EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

MAUDELLE SHIREK POST OFFICE BUILDING

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to recognize an unsung hero and political legend in the East Bay area, Ms. Maudelle Shirek.

The legislation we are considering here today, H.R. 438, would name the post office building at 2000 Allston Way in Berkeley after Maudelle Shirek.

It would have been impossible for the House to consider this bill without the timely help of my colleagues, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Government Reform Committee, Congressmen TOM DAVIS and HENRY WAXMAN. I thank the gentlemen for their assistance.

I would also like to thank Majority Leader TOM DELAY, Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI, and Democratic Whip STENY HOYER for their help in bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, this special tribute is long overdue. In fact, in June 2003, the Berkeley City Council passed a resolution recommending the post office naming. I am pleased that we will finally honor Maudelle Shirek today.

Maudelle Shirek was Berkeley's 94-year-old former vice mayor. Until last fall, Maudelle was one of California's longest-serving elected officials.

As one of my political heroes, she continues to fight for equality and social justice for all. She not only helped me get involved in politics but also inspired my predecessor, Congressman Ronald V. Dellums, to run for Congress. Her understanding of the importance in investing in people has won the solid support of voters in her district and admirers around the world as an international leader for peace and justice.

A granddaughter of slaves, Maudelle left her rural Arkansas home and came to California in the middle of World War II. Before long she was campaigning for fair housing and other civil rights for African Americans. She helped found two Berkeley senior centers, and until her health started to slow her down, she helped deliver meals to shut-in seniors; or if it was a Tuesday, did all the shopping for lunches at the New Light Senior Center, which she founded nearly 30 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, Maudelle Shirek entered elected politics in 1983 after being forced to retire from a senior center simply for having reached the age of 72. Soon after her election to Berkeley City Council, she helped end the discriminatory policy of mandatory retirement in Berkeley city agencies.

Maudelle refuses to accept arbitrary limitations. It is one of the things we all respect about her. Maudelle remains one of the best examples of how one person can make a difference.

Ms. Maudelle Shirek is a fearless and inspirational woman who for over 60 years has tirelessly fought to make this world a fair and just place. She has spoken for the voiceless and has been a staunch defender of our basic civil rights.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me today in supporting this resolution, H.R. 438.

The world would be a better place if we had more Maudelles.

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF AUGUST WILSON

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 7, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my recognition and respect to the extraordinary contributions of the world renowned playwright August Wilson who died October 2, 2005 of liver cancer. Mr. Wilson was a Tony Award winner and two time Pulitzer Prize winner whose plays not only chronicled and captured the harsh realities African American families faced throughout the 1900s, they have provided insight into Black life, depicting its struggles to overcome discrimination and poverty with dignity and nobility amidst the pain and the struggle that all communities are able to appreciate. His plays poetically depict the effects of slavery and oppression on Black Americans in every decade of the 20th century, and show that despite the harshness of life, this crucible produced great strength and resilience that have enabled us to overcome.

August Wilson was born on April 27, 1945 as Frederick August Kittel, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He later changed his name after his father left out of respect for his mother. Mr. Wilson grew up on "the Hill," which was a predominantly Black and poor neighborhood in Pittsburgh. It was the daily experiences of this African American community that inspired the content of his plays. At 13 years of age he moved to predominantly White Hazelwood, but he did not forget the unique culture of the Hill, especially when he had to suffer the racial taunts in Hazelwood. The racial discrimination that Wilson faced led Wilson, at the age of 15 to drop out of high school because his teacher couldn't believe that a Black student could create a well written term paper and accused him of plagiarism. This however, did not impede his thirst for knowledge or his love for writing. With diligence and self discipline, August Wilson continued his education through self-study at Carnegie Library. He began reading Black literature and other Black works, like Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Arna Bontemps.

His hopes of becoming a writer were quickly challenged when his mother urged him to become an attorney. Disapproving of his dreams for a writing career, his mother forced him to leave the house. In 1963, Mr. Wilson enlisted in the U.S. Army only to be discharged in 1964. Determined to continue his pursuit for a writing career, he invested in the purchase of his first typewriter and moved into a rooming house in Pittsburgh. To support himself he worked a series of odd "blue collar" jobs, like short-order cook, dishwasher, porter, stock boy, and gardener. Starting out as a poet, his poems were published in the late 1960s and early 70s in several periodicals, one being the Negro Digest created by the late John Johnson.

However, it was not until August Wilson heard the voice of legendary Bessie Smith's record "Nobody in Town Can Bake a Sweet Jellyroll Like Mine," he realized that it was his responsibility to carry the torch of his ancestors and assume the role as the representative of Black American culture, telling the world our history and dignifying our struggle. Hearing the blues motivated, challenged, and empowered the young poet to document Black American culture in his writings. Wilson describe this epiphany as the "Universe stuttered and everything fell to a new place . . . I cannot describe or even relate what I felt . . . it was a birth, a baptism, a resurrection, and a redemption all rolled up in one. It was the beginning of my consciousness that I was a representative of a culture and the carrier of some very valuable antecedents . . . I had been given a world that contained my image . . . The ideas of self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense . . . are still very much a part of my life as I sit down and write. I have stood [these ideas] up in the world of Bessie Smith on the ground captured by the Blues. Having started my beginning consciousness there, it is no surprise that I would mature and my efforts would come to fruition on that same ground." As a result he established two organizations that promoted Black American writing: the Center Avenue Poets Theatre Workshop, and Black Horizons. Plus, he continued writing plays chronicling different experiences that Afiican Americans faced.

His big break was the debut of the 1982 play "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," the first of a 10-drama series that would chronicle each decade of the Twentieth Century, which premiered at Broadway's Cort Theater on October 11, 1984. Set in Chicago in 1927, the play focuses on White record companies' exploitation of Black musicians. This play mirrored the images and positions that African Americans faced in a society dominated by White racism. The beauty of the play, grabbed national attention earning Mr. Wilson several Tony nominations, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. "Fences", however, a play depicting a 1950s Black family's personal and economic issues, grossed a record $11 million in a year, which broke the record for nonmusical plays. As a result, Wilson became The Chicago Tribune's Artist of the Year; the play won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, four Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Featured Actress; and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Finally, "The Piano Lesson," inspired

by Romare Beardon's painting illustrated family conflict over an heirloom built by a slave ancestor. This 1986 play earned the New York Drama Critics Award, the Tony for Best Play, the Drama Desk Award, the American Theatre Critics Outstanding Play Award, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Wilson's subsequent plays continued to receive accolades and awards, solidifying his position in American Theatrical history.

August Wilson was not only a champion of Black America by representing and dignifying African American culture during a time when it wasn't otherwise appreciated; he was a pioneer in the world of literature and theatre. Although his body is no longer with us, his work and his impact on American History will continue on for posterity. On October 17, Broadway's Virginia Theatre will be renamed the August Wilson Theatre in Mr. Wilson's honor. His final play, ''Radio Golf' is scheduled to be produced on Broadway during the 2006–2007 season. Mr. Wilson is survived by his wife, Constanza Romero; their daughter, Azula, 8, and an adult daughter from a previous marriage, Sakina Ansari.

I submit to you an article from the October 4, 2005 edition of the Washington Post, illustrating the type of man and impact August Wilson had on this country.

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 4, 2005]

THE CYCLE OF AUGUST WILSON'S LIFE

(By Peter Marks)

The death of August Wilson does not simply leave a hole in the American theater, but a huge, yawning wound, one that will have to wait to be stitched closed by some expansive, poetic dramatist yet to emerge.

To say that Wilson was the greatest African American playwright the nation has produced—as some inevitably do—is to limit the scope of his significance as a contributor to the country's dramatic heritage. Wilson wrote scathingly about racism, yes, in ''Ma Rainey's Black Bottom,'' and the indelible scars of slavery, in ''The Piano Lesson'' and ''Gem of the Ocean.'' He also wrote about the Oedipal conflict of fathers and sons (''Fences'') and the universal quest for the easy score (''Two Trains Running''). His concerns were as multifaceted as the hard-pressed people he wrote about.

Over the past 20 years, Wilson had staked a legitimate claim to the title of nation's most important dramatist. During that time he won two Pulitzers and a Tony, and among his plays he polished off at least three that will rank among the classics: ''Ma Rainey,'' ''Joe Turner's Come and Gone'' and ''The Piano Lesson,'' along with what will perhaps endure as his favorite with audiences: ''Fences,'' the story of an embittered former baseball prospect, played on Broadway by James Earl Jones.

All this may not have meant as much as it did in the days when playwriting giants roamed the countryside, when a new play by Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller or Eugene O'Neill had the power to galvanize public discourse, and even land an actor on the cover of a national magazine. We've moved away, sad to say, from the era of the stage as a truly vital pulpit. In the commercial realm, Wilson's plays were usually not moneymakers. But the fact that he could consistently count on clicking the ''send'' button and having a play end up in the in box of Broadway—even in this lean and inhospitable time for serious drama—stamps him as a theater man of nothing but consequence.

Wilson died ludicrously young on Sunday, at the age of 60 in his adoptive home town of Seattle, where he wrote plays, big, garrulous, angry, lyrical, ponderous, often beautiful plays, in an office in his basement. He went public with his terminal liver cancer a little more than a month ago and when he did, he came forward with a breathtaking serenity. He pronounced himself prepared for what was coming. ''I've lived a blessed life,'' he told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the paper of the city of his birth, the metropolis that served as backdrop for many of his major plays. ''I'm ready.''

He cannot, of course, have been content to leave his family, especially his 8-year-old daughter, Azula, whom he proudly told me last December was writing her own plays. Work-wise, however, he may have been expressing a measure of relief, in that he had satisfied the exacting requirements of the towering assignment he had given himself: a cycle of 10 plays, one set in each decade of the 20th century. (''Radio Golf,'' the last one, has yet to reach New York; its regional debut comes at Center Stage in Baltimore in March.)

Not that he was exactly through with writing. In an interview over breakfast at a diner in the Edison, the modest Times Square tourist hotel that was his longtime New York base, he revealed that he was working on a comedy whose milieu now seems heartbreakingly prescient: Pittsburgh coffin makers.

His dramas are connected by a palpable sense of geography, usually, a rambunctious district of Pittsburgh; by the mordant humor of characters who spit at hardship; by an eye that seemed to see a story taking shape in every soul. They also reveal the acumen of Wilson's ear in the cross currents of language that flow from his characters as if pouring out of deep, lustrous, meandering canals.

He wrote for authentic-sounding stage creatures, and yet his dialogue might have found a place in novels. ''Now I'm gonna show you how this goes, where you just a leftover from history,'' Toledo, the piano player, tells the other Black musicians in dialect in ''Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.'' The play, set in the 1920s, was the first of Wilson's to make it to Broadway. It was an auspicious coming out. Wilson, wrote drama critic Frank Rich in the New York Times at the play's 1984 opening, ''sends the entire history of black America down upon our heads.''

Wilson returned again and again to the idea of Black America's unique historical inheritance, to reminders of how the South's peculiar institution was not at all a dead memory but a living shadow. As many other characters would in the Wilson pantheon, Toledo offers in ''Ma Rainey'' his own homespun history lesson about the African diaspora:

''Everybody come from different places in Africa, right? Come from different tribes and things. Soonawhile they began to make one big stew. You had the carrots, the peas, and potatoes and whatnot over here. And over there, you had the meat, the nuts, the okra, corn . . . and then you mix it up and let it cook right through to get the flavors flowing together. Then you got one thing. You got a stew.''

Wilson's own favorite playwright was Chekhov, and you can see how their theatrical stews might simmer well together. Wilson was a conjurer of characters, not an accomplished spinner of plot or master of compression. He was, in fact, legendary for writing one overlong draft after another, and working with a director—most successfully Lloyd Richards, head for many years of the Yale School of Drama—who could help him pare it down. A script was by no means complete once rehearsals began, he told me. He even liked to seek out actors and ask them what else they needed from him.

He had a reputation for feistiness and a certain amount of ego. The talk of the theater world in 1997 was his Manhattan debate with Robert Brustein, the director, critic and founder of Harvard's American Repertory Theatre, over their disagreement about whether a theater exclusively devoted to Black experience is desirable. Wilson was a passionate advocate of Black theater, and the evening at Town Hall stands as the last occasion on which a philosophical theater argument grabbed headlines.

When I sat down with him late last year, Wilson seemed anything but combative. He was in a pleasant frame of mind, as a playwright might be with the work of grinding out a play completed. The play was ''Gem of the Ocean,'' set in 1904, which as a result became the prologue of the cycle he'd been writing for much of his professional life.

As it happens, the first in the chain was the last he'd ever get to see on Broadway. The chain he'd long promised, and true to his word, the chain he delivered.

HONORING MAUREEN BUFALINO AS SHE RECEIVES THE ATHENA AWARD FROM THE WILKES-BARRE CHAMBER OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 7, 2005

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to Maureen Moran Bufalino, regional president of Omega Bank in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on the occasion of her receiving the prestigious Athena Award presented annually by the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry.

Mrs. Bufalino is truly deserving of this honor because throughout her career she has exemplified what a true community leader should be.

As a former president of the Junior League of Wilkes-Barre, Mrs. Bufalino helped develop many young women for volunteer service within the community. She has served as a role model for businesswomen through her work in the banking industry. And despite her demanding business schedule, she has still found the time to volunteer and serve several non-profit organizations and also raise three children.

She is also a charter member of Circle 200, a regional executive women's networking organization, and is a graduate of the Leadership Wilkes-Barre program.

Mrs. Bufalino serves as vice chair of CityVest Community Development Organization, a group committed to revitalizing Wilkes-Barre's downtown. She is a graduate of King's College.

Mrs. Bufalino was also named one of the top 20 executives under the age of 40 in 2001 by the Northeastern Business Journal, a widely respected business periodical in northeastern Pennsylvania.

On a personal note, I have known Maureen and her family for decades. I know her parents Jack and Maureen are extremely proud of her success, not only as a well-respected professional, but also as a dedicated community