

which links rural and urban hub communities along the coast of our vast State. Unlike the lower 48, many of our communities are not accessible by road, so in many areas the primary means of travel is by air or sea. Therefore, the Alaska Marine Highway makes up a large part of our highway system and is a route so special it has been designated a National Scenic Byway and an All American Road, the only marine route in the United States with this designation.

My family and I share special memories of taking the ferries to many communities throughout Alaska. The Marine Highway was even part of our trip here to Washington for my first year in the Senate. A ferry ride brings Alaskans together while on their way to visit family, play in basketball tournaments, or bring new cars and boats home from the lower 48.

Although the 50-year anniversary commemorates the formal establishment of the Alaska Division of Marine Transportation in 1963, the Alaska Marine Highway System was begun in 1948, initiated by three men with a dream to provide dependable marine transportation among Alaska's coastal communities. Haines resident Steve Homer joined forces with brothers Ray and Gustav Gelotte to purchase the M/V Chilkoot and set up Chilkoot Motorship Lines. The vessel, formerly a U.S. Navy landing craft, required work to remove its military features and ensure it could pass U.S. Coast Guard inspection, but within a few months of its purchase, it was deemed ready for service as a civilian passenger vessel. The M/V Chilkoot could carry a maximum of only 14 cars and by all accounts had "poor accommodations" due to retaining many of its original Navy features. No matter the M/V Chilkoot ferried its first two cars from Haines to Juneau in August of 1948.

As fate would have it, one of those cars belonged to Ernest Gruening, then the Territorial Governor of Alaska. Governor Gruening became an ardent supporter of the new transportation system and with two other commissioners from the Board of Roads authorized the construction of ferry ramps in Juneau, Haines, and Skagway. Thus, service to these three small southeast communities was born.

In 1988 Steve Homer wrote a letter about his experience starting the Alaska Marine Highway System. In that letter he wrote that his initial idea of bringing a landing craft to Southeast Alaska was spawned in 1944 when he commanded such a craft in World War II. He said he signed partnership papers to form Chilkoot Motorship Lines in 1949 and that the total required equity capital was \$9,177 in 1948 dollars. A few years later the business ran into financial difficulties, and the Alaska Territorial Government offered to purchase it. Ownership transferred to the territory in 1951.

By 1957 the M/V Chilkoot was too small to meet demand and was re-

placed by the M/V Chilkat. The M/V Chilkat could carry 59 passengers and 15 vehicles. It began daily service between Juneau, Haines, and Skagway in April of that year.

Two years later, on January 3, 1959, Alaska became the 49th State and the M/V Chilkat became the first State-owned ferry. That same year, the First Alaska Legislature approved the Alaska Ferry Transportation Act, and voters approved bond issues totaling \$18 million to expand the ferry fleet. These bonds enabled the State to commission four new vessels and build docks throughout southeast Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula. In 1963, with the establishment of the Division of Marine Transportation, the Alaska Marine Highway System was officially launched.

Over the past 50 years the Alaska Marine Highway has grown to include 11 vessels which serve 35 communities. From the southern terminus in Bellingham, WA, the system stretches more than 3,500 miles to Dutch Harbor, AK. It makes port calls in Prince Rupert, BC, and throughout Alaska's Inside Passage. It travels across the Gulf of Alaska to Prince William Sound and along the Aleutian Chain, all to carry the Nation's commerce to distant destinations and Alaska's passengers to home ports. Through this scenic highway, Alaskans share their incredible natural beauty with visitors from around the world and connect with each other through a transportation system which has served safely and reliably for 50 years.

Thank you for allowing me to celebrate this milestone 50th anniversary of the unique Alaska treasure known as the Alaska Marine Highway System.●

OBSERVING ELIZABETH PERATROVICH DAY

● Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, every year on February 16, Alaskans take time to remember and celebrate Elizabeth Peratrovich, a Tlingit woman who demonstrated courage in her convictions—a courage which changed the course of civil rights treatment for Alaska Natives.

Almost 25 years ago, the Alaska State Legislature designated this date as Elizabeth Peratrovich Day to commemorate the signing of the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945 and to honor Ms. Peratrovich.

Elizabeth Wanamaker was born on July 4, 1911. Her family traveled extensively on missionary trips throughout southeast Alaska, providing Elizabeth with broad educational experiences and connecting her with people throughout the region—an extraordinary opportunity for a Native girl of that era.

After leaving the State to attend Western College in Bellingham, WA, she returned to Alaska with her new husband, Roy Peratrovich, who was half Tlingit, to work in the canneries in Klawock. Both were educated and

interested in Native issues, and Roy joined the Alaska Native Brotherhood, ANB, and Elizabeth joined the Alaska Native Sisterhood, ANS. Both ANB and ANS were working to gain land claims and civil rights for Alaska's Native people. Their interests turned to activism, and Elizabeth and Roy began to get more involved in their community. Roy was elected as mayor of Klawock.

Eventually, the couple decided to move to Alaska's territorial capital, Juneau, in search of more opportunities and a better education for their children. Their dreams quickly dissolved when they discovered Natives were not welcome in many places in Juneau. There were signs reading "No dogs, No Natives or Filipinos" and others that simply said "No Natives Allowed." They found separate drinking fountains and separate entryways in public buildings for non-Whites. They learned they could only purchase property in Native neighborhoods, could only be seated in a segregated portion of the local theater, and could only send their children to missionary schools—not the public schools for which they paid a school tax.

In 1941, Elizabeth and Roy wrote a joint letter to Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening about their concerns. Many legislators were entrenched with the idea that Alaska Natives were second class citizens and despite the fact they paid taxes and bore arms in defense of the Nation, they were not endowed with the same rights as others.

However, 1945 brought some hope. Antidiscrimination legislation had passed the Alaska State House but was stalled in the Senate. One senator made a speech stating that Natives had only recently emerged from savagery and they were not fit for society. He argued they had not had the experience of 5,000 years of civilization.

With great courage and composure, Elizabeth Peratrovich stood during public testimony and confronted the senator who had just belittled her and her people. Not only was she a Native addressing the mostly White senate, she was also the first woman ever to address the body.

Elizabeth Peratrovich opened her testimony with, "I would not have expected that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind gentlemen with five thousand years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill of Rights."

The senate gallery and floor exploded in applause. The opposition that had been so absolute and emphatic shrank to a mere whisper.

On February 8, 1945, a bill to end discrimination in Alaska passed the senate by a vote of 11 to 5. The bill was signed into law on February 16—the day we celebrate Elizabeth Peratrovich Day.

Elizabeth Peratrovich was instrumental in making Alaska the first organized government under the U.S. flag to condemn discrimination. Today in Alaska, we celebrate Elizabeth

Peratovich Day and affirm our beliefs in equality.

Thank you for allowing me to embrace the memory of one woman who fought for equality for all, Alaskan Elizabeth Peratovich.●

REMEMBERING KEVIN TONN

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Kevin Tonn, a loving son, devoted friend, and respected law enforcement official. Officer Tonn lost his life serving the Galt Police Department on January 15, 2013. He was 35 years old.

Kevin Tonn was raised in the Sacramento region. He graduated from Roseville High School and the Roseville Police Explorers program before serving in the U.S. Army as a military police officer at Fort Drum and later as a firefighter in New York. In January 2009, he returned home to California and graduated from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Academy.

For the past 3½ years, Officer Kevin Tonn was a member of the Galt Police Department, where he was known for his hard work, sense of humor, and dedication to the community and its people. In his short time with the department, he was promoted to the K-9 unit, where he proudly served with his devoted German Shepherd partner, Yaro.

Officer Kevin Tonn, like all those who serve in law enforcement, put his life on the line to protect and serve his community. His commitment to public safety and to the citizens he served will never be forgotten.

On behalf of the people of California, whom he served so well, I send my gratitude and deep sympathy to his friends and family, including his beloved parents Will and Mary Ann Tonn. We are forever indebted to Officer Tonn for his courage, service, and sacrifice.●

HONORING GORDON H. MANSFIELD

● Mr. BURR. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SANDERS and myself, as the ranking member and chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I wish to pay tribute to Gordon H. Mansfield, a great American hero, a distinguished public servant, and a boundless advocate and friend of veterans, who died on January 29, 2013, concluding a life of exceptional service to America.

On February 4, 1968, Gordon, then a young Army captain, was leading troops in battle in Quang Tri province, Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive when he was shot twice in the spine by the enemy.

Without the use of his legs, he made sure all his men were safe and all other wounded troops were evacuated before he allowed himself to be medevac'd. Gordon received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on that day—a day that marked a new beginning, not an end, to his service to our Nation.

The wounds Gordon suffered required him to use a wheelchair for mobility for the remainder of his life, but after 5 years of rehabilitation and thanks to his amazing determination, he graduated from law school and started a new chapter in his life.

In 1981, he joined the staff of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and he later became its executive director. His passion for public service led him to become the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. And in 2001, he joined the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, first as Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, then as Deputy Secretary, and briefly, in 2007, as Acting Secretary.

At VA, Gordon brought his unique perspective on the needs of paralyzed veterans to the day-to-day management of the Department. He spoke out regularly on the need to improve access for paralyzed veterans to VA services; to ensure that disabled veterans were properly compensated for their services; and to provide opportunity for every paralyzed veteran to live a full, barrier-free, and productive life.

In 2009, Gordon retired from VA, but he did not conclude his service to veterans and their families. He became a member of the board of directors of the Wounded Warrior Project, serving a new generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. He also joined the board of directors of the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Foundation.

Gordon's lifetime contributions to our country and its citizens were well recognized. In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, his military decorations included the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame in 2007 and the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame in 1997.

He received the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, the Robert Dole Service to Our Nation Award, the Disabled American Veterans Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year Award, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America Outstanding Service to Veterans Award.

We offer his wife Linda; his children, Gordon and Leon; and his entire family our deepest condolences. They, and all Americans, have lost a remarkable leader, a courageous hero, and a role model to all individuals with disabilities. He will be sorely missed.●

VERMONT ESSAY WINNERS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD winning essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the Third Annual "What is the State of the Union?" Essay contest conducted by my office.

The essays follow.

CAROLINE BRAUN, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (WINNER)

There is no simple cure for the abundant issues plaguing our nation. Not only are we recovering from a recession, but we also are confronting challenges related to climate change, healthcare, and education. While our efforts to address these issues are noble, our failure to solve them reflects a more concerning societal problem.

On December 14, 2012, twenty children and six faculty members were fatally shot in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Not only did this devastating tragedy leave close friends, family, and the local community in shock, but also the nation. Though it is remarkable that our country embraced the friends and families of those killed, we only seem to value such a strong sense of community after a crisis. The dramatic increase in violence in the past decade raises new questions about our current societal values and priorities: have we forgotten what's truly important in this new age? While we enjoy the many luxuries that accompany technology and contemporary life, has the lure of modern convenience eclipsed our fundamental human need to take care of and support each other, our families, and our communities?

Perhaps it is time we recalibrate who we are and who we want to be as a country so that the fundamental values on which our country was founded can once again flourish. How can one pursue happiness without access to basic healthcare, food, or the ability to spend time with the ones we love? Certainly when our forefathers declared our right to bear arms, their intent was not for corporations and special interest groups to profit from its citizens being armed with assault weapons intended for war. Instead of unbridled greed and big business dominating our economy, it is imperative we support small businesses so they can thrive once again. Environmentally, we have yet to replace our dependence on oil with renewable energy resources and reduce our effects on climate change. And while we all agree educating our children is a requisite investment in our future, teachers continue to earn, on average, 12 percent less than other workers with similar education and work experience.

As a world leader and role model for democracy and peace, we need initiatives that not only connect people and communities, but also ones that will act as catalysts for change. Increasing awareness of issues related to social justice will spark larger movements for societal change; whether it is reducing community violence, practicing business ethics, implementing renewable energy sources, advocating for mental health care, or investing in our teachers and schools. Instead of businesses and special interest groups being the sole influence on policies and the direction of our country, now is the time, once again, for all citizens to be heard, cared for, and respected. Although as a nation we have made and continue to make advances that were inconceivable just a century ago, our penchant for the new shouldn't trump our commitment to older values and fundamental human rights. EMILY ELLSWORTH, COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL (2ND PLACE)

Social mobility is essential to the development of the American character. The ability to overcome class distinctions and succeed economically through hard work equates to opportunity. Yet current U.S. taxation policies are harming the middle-class and widening the gaps of income inequality, thus narrowing the window of opportunity for Americans. Federally enforced legislation such as the Bush Tax Cuts and the income