

our country. Asian Pacific American Heritage month, observed during the month of May, celebrates the diverse cultures represented by the over 13 million Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage in our country. The theme for this year's APA month, "Salute to Liberty: Many Journeys, One Dream" represents Asian Pacific Americans' diverse paths to achieving their goals. In New Jersey, where Asians are the fastest growing racial group, this month is particularly significant. Asian Pacific Americans in my State play important roles such as educating our students, owning small businesses, working on new technologies, and holding public office.

The difficult journeys of Asian Pacific Americans include the Chinese laborers who built our Nation's railroads, Japanese Americans who were sent to internment camps during WWII, refugees from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian nations, immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, and Filipino farm workers. Despite the great obstacles faced on these journeys, Asian Pacific Americans have accomplished a great deal and have made major contributions to our country.

First and foremost, I would like to recognize the service of Asian Pacific Americans in our Armed Forces, especially as we celebrate Memorial Day. The history of Asian Pacific Americans in military service stretches from William Ah Hang, who enlisted in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War, to the more than 25,000 Japanese Americans who served during World War II, to the young APA men and women fighting terrorism today. In particular, I would like for us to remember Lance Corporate Alan Dinh Lam, a 19 year old Vietnamese-American from North Carolina and Corporal Kempahoom A. Chanawongse, a 22 year old Thai-American who moved from Thailand to Connecticut at age 9. These two young men recently gave their lives for our country during the war with Iraq.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Asian Pacific Americans in space exploration. Kalpana Chawla was the first Indian-American woman to go into space. Although she lost her life during the recent space shuttle Columbia disaster, Ms. Chawla will be remembered for her work in the field of aerospace engineering. Currently, another Asian Pacific American, Eric Lu, is working on the International Space Station. His work is certain to inspire many young men and women interested in space.

The brave men and woman I mentioned today are only a small example of the difficult endeavors undertaken by Asian Pacific Americans. It is my hope that recognizing the heritage and accomplishments of Asian Pacific Americans will inspire the next generation to embark upon challenging journeys and reach their dreams.

BETTY BROWN CASEY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Washington is, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful cities in our country. It is also a city rich in history and cultural advantages.

Many people have, over the years, added to Washington's achievements and glories. One very special person who has done that is Betty Brown Casey. I have had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Casey because my wife, Marcelle, serves on the Board of the Washington Opera. Mrs. Casey has been one of the greatest supporters the Washington Opera has ever known.

On Sunday, April 13, Mrs. Casey threw a party for the Washington Opera. This will go down as one of the greatest and most memorable parties thrown in this city. Marcelle and I were fortunate to attend, and when we left Washington before dawn the next morning, we had the joy of reading Roxanne Roberts' article about Mrs. Casey, titled "Phenom of the Opera."

I hope my fellow Senators will enjoy this as much as I did, and I ask unanimous consent that this article about this extraordinarily generous woman be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 14, 2003]
PHENOM OF THE OPERA; PATRON BETTY BROWN CASEY GIVES A PARTY
(By Roxanne Roberts)

As fairy godmothers go, Betty Brown Casey is pretty nice to have on your team.

The low-key philanthropist has a passion for the Washington Opera, a passion that has translated into millions in donations and support for the organization. Last night Casey threw a gala concert for 2,500 fellow lovers of the opera—and picked up the entire tab herself.

"We're here to say thank you to all of you for all the years in the Washington Opera family," she told the audience. Casey ticked off a list of the thankees: Volunteers, staff, board members, subscribers and "those of you who sat—year after year—quietly, patiently and resignedly, in seats next to those who loved opera—and you didn't." Long-suffering husbands in tuxedos broke into huge grins as knowing laughter rippled through DAR Constitution Hall.

The program included mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves, soprano Veronica Villarroel, bass Rene Pape, conductor Valery Gergiev and the Three Mo' Tenors. (Artistic Director Placido Domingo was scheduled to conduct and sing at the gala, but was sidelined by stomach flu.)

"Tonight is wonderful," said Betty Vertiz, a Washington Opera subscriber since the 1960s. "We even like our seats!"

Three generations of her family attended the gala: husband Oscar Vertiz, his daughter Virginia Cameron and granddaughter Carrie Gouskos. "It's nice for people who are faithful to the opera to feel they're appreciated," she said.

All because Casey wanted to do "something nice" after the risky move to Constitution Hall, the Washington Opera's temporary home this year while the Kennedy Center Opera House undergoes renovations. The cost of last night's soiree? "It's a private party," she demurred, but a savvy eye would chalk up seven figures.

"She's been the absolute soul of the company," Domingo said last week. "She always wants to do more and thank anybody who's been involved with the company in any capacity."

Casey, sitting nearby, flushed with embarrassment. The philanthropist shrinks from anything that smacks of self-promotion, and agreed to speak to a reporter only to highlight the contributions of everybody else.

"It's just that this company went through some hard times and there were many, many people who worked very hard to not only keep us going and to make us better and better over the years. I just felt it was a good time to say thank you to Placido—who has been the real spark plug for everything that has happened to us—and to everybody. We really feel like a family, so I felt we should have a family reunion."

Casey, 75, has had a soft spot for opera since she was a teenager. "I just love the music," she said with a smile. "I get into the music and I'm just there. Terrible as it may seem, Placido, there are times when I don't care who's singing. I just love the music."

Luckily for the opera, Casey is in a position to nurture that love. After 31 years of marriage to legendary Maryland developer Eugene Bernard Casey, she inherited an estate of more than \$200 million when he died in 1986. She has led a very private life since then, quietly doling out donations to her pet projects.

"I just think that everybody in life does what they can do," she said. "I'm naturally shy, and I'm just more comfortable when people don't think I do anything—because I don't feel like I do. I only do things that I really believe in, I only do things that I can afford, and I don't do things I ask other people to give to. I don't start something and then ask other people to give me money to do that project. So I don't try to bother anybody, so to speak."

"Betty knows, and some of us, we know it," said Domingo. "And that's enough."

Her support is funneled through the Eugene B. Casey Foundation to the Salvation Army, Suburban Hospital, George Washington University and Georgetown University and its hospital. She generated more than a few headlines when she offered to build an official residence for the District's mayor on a 17-acre estate in Northwest Washington, and created a \$50 million endowment to plant and tend the city's trees.

Casey has a special affection for the Washington Opera. She joined the board in 1974 and has been a member ever since; she now holds the title of life chairman. In 1996, she spent \$18 million to buy the Woodward & Lothrop building with the idea of converting it into a state-of-the-art opera house in the heart of downtown Washington. When the opera decided to remain at the Kennedy Center instead, the company was allowed to sell the building and keep the profits.

"She's terrific," said Opera President Michael Sonnenreich. "She's stepped up and exhibited a leadership role for the opera beyond financial. She's setting examples for others to follow."

Last night's gala comes after the company's successful move to Constitution Hall—an artistic experiment that, so far, has generated praise from critics and subscribers alike.

The evening began with a standing ovation for Casey, who thanked everyone who had contributed to the success of the 47-year-old company. She asked for whistles, bravos and bravas for two individuals who had carried the opera during the tough times: former general director Martin Feinstein and longtime board member Christine Hunter.

The program was full of familiar material—and a few surprises. The strongest applause came for Pape, who sang two arias for

his Washington debut: "Le veau d'or" from Gounod's "Faust," and "Ella giammai m'amo" from Verdi's "Don Carlo." Tenor John Matz had his role unexpectedly expanded when he filled in for Domingo in "Granada." Washington native Graves had the widest repertoire, with a French aria and an American spiritual, and the Three Mo' Tenors were also all over the map with the classic "La donna e mobile" followed by "Let the Good Times Roll."

The good times kept rolling after the concert, when 300 guests joined Casey for dinner and dancing at the Organization of American States across the street. The grand ballroom was lavishly decorated with spring bouquets, Peter Duchin kept the dance floor hopping, and the speeches were short but sincere. "I am so impressed by Betty," said Washington Opera Chairman Jim Kimsey. "Without her the opera would not be what it is today."

The hostess was characteristically low-key about the evening. "I thought it was wonderful, really great," she said, "Perfect, really, except for Placido" not being here.

Washington Post music critic emeritus Joseph McLellan contributed to this report.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

• Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to America's senior citizens. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy designated May "Older Americans Month" to acknowledge the accomplishments of our Nation's elder generations. I welcome this opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions of those individuals who have played such a major role in shaping our great Nation. For those of us in the Senate who have worked to ensure that the members of America's "greatest generation" will be able to enjoy their later years with dignity and independence, this is a chance to honor them for their hard work and the countless sacrifices they have made during their lifetimes, and to look forward to their continued contributions to the welfare of our country.

Today's senior citizens have witnessed more technological advances than any other generation in our Nation's history. Seniors today have lived through times of extreme economic depression and prosperity, times of war and peace, and have seen incredible advancements in the fields of science, medicine, transportation and communications. They have embraced these new technologies and used them to further develop their vital roles in America's communities. Older Americans are working and volunteering far beyond the traditional retirement age to give younger generations the benefit of their wisdom and experience. Moreover, they are in much better health than their counterparts in previous generations and far less likely to be impoverished, disabled, or confined to nursing homes.

Recent census figures reveal that the number of older Americans continues to grow. The population of those 85 and older grew 37 percent during the 1990s,

while the Nation's overall population increased only 13 percent. Approximately 35 million people 65 and older were counted in the 2000 census as well as 50,500 Americans who were 100 or older. Baby boomers, who represented one-third of all Americans in 1994, will enter the 65-years-and-older category over the next 13 to 34 years, substantially increasing this segment of our population.

These figures reinforce the need to demonstrate our commitment to programs such as Medicare and Social Security, and to stimulate investment in biomedical research and treatments that are improving the lives of older Americans. One of our national goals must be to ensure all older Americans benefit from these improvements. In Congress, we must ensure our legislative priorities reflect our dedication to the support that older Americans deserve. This includes expanding and strengthening those programs that effectively aid older Americans, and addressing those that fall short of assisting this valuable and constantly expanding segment of our society. I have worked with my colleague from Maryland, Senator MIKULSKI, in her efforts to provide a \$5,000 tax credit for individuals with chronic care needs. I regret this credit was not included in this year's budget resolution but I will continue to support her efforts to see that Congress passes the Family Caregivers Tax Credit Act.

By 2020, Medicare will be responsible for covering nearly 20 percent of the population. Though Medicare meets the health care needs of millions of Americans, it was created in a different time before the benefits of prescription medicines had become such an integral part of health care. Sixty percent of Medicare beneficiaries lack affordable, prescription drug coverage. Although people 65 and older are 12.5 percent of the population, they fill 34 percent of all prescriptions. Today it is impossible to imagine quality health care coverage that does not include affordable medicines to treat and prevent illness.

I have and will continue to fight for Medicare prescription drug coverage for all seniors. Earlier this year, I again cosponsored legislation to provide coverage of outpatient prescription drugs under the Medicare program and to provide greater access to affordable medications. I recognize the predicament of many older Americans as they struggle to live independently on a fixed income and at the same time spend money on costly prescription drugs. The tremendous advances in biomedical research that have led to life-saving drugs and treatments are of little use if the population that stands to benefit the most cannot afford them. It is imperative that we address the needs of the Americans who have sacrificed so much for the benefit of our society. Like all Americans, they deserve access to comprehensive health care.

One of the strengths that I admire most about older generations is their

devotion and concern for younger Americans. As we face the dilemma of funding Social Security and some of my colleagues make proposals to privatize the program, older Americans have been the most outspoken advocates of ensuring its existence for future generations. Their determination to preserve this important social insurance program is not weakened by questionable reports that privatization proposals would not alter or reduce their benefits. Instead, they fight on, trying to ensure the benefits of Social Security will be there for others for years to come. I support their efforts and strongly oppose altering the fundamental social insurance nature of the current system, the strength of which is the guaranteed benefit concept. It is our responsibility as legislators to make certain that this Nation's fiscal priorities reflect our enormous appreciation for America's senior citizens.

I continue to be impressed with the degree to which our elders contribute to American society. Our Nation's older generations are an ever-growing resource that deserve our attention, our gratitude, and our heartfelt respect. In accordance with President Kennedy's vision of Older Americans Month as a time to honor our older generations, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to implement public policies that recognize their contributions to our society. We have the opportunity to ensure the well-being of this Nation's most respected citizens, and it is my sincere hope that we pursue it with the same vigor that America's seniors have demonstrated throughout their many years of service to our country. ●

FEDEX CORPORATION AND HYBRID VEHICLES

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to bring to my colleague's attention to great step forward for the environment that the FedEx Corporation is undertaking. The company recently bought 20 hybrid trucks and has announced that it is planning to replace 30,000 of its delivery trucks with hybrid vehicles over the next 10 years.

This means that the FedEx Corporation is one of the first big commercial fleets to move toward using environmentally friendly hybrid vehicles.

The 20 hybrid trucks that have already been purchased are the delivery trucks that we see in cities across the Nation every day. These low-emission, hybrid electric-powered delivery vehicles will decrease particulate emissions by 90 percent, reduce smog-causing emissions by 75 percent and increase fuel efficiency by 50 percent.

FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corporation, has been working on this project for 3 years with Environmental Defense. The company and the environmental organization worked together as partners to develop the concept for manufacturers to create an "environmentally progressive commercial delivery vehicle."