

At 7 o'clock, there was Vince Gill who ended his hour-long session with a piece of jazz music. The Grand Ole Opry is getting more diversified. There was Keith Bilbrey backstage interviewing people. He was explaining what Charlie McCoy, the great harmonicist, once said about the four stages of being a country music star which sound a lot like being a politician. Stage No. 1 is, Who is Charlie McCoy? Stage No. 2 is, Get me Charlie McCoy. Stage No. 3 is, Get me somebody who sounds like Charlie McCoy. And stage No. 4 is, Who is Charlie McCoy?

The Opry was started so that the National Life and Accident Insurance Company could sell debit insurance. They got a big tower in Nashville. I think it is 50,000 watts. So all the people who were on little radio stations came to Nashville so they could be on the big radio station.

That is when Roy Acuff and Chet Atkins and Archie Grandpappy Campbell and Dolly Parton all moved from east Tennessee to Nashville. If you understand how important the Alamo is to Texas, you will understand how important the Grand Ole Opry is to Tennesseans, not just Tennesseans but many Americans, the 3,400 who every Friday and Saturday night have gone to thousands and thousands of these radio shows.

No one represented the Opry in its spirit better than Minnie Pearl. There is a photograph of Minnie in dressing room No. 1 backstage, which was Roy Acuff's dressing room until he died, which was the dressing room that Vince Gill was using on the night I was there as the guest announcer. There on the wall was a picture of a young Minnie Pearl in the early 1940s with this hat or a hat similar to this one.

Where did this \$1.98 price tag come from? I heard the story that night for the first time. Minnie was performing on the Opry. She pinned a garland of flowers to her hat. And during her performance, this price tag wiggled down and started dangling from her hat. She left it there for the next 40 years as a reminder that anybody can make a mistake and it is all right to make one.

Minnie Pearl was a talented woman who wanted to be Katharine Hepburn. As she said, that was already taken. She set a standard of conduct and style for the Grand Ole Opry that lasts and persists until today, and that style was simply that she was just a very nice person. She would sign the last autograph; she would say hello to anyone; she would pay a call on a Grand Ole Opry family member who was sick; she would see the last fan who had waited for 2 hours after the show.

Minnie Pearl told me one time: I have gotten to the point in life where I have decided if people are not nice, they are not so hot in my book no matter how big they are.

So in the spirit of Minnie Pearl and all of the thousands of Americans who have created and enjoyed the Grand Ole Opry, happy 80th birthday, Grand Ole Opry.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

SAVING OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me recognize that Minnie Pearl is a tough act to follow. Nonetheless, we must move on. Today, I am going to announce a one-sentence initiative that I will try to put on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I won't be successful because there are some procedural reasons. It would take a supermajority. But at least we will get a vote down so we will have an idea about who in this Chamber is really serious about doing something about the deficit.

I had to oppose my dear friend and junior Senator from Oklahoma last week because of the unintended consequences of interfering with local self-determination, and I caution any effort that would substitute or preempt States' sovereignty in favor of centralized control in the Federal bureaucracy unless substantial cuts in spending are accomplished.

The Framers of the Constitution feared one thing above all else, and that was a tyrannical central Government made up of unaccountable Federal bureaucrats would someday be able to supersede States' rights in decisionmaking by locally elected representatives. There is nothing more conservative than this very principle of preserving local control against the centralized Government.

As the author of the Transportation reauthorization bill, I was very pleased at the way we drafted the legislation. We took a formula so that we could allocate funds to the States but then didn't tell the States what to do with them and said: You determine what your priorities should be at the State level. I believe it is a very good process. I was proud to be a part of that process.

There is a mentality in Washington, DC, that if a decision isn't made in Washington, it is not a good decision. The controversial Ketchikan to Gravina Island bridge in Alaska has become a rallying point about boon-

doggles, and maybe it is a boondoggle, but the people in Alaska didn't think so. They have 100 projects. All States do it differently. But in Alaska, they list 100 projects that are the projects they want to have someday. That particular bridge is ranked in the top 4 of those 100. I think also that we have to recognize that we in Washington do not really know what is the best thing for them.

The other thing that is very important is that most of the money, had this amendment passed, is in accordance with the formula. So if we directed them not to build their bridge, that money could still be spent in Alaska on other projects. We would just be saying that you have to spend the dollars in a way that we in Washington say is best for you.

I will support future amendments that will save taxpayers' dollars. In the meantime, there is something we can do: support the one-sentence amendment that I will introduce.

Beginning with fiscal year 2007 and thereafter nondefense, nontrust fund discretionary spending shall not exceed previous years without a two-thirds vote.

That is very simple, very straightforward, and something that will work. I recognize that we are only talking in this case about 20 percent of the budget because we have so many entitlements and, of course, the defense spending. But those entitlements are being addressed right now in the budget reconciliation. We need to wait and see how that washes out.

I had this as kind of a mission for a lot of years. I introduced the first amendment in 1987, the first year that I was here over in the other body at that time. But it goes all the way back to 1969 when then Senator Carl Curtis from Nebraska came up with the idea. He was the one who always wanted to the pass the amendment as an amendment to the Constitution. So he said, Why don't you out in Oklahoma preratify a constitutional amendment, so if we get enough States to do it, that would give us the power needed to try to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

It never worked. I think the idea was right. I think this very simple solution is one we can address today. It will be something that will take care of these problems in a much simpler way and will maintain the authority out in the States where I believe it belongs. I have served as a mayor of a city, I have served in the State legislature, and I have served here. It has been my experience that the closer you get to home, the better the decisions, and that is consistent with what I am asking for today.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.
Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Chair.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, these are serious and difficult times for our