodied the American spirit at its best. His lifetime of accomplishments as a performer, cultural ambassador, and role model are truly remarkable. I am pleased today to recognize and congratulate Byron Janis for his triumphs, for his accomplishments, and for inspiring millions of individuals around the world.●

RECOGNITION OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

● Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the contributions of Business Executives for National Security, BENS.

Since 1982, this national organization has been a primary channel through which American business leaders have contributed their special experience and talent to help build a more secure nation. Founded by business tycoon Stanley A. Weiss, BENS operates on the principle that America's national security is everybody's business. BENS is a highly respected nonpartisan organization of senior executives and entrepreneurs dedicated to enhancing our national security by implementing proven practices of the private sector.

Working with Congress and the Department of Defense, BENS helps pro-

tect the American homeland and build a more efficient and effective military. As the United States continues to confront domestic and international threats, BENS proves more important than ever before.

BENS has provided distinguished service to the Nation for over a quarter century. This service includes reforming the business of defense, protecting the homeland, tracking terrorist funding, and banning chemical weapons. BENS helps our Armed Forces by slashing bureaucracy, streamlining operations, and cutting waste, making more funds available for urgent priorities such as military readiness and modernization.

BENS is a pioneer in homeland security creating innovative partnerships around the country that civic-minded companies that provide assistance to local and State governments in times of emergency. BENS works with the Department of the Treasury to improve America's ability to locate and suspend suspicious financial activities that fund terrorism.

BENS is a strong advocate of the Chemical Weapons Convention to eliminate the chemical weapons stockpile by 2012, reducing the chances such weapons will be used against the United States through a terrorist attack.

Mr. President, I ask my distinguished colleagues in the Senate to join me in recognizing BENS and their commitment to national security interests.●

TRIBUTE TO PORTLAND STATE VIKINGS

● Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, today, as a proud Oregonian, I congratulate the Portland State University men's basketball team on a stellar performance last night. The PSU Vikings capped a five-game winning streak by soundly defeating the Northern Arizona University Lumberjacks 67 to 51 to win the Big Sky Conference Tournament and advance to the NCAA Tournament.

This achievement marks the Vikings' first trip to the "Big Dance," and an important moment to recognize their collective talents. I think I speak for all Oregonians when I say that we are greatly impressed by the hard work these young men and their coaches have put into achieve this victory.

I congratulate this team not only for their athletic achievement, but also for putting Oregon's largest university on the map of collegiate sports. I know the PSU Vikings, who have lost only twice in 2008, will be an excellent representative of our home State in the national tournament.

Certainly this victory is just the beginning for the members of this team. I look forward to hearing of their successes not only in athletics but in any endeavor they choose to take on in the future.

Mr. President, allow me to specifically mention the names of all the coaches and players who have made my