Tribute to Mr. Robert Coultier "Dink" Eldridge

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, Jr. OF TENNESSEE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer a tribute to one of Knoxville, Tennessee’s finest citizens. Many in this body and around the Country will not recognize his name, but when Mr. Robert Coultier “Dink” Eldridge, Sr. passed away at the age of 85 on February 21, 2003 this Nation lost a great American. Many Knoxvilleians join me in mourning his death.

Dink Eldridge graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1940. During his final years at the University, he managed the Volunteer Football team as they went undefeated in regular season play and participated in the Orange Bowl, the Rose Bowl and the Sugar Bowl. More than victory marked his time with the Volunteers however. Those who knew him at this time also remember his dedicated leadership and desire to see every athlete reach his fullest potential.

In addition to his time managing the Volunteers, Dink managed the East Army All Star football team at Yale University with the great General R.R. Neyland. In 1942 Dink Eldridge was called to serve his Nation in the United States Army where he served with distinction as a second lieutenant in the Tank Corps. Here again, Dink proved his willingness to serve his fellow man and was awarded both a Purple Heart and Bronze Star medal for his efforts. After a brief period away from the military, Dink was called on again, this time in the Korean War.

During his professional career, Dink demonstrated a deeply held commitment to excellence. Following his early days as a lineman for Bell Systems, Dink steadily rose in his career. While his supervisory work for Bell took him to cities across the State, Dink was eventually able to return to Knoxville where he served as District Engineer until his retirement in 1971.

Like many leaders, Dink was unable to remain retired for long. In 1986, he was named president of the Concord Telephone Exchange. Dink provided steady leadership to this organization during a period of tremendous growth and remained president until his second retirement in 1993.

With this said, Dink is possibly best known to the people of East Tennessee for his dedicated work in the community. His generosity of time touched countless lives. Through his work on the executive board of the Great Smoky Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America and a President of the Knox County Little League Baseball league alone, Dink passed his love of Country and community onto a generation of young people.

In everything Dink did, he strove for excellence in himself and sought to inspire the same in those around him. To have known Dink for many years, but I am even more proud to have called Dink Eldridge a personal friend.

To his wife Anna Yvonne I say thank-you for being such a supportive and loving part of his life and to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Dink truly say continue carrying the banner of service your father and grandfather held so high.

Honoring Huntington Historical Society

HON. STEVE ISRAEL OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the Huntington Historical Society.

The Huntington Historical Society was founded by the local community as an outgrowth of the collection of artifacts gathered together in 1903 for exhibition at the celebration of the Town of Huntington’s 250th anniversary. The exhibition was so well received by the community that the exhibition committee decided to keep its collection together and found a Society whose mission would be to preserve the heritage of the Town of Huntington, by maintaining museums, collections and a research center, by educating the public about Long Island’s regional history, and by promoting the preservation of historic buildings and sites.

The society serves the dual role of being a repository for the treasures of Huntington’s founding families while also reaching out to the community to provide a sense of place and identity in a rapidly changing area proud of its deep historic roots. In addition, the Huntington Historical Society is distinguished as one of the oldest repositories of local history in the New York metropolitan area.

I commend the Huntington Historical Society for their dedication to the historical preservation of the great town of Huntington, and congratulate them on their 100th anniversary.

President Shevardnadze’s Statement Welcomed, but Action Also Needed

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge and welcome the March 14th statement of the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, pledging his commitment to religious freedom for all Georgians and promising the punishment of individuals complicit in mob attacks on religious minorities. (I am submitting the statement for the RECORD below.) President Shevardnadze made this pledge during an ecumenical service in Tbilisi’s Evangelist-Baptist Cathedral Church, attended by leaders of the Georgian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist churches and many individuals from the diplomatic community. The U.S. Ambassador to Georgia, Richard Miles, also attended and addressed the gathering. Reportedly, so many people came that hundreds had to listen via loudspeakers in the churchyard.

The service was initially planned for late January, but defrocked priest Basil Mkavlishvili and his crowd of thugs assaulted worshipers and clergy an hour before it was scheduled to begin—first in December, then again in February, and then again in March. Reports say between 150 and 200 people were beaten as they tried to leave, with rocks and stones being reportedly thrown. While President Shevardnadze quickly condemned that attack, ordering the Interior Minister, the Prosecutor General, State Chancellery Head, and the Security Council Secretary to investigate and punish the perpetrators, no arrests or prosecutions followed.

Despite Georgia’s appalling record on religious tolerance for the last few years, I hope President Shevardnadze’s speech at the Baptist church signals a new determination to arrest and aggressively prosecute the mob leaders and their henchmen. He promised that “as the President of Georgia and a believer, I shall not restrict myself only to a mere expression of resentment. I do promise that the President and the Authorities of Georgia will do their utmost to grant every person freedom of expression of faith.” Driving home the point further, Mr. Shevardnadze declared, “the state will exert its pressure on whoever comes in defiance of this principle. You may stand assured that the aggressors will be brought to justice.”

As Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, over the past three years I have watched with increasing alarm the escalation of mob violence. On September 24th I chaired a Commission hearing focused on this disturbing pattern. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have borne the brunt of attacks, along with Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists and Catholics. Most disheartening has been the government’s indifference; victims throughout the country have filed approximately 3,000 criminal complaints, without one criminal conviction.

Despite a series of statements by President Shevardnadze, Georgia’s Minister of Interior
and Prosecutor General appear unwilling to effec-
tively enforce the rule of law, refusing to ar-
rest mob leaders like Mkalavishvili and Paata
Bluashvili and not attempting serious prosecu-
tions. For example, the trial of Mkalavishvili
has dragged on for more than a year, without
a single piece of evidence considered yet. I
would imagine that adequate and visible
security, which took months to organize,
will continue and that the prosecutor will begin
his case shortly. Also, the inauguration of trial
proceedings against Bluashvili in Rustavi is
positive; I trust the delays and shenanigans
seen in Mkalavishvili’s trial will not be re-
peated there. I also urge the Government of
Georgia to arrest and detain Mkalavishvili,
Bluashvili and other indicted persons who con-
tinue to perpetrate violent criminal acts against
religious minorities.

Undoubtedly, President Shevardnadze’s
presence at the March 14th service and his
statement illustrate his personal commitment
to religious tolerance and basic law and order.
Yet, while I appreciate his gesture, it is time
for real action. If the attacks are allowed to
continue, we will only weaken the government’s
ability to enforce the rule of law. And, of course, we must not
forget that the plight of minority religious communities
will continue, it will only become more difficult to
prosecute the aggressors.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with
my colleagues to enact it as soon as possible.
This year NRCS named Ben its rangeland
ambassador and diplomats accredited in
Georgia, who have come this evening to
share our happiness.

I am happy because you are together,
but important step to improve health care ac-
ceptance to these life saving services for many
Medicare beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Medicare Outpatient Co-
payment Reduction Act of 2003 is a simple bill.
We've charged seniors outrageous amounts for too long already for hospital out-
patient services. Seniors shouldn't have to
wait another 26 years before they are fairly
charged for outpatient services. This is an in-
cremental approach that lowers the co-pay-
ment level to 20 percent by 2010. It's a small,
but important step to improve health care ac-
cess for seniors. I look forward to working
with my colleagues to enact it as soon as possible.

HON. FORNY PETE STARK
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr.
McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to
take this opportunity to recognize Ben
Berlinger of La Junta, Colorado. Ben has
worked with the Natural Resource Conserva-
tion Service for over 25 years, and I would like
to recognize his accomplishments before this
body—particularly Ben’s work in the western states.

Ben started his job with Natural Resource
Conservation Service in 1975, becoming an
area rangeland management specialist in
1981 when he moved to Eastern Colorado.
He has served in La Junta for 14 years, working
with his agency and local ranchers and agri-
cultural producers to ensure good rangeland
management and to develop and implement
sound technology on grazing land resources.
This year NRCS named Ben its rangeland

HON. J. GRESHAM BARRETT
OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to
consider the development of remarks.

HON. SCOTT McINNIS
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2003