

men under me," he said. "Of those 26, 13 lost their lives during our stay on Bougainville Island. Our job was to dig machine gun nests out of the big banyon tree roots where the Japanese had placed them. It was my job to lay down in a root trench and receive the flame throwers from one of my men. I would then drop the flame thrower down a hole which looked like a gopher hole to try to destroy the machine guns." Strauss would then have to scramble out of the hole as quickly as possible. We continued that dangerous mission for seven days but were unable to burn the machine gun nests out."

He explains that the flame throwing itself was not the hard part of the mission. The difficult part was getting back to their line without being hit by enemy fire.

He goes on to explain that on one of his flame throwing missions he received a head wound which was believed to have been from shrapnel but which he describes as "just a nick or scratch." For that wound he received a Purple Heart which he proudly displays with his other medals. He also received a Bronze Star for meritorious service while under the call of duty.

From Bougainville the 164th Infantry was shipped to the Philippines. Shortly after arriving there, Strauss came down with a strange skin disease. He received orders to go to the medics and, as a result, ended up in the hospital again. After a couple weeks he was shipped back to the United States, since his skin condition seemed to be getting worse instead of better. He was hospitalized at Harmon General Hospital in Longview, Texas for a few months and then was sent home for a month. An army doctor in Texas diagnosed his skin condition, which had been previously thought to be 'jungle rot,' as dermatitis. Once the correct diagnosis was made and proper treatment provided, his skin cleared up. He told his doctor that he was afraid of getting it back when he went back to the Philippines, since it seemed to be the dirty conditions in which the soldiers were forced to live that caused it. The doctor replied that he did not have to be afraid of that happening because he was sending him home instead.

In June of 1945 Strauss was sent to Fort Snelling where papers were filled out for his discharge. He was then sent back to his home town of Harvey.

After his discharge Strauss went back to work at the plumbing and heating business where he had been formerly employed. He was sent to a private machine shop in Wahpeton for six months of training, on a lathe. He later spent some time working on a ranch in the Bowman area. He then answered an ad for a maintenance worker at the Harvey hospital and was hired. He eventually became head of maintenance there and worked there for six years.

He left that position in 1969 and went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation with a crew that was working on the McClusky Dam. He worked at the commissary at the Fortuna Air Force Base at Crosby for a while and then worked in Housing and Maintenance at the same base for a couple years.

Strauss retired in 1975, at 62 years of age, and moved into an apartment in Harvey. He continued to do odd jobs in the Harvey area.

When his health began to fail in 1998 Strauss moved to the North Dakota Veterans Home. "I always had it in mind that I wanted to live here some day," said Strauss. "I had visited the home a few times and thought it was a nice place. I have never been sorry for a minute that I came here."

Strauss celebrated his 90th birthday with cake and ice cream treats at the NDVH in September. His nephew, David Strauss, Valley City, planned a big party for him.

Strauss's sister Mary and several nephews and nieces were on hand to help him celebrate.

Outside of some arthritis and a few heart problems Strauss said he is doing fine. He explained that he got the flu last spring and was sick for several months. However, once he recuperated from that bout he has been back to his old self. "They are so good to me here," he said. "Anything you need, you get. The staff people are always smiling. I couldn't have found a better home anywhere."

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#### RECOGNIZING JIM AYERS

### HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an incredible citizen of the 7th district of Tennessee.

Jim Ayers is the founder of the Ayers Foundation; since the fall of 2000, the Ayers Foundation has given as much as \$4,000 a year in scholarships to every high school graduate from Decatur County who agrees to go to college or technical school. Yes, I said every high school graduate.

Jim is a success in the health care, banking, real estate businesses to name a few—however, he has never forgotten his native Decatur County. Every community would be fortunate to have a Jim Ayers.

It took Mr. Ayers about eight years to put together an endowment and a staff of counselors to work with the students of Riverside High School and Scotts Hill High School. The benefits that the students of these schools have received is evidence that Jim Ayers is doing a great thing for our young people.

Only 25 percent of Riverside graduates pursued some form of postsecondary education before the scholarships were available. But the participation rate immediately shot up to 75 percent when the Ayers Foundation began. And now 90 percent of students at this school are able to further their education beyond high school.

He not only provides financial assistance to the aspiring high school seniors, he has a direct talk with the students—telling them "if anyone is going to take care of them, it's got to be themselves."

It is with great appreciation that I honor Mr. Jim Ayers for his service to community and for his commitment to education.

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#### REMEMBERING FEDERAL JUDGE JOHN HANNAH

### HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to mourn the sudden passing of Federal Judge John H. Hannah, Jr., chief judge for the U.S. Eastern District of Texas, who died this past Thursday while attending a judicial conference in Florida. John was 64.

Judge Hannah was an esteemed and respected jurist and public servant who served the State of Texas and his fellow citizens with

distinction as an attorney, legislator, State official and finally U.S. Federal judge. His untimely death is being mourned by numerous friends and supporters and his passing leaves a tremendous void in the U.S. Eastern District of Texas.

President Bill Clinton appointed John to the Federal bench in 1994, and he had been chief judge for the Eastern District since 2001. Governor Ann Richards named him the Texas Secretary of State in January 1991 on the day she was inaugurated, and one of his projects was working on passage of a new ethics law for State officials.

John was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1966, representing Angelina, Trinity, San Jacinto and Polk counties for three terms. He attended South Texas College of Law while serving as a State lawmaker. He then served as district attorney for Angelina County from 1973 to 1975 and served as legal counsel for the public interest group, Common Cause. In 1977 President Jimmy Carter appointed him U.S. attorney for the Eastern District, a position he held until 1981.

John also served in the U.S. Navy for 4 years. He grew up in Diboll, graduated from Sam Houston State University and was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus in 1993.

Judge Hannah's integrity and commitment to ethics are evident in his distinguished record of public service and in his many significant accomplishments on behalf of Texans. He was an accomplished jurist and statesman whose word was his bond and whose commitment to rendering fair decisions was well-known and highly respected. He leaves a powerful legacy for those in public service and in the practice of law to emulate.

John's wife, U.S. Magistrate Judith Guthrie of Tyler, is a respected jurist in her own right and was with him at the time of his death. Our hearts go out to her and to his father, John Hannah Sr.; son, John Hannah III; brother, James Hannah; and granddaughter, Rebecca. Their loss, though certainly more personal, is shared by all those who knew and admired Judge Hannah.

Mr. Speaker, as the House adjourns for business this year, let us do so by recognizing the remarkable contributions of this dedicated public servant, outstanding Texan and great American to whom we pay tribute and pay our last respects today—Judge John Hannah, Jr. May God bless his family in their time of sorrow.

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#### RECOGNIZING DR. JAMES E. OWEN, AN EDUCATOR HIS ENTIRE LIFE

### HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. James E. Owen whose professional education career has spanned 40 years.

Dr. Owen received his education at Jacksonville State Teachers College, the University of Alabama and Auburn University and began teaching in the Talladega (Alabama) City School System in 1949. His career was briefly interrupted while Dr. Owen was on active duty with the United States Army during the Korean Conflict. It was during his service at Camp