But Jeremiah was a man of duty and loyalty. When the war came, he hiked north to Ashville, where he mustered with the 14th North Carolina. In the ensuing years, he fought with the 14th of North Carolina in Virginia: at Richmont, Spottsylvania Courthouse, Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, to the bitter end at Appomattox. At the conclusion of the war, Jeremiah walked the hundreds of miles back to his beloved farm in Greenville.

Let me say that Jeremiah would have been very, very proud of his grandson Jerry. He would have been proud that Jerry chose to go to The Citadel. He would have been proud of Jerry’s decision to go into the infantry. He would have been proud that in the bitterest, coldest engagements in Korea, Jerry stood and fought at the point of maximum danger—commander of rifle company on the front line. He would have understood Jerry’s agony when a comrade fighting at his side, an African-American, sustained a wound. He was a soldier—serviced for a second combat tour in Vietnam.

And finally, Jeremiah would have been proud that at the end of the fighting, Jerry always returned to his farm in upper Greenville County—land that Whitmires have farmed for more than two centuries. Jerry worked that land as a dairyman and cattleman throughout his adult life. He loved it with all his heart. Right up to the last, Jerry was happiest when he was tending his cows, walking the bottomlands, jumping over creeks, climbing the highest hills. On that farm, Jerry Whitmire was at home.

Of course, for family and friends gathered here, we do not remember Jerry as a fierce warrior. We remember him as the gentlest of gentlemen—a man who was always full of laughter, a man who loved to make other people laugh. Jerry was a soldier, a devoted father, a loving husband to the woman he called "Trigger"—a man who was always full of laughter, a man who loved to make other people laugh. Jerry worked that land as a dairyman and cattleman throughout his adult life. He loved it with all his heart. Right up to the last, Jerry was happiest when he was tending his cows, walking the bottomlands, jumping over creeks, climbing the highest hills. On that farm, Jerry Whitmire was at home.

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And so it is with people. Sometimes their lives can be captured best in the fewest, simplest words. To capture the essence of Jerry’s life, I once again go back to his great-grandfather, Jeremiah, who is buried at Ebenezer Baptist church not far from the Greenville farm. And on the gravestone, his epitaph is exactly eight words long: "Confederate Soldier, Christian Citizen, Faithful to Every Trust." With one necessary amendment, those same words can now sum up Jerry Cleveland Whitmire’s life: American soldier, Christian citizen, faithful to every trust. We will remember him with love. May he rest in peace.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ANNUAL HONOREES

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ
OF NEW JERSEY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, March 29, 2001

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Police Officer Edward Ryan, Firefighter Brian O’Sullivan, and EMT Lt. Raymond Branigan, all of whom will be honored by the Knights of Columbus on March 31, 2001.

For the past eight years, The Fourth Degree Assembly 675 Knights of Columbus of Bayonne, New Jersey has honored officers from the city’s three branches of service. The award honors both individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty and the departments that employ these brave men and women.

Police Officer Edward Ryan is being honored for evacuating the occupants of two burning buildings. On January 22, 2000, Officer Ryan was dispatched to a call regarding a fire at 86 W. 16th Street. Upon arrival, Officer Ryan found the building engulfed in flames and the wealth of a life well lived . . . the wealth of our respect and admiration and love.

The result of this lifetime of generosity and giving is that Jerry did not die a rich man. Money was not what drove him. Jerry understood that we make a living by what we give. He was forever giving: himself, his labor, his money. As a result he takes to the grave the only wealth that really matters: the wealth of a life well lived . . . the wealth of our respect and admiration and love.

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