

freedom. This devotion and steadfast commitment to the defense of freedom and liberty around the world is the hallmark of a great American.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my personal gratitude to Lieutenant Colonel Ace for his service to the House of Representatives, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Gary for his service to our country. The United States will be well served as Lieutenant Colonel Ace furthers his career at CENTCOM in Iraq and Kuwait.

#### A SALUTE TO WALTER MESS

### HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Mr. Walter L. Mess, on the occasion of his retirement after 46 years of service with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Walter is a good man who has made invaluable contributions to our area through his dedicated public service.

I am proud to call attention today to Walter's achievements. He spent 30 years as chairman of the park authority and under his leadership the park authority has become a thriving organization. I would like to share an article from a recent edition of the Washington Post which highlights Walter's many accomplishments and contributions.

[From the Washington Post, February 3, 2005]

#### AREA PARKS PIONEER EARNS A REST

(By Leef Smith)

He was the longest-serving public official in Northern Virginia, overseeing the area's regional park authority as chairman for 30 years.

In December, Walter L. Mess stepped down from that post at the age of 90—his hearing, not his age, the deciding factor—having devoted more than 46 years of his life to preserving land in the area.

Under his leadership, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority preserved more than 10,000 acres while operating 19 regional parks in the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church, as well as in Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties.

Today, the authority's assets are valued at more than \$1 billion.

"His contributions have been immense," said Barry Buschow, a member of the park authority board since 1990, who represented Falls Church along with Mess. "He's taken a struggling organization from nowhere to a billion-dollar corporation."

Asked this week to name his proudest achievement, Mess did not mention the development of the 45-mile Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park trail, or the acquisition of the 5,000-acre Occoquan Reservoir shoreline.

Instead, he talked about his family.

He told a story about one of his 10 grandchildren, Christine, now a schoolteacher with two children of her own. Just a teenager at the time, she confronted a manager at Upton Hill Regional Park in Arlington and demanded to know why a plaque honoring her grandfather was not being displayed.

"That's what I'm the proudest of," said Mess, who also has 10 great-grandchildren. "That's where the pride comes from."

Mess and his wife, Jean, met in business school in 1934. They were married for 62

years and raised four children. She died in 2002.

The parks agency was a voluntary, time-consuming sideline to Mess's career as a land economist and mortgage banker.

As a child he canoed, hiked, hunted and fished with his father and uncle throughout the area, in the days when it was still undeveloped.

As a young man hard at work on a law degree in 1939, Mess signed on with a U.S. government covert operations unit and was sent to Europe, where he traveled behind German lines.

He would receive an honorary green beret more than half a century later to honor his military intelligence service.

Mess returned to the United States in 1940 and returned to school to complete his degree. He married and started a family. Two years later, he enlisted in the Quartermaster Corps and was on his way to Asia when he caught his first glimpse of the future. Stationed in San Diego for a month, he got a chance to see the area's regional system of parks, golf courses and swimming pools, available to the public at no cost.

He came home in 1946 to his wife and a 4-year-old daughter he had never met. He brought with him four Bronze Star Medals, malaria, blackwater fever and the knowledge that he was lucky to be alive.

It was time, he decided, to help his native Washington benefit from the kinds of land preservation and recreational opportunities he had seen in California.

What the area needed, he decided, was a regional park system. Others agreed, and together they embarked on a decades-long journey to make it happen.

"When you start to do something, and you don't have any money and you have to get it from the public, you have to be very patient," Mess said. "We were very patient. That was part of the game."

It was also part of their success.

It took about 10 years to persuade legislators in Richmond to grant their approval. In 1959, Mess was Falls Church's first appointee to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Board.

Since then, the park authority has spent \$120 million on land, including parcels along the Occoquan Reservoir and Potomac River and on the environmentally fragile Mason Neck.

"Our whole idea was to protect the watershed and give people access to the water," Mess said. "Back in the early days, much of that land was land that developers weren't going to use."

In 1975, Mess became the authority's second chairman. In 1999, the agency honored his 40 years of service by naming its headquarters in Fairfax Station for him.

"This whole thing I'm being given credit for I didn't do," Mess said. "The people around me did." The authority "gets credit for planning and starting it, but we couldn't have done it without everyone."

#### A PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING BEV RILEY

### HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker:

Whereas, Bev Riley has served continuously as the office manager for the Chillicothe Mayor's Office for twenty years; and

Whereas, Bev Riley provided her services as office manager through the administration of three different Chillicothe mayors; and

Whereas, Bev Riley's service to the residents of Chillicothe is greatly appreciated by all who have worked with her. She should be commended for the help that she provided to the people of Chillicothe and the surrounding area.

Therefore, I join with the entire 18th Congressional District of Ohio in celebrating Bev Riley's twenty years of service to the Village of Chillicothe.

#### HONORING THE LITERARY AND CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF VIOLA HERMS DRATH

### HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for a very special occasion—to celebrate the birthday of a distinguished American who is an author, playwright, journalist and diplomatic advisor—Viola Herms Drath.

Viola left her native Germany when she married U.S. Army Colonel Francis S. Drath, another great American, then Deputy U.S. Military Governor of Bavaria, after World War II. Prior to her marriage, Viola had established herself as a young playwright in Munich. Her first play, *Farewell Isabell*, a comedy, written at the age of 18 in the aftermath of the war, which was praised by critics, signaled the beginning of a long, creative career.

As her career evolved in the United States, she became a longtime Washington correspondent for *Handelsblatt*, Germany's equivalent of the *Wall Street Journal*, and a member of the Executive Committee of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy. Viola's insightful writings have helped Americans and Germans better understand post-war foreign policy. One of her articles for the National Committee entitled "The Reemergence of the German Question" published in 1988 proposed negotiations on German unification between the two German states and the four Allied Powers. As a foreign policy advisor of the 1988 Bush Presidential campaign, she helped lay the groundwork which led to the "2+4" process towards German unification in 1990.

Her biography of former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, *Willy Brandt: Prisoner of His Past*, first published in 1975, is being reissued this June in conjunction with the Broadway premiere of Michael Frayn's play "Democracy". Dr. Henry A. Kissinger recently praised this biography by calling it "a must-read for those interested in fully appreciating an important statesman both within his own times and beyond."

We are thankful to have the talents and energies of this extremely accomplished and talented individual. We wish her and her family many more birthday celebrations and all the best on this great occasion.

#### TRIBUTE TO DON DEMERS

### HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, it is with heavy heart that I rise to pay tribute to Don DeMers.