

GOOD WISHES, GOOD NEWS AND A
GOOD IDEA**HON. HENRY J. HYDE**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, please permit me to share with my colleagues the delightful story of a Larry McManus and his efforts to bring a small measure of gratitude to our collective conscience. Four years ago, Larry concluded that, as Americans, we fail too often to appreciate the good deeds of others. And so, with little fanfare, but with strong determination, Larry set out to establish National Write a Letter of Appreciation Week. This holiday is a gift free event held annually during the first week in March. I commend to my colleagues excerpts of a wonderful story authored by Chicago Tribune columnist Eric Zorn that captures the essence of Larry's mission.

THOSE WHO SHAPED YOUR LIFE DESERVE A
LETTER OF THANKS

In your past, there is someone who was very important to you but may not know it.

Is it a teacher who inspired you to better things? Is it a mentor who pushed you along when you most needed pushing? Is it a former neighbor or lost friend who gave wisdom and support? Is it a boss or a health-care professional or a pastor or a cop or a firefighter? Is it a famous person who took a moment to give you attention and encouragement, or an artist you never met but whose work lifted you?

Whoever it is, chances are good this person either doesn't remember you or have any idea that you remember him or her with such fondness. And chances are also good that it would make this person's day—big time—to hear from across the years: "Thanks for everything. You made a difference."

These are awkward words for all but the most demonstrative among us. They seem to require the excuse of an occasion, a landmark for reflection, yet too often that occasion is death—at which point such expressions, no matter how heartfelt, are tardy.

Larry McManus of suburban McHenry created a more timely occasion: National Write a Letter of Appreciation Week.

Simply, he suggests that you write letters to those who have gone out of their way at some point to brighten your life. He includes in his list of potential recipients notably friendly store clerks, waiters and waitresses, repair workers, bus drivers and dentists.

"Can you imagine how pleased these people would be if you took the time to write a

short letter acknowledging their kindness, concern or assistance?" McManus asked in one of his faxes.

"I have a hunch that gratitude and graciousness are connected," he continued. "By extending our feelings of gratitude to another we become, perhaps, by just a little bit, more gracious. I believe that writing a letter of thanks . . . is an antidote to what seems to me the coarsening of our national culture and spirit."

McManus' week, which he hopes will become an annual event, has received the endorsement of Gov. Jim Edgar and McHenry Mayor Steven Cuda. He also has the informal support of many McHenry County school officials, who he says have told him they will encourage students to participate and learn the value of both correspondence and expression of gratitude.

I come from a long line of educators and can report that my parents are always moved when they receive a kind remembrance from an old student—the older the better. It validates what they are doing far more than even the most positive end-of-semester student evaluation. Such a letter is where the echo is louder than the applause.

I wrote one about four years ago to Pete Seeger, the septuagenarian folkie. Dr. Seuss had just died, and I'd been struck by how pleased he would have been to have read and heard all the sentimental slop from grown-ups about how much his books had meant to them.

Seeger recordings gave me pleasure for years and helped inspire me to learn to play, however indifferently, several folk instruments. And I knew someday I'd wake up and read his obituary and regret never having thanked him. So, tactfully not mentioning the inevitability of his demise as my motivation, I wrote him a brief but warm letter of appreciation and received a friendly reply.

And now that Larry McManus mentions it, there are some other people I should probably write to next week. You, too?

IN MEMORY OF MARY
STRASSMEYER**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of an exceptional figure in the Cleveland media for nearly forty years, Mary Strassmeyer. Ms. Strassmeyer prided herself on her journalistic talent and her insight into the Cleveland social scene.

As a native of the Old Brooklyn section of Cleveland, Ms. Strassmeyer lived on the same street where she was raised for most of her life. Devoted to the Greater Cleveland area, she attended Notre Dame College in South Euclid, majoring in English and history. Ms. Strassmeyer began her journalistic career in 1956 at the Cleveland News as a reporter. After the paper dissolved in 1960, she joined the Cleveland Plain Dealer, a place she called home for over thirty years.

At first, Ms. Strassmeyer wrote travel pieces for the Plain Dealer and served as beauty editor. She was named Society Editor in 1965. She helped to develop a nationally-syndicated cartoon during this time and wrote articles on teen beauty. Ms. Strassmeyer created her famous social column in 1976 entitled "Today" which was later called "Mary, Mary." She also worked in broadcasting in the early 1980's with shows on radio and television, and received a law degree from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1981. She retired in 1997 and began to devote her time to her law practice and her travel agency.

My fellow colleagues, join me in saluting the life of a journalistic paragon, a woman who understood the social structure of Cleveland society: Mary Strassmeyer.

A CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS OF
LOVE, HONOR AND RESPECT MR.
& MRS. JAMES RUZICKA**HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my heartfelt congratulations to a wonderful couple from my district, Mr. & Mrs. James Ruzicka. Mr. & Mrs. Ruzicka celebrate 50 years of devoted love, honor and respect.

As Mr. & Mrs. James Ruzicka celebrate their anniversary, their 50 years of committed love, friendship and respect shows how love grows deeper and stronger through the years.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations on their love and success to Mr. & Mrs. James Ruzicka as they celebrate their anniversary. May happiness be theirs in everything they do.