

On the Byrds' 65th wedding anniversary in 2002, Senator BYRD said:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond.

As every schoolchild in West Virginia learns, coal, when placed under great pressure, becomes a diamond. So it is fitting that Senator BYRD has the coalfields to thank for bringing his beloved Erma to him.

The Byrds' marriage was a study of partnership, devotion, and teamwork. It was living proof of the deep bonds that grow between a loving husband and wife. My own parents were married for 50 years, so I have seen firsthand the strength of those bonds and know the heartache when they are broken—until the reunion.

And so we grieve with our friend for his loss. Our prayers are with him. But we also know West Virginia's great Senator will one day be rejoined with his beloved Mrs. Byrd.

May God bless our friend ROBERT BYRD and the Byrd family.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

I withhold that suggestion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

TRIBUTE TO MAGGIE INOUYE AND ERMA ORA BYRD

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I join with my colleague from Kentucky in expressing my deep sense of sorrow, as well, over the passing of two members of our family. And I speak of both the wife of our colleague from Hawaii, Senator INOUYE, who lost his beloved Maggie a week or so ago and, of course, the recent news we received over the weekend of the passing of Erma Ora Byrd. These are members of our family, in a sense.

I have known both Mrs. Byrd and Mrs. Inouye since I was a child. My father was a Member of this body and was elected, in fact, to the Senate on the same day ROBERT BYRD was, in 1958. So I have had the privilege of serving with Senator BYRD both indirectly and directly for these now more than 40 years. In fact, I have the unique privilege of being his seatmate in this body, something which I have enjoyed immensely over the past decade and a half that I have sat at this seat in the Senate next to the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia.

I certainly remember Maggie Inouye. She was wonderful to my parents and was good to me over the years. To watch two of our colleagues about whom we care so deeply go through the tremendous suffering they are going through as a result of the loss of their life mates is something all of us—regardless of where we sit in this Chamber, to what party we belong, in what direction our ideological compass may lead us—we all have a deep sense of loss for these wonderful people.

DAN and Maggie Inouye were very close to my parents, as I mentioned.

She was born in 1924 and attended schools in Hawaii and then went on to receive degrees at the University of Hawaii and Columbia University and was highly respected in the area of speech pathology. She was a remarkable woman in her own right who could have had a very distinguished career independently of her husband.

She and DAN met in 1947, and as DAN INOUYE likes to tell the story, on the second date he proposed marriage. Not one to delay at all, he had met the person he clearly decided was going to be his life mate. And for the next 57 years, they were just that.

They celebrated the birth of their son Kenny who was again a wonderful child and has done a remarkable job in his own right.

I will remember Maggie best for her grace and poise and I was saddened to hear of her passing after a long battle with cancer earlier this month.

I went out to Hawaii last week and attended Maggie's funeral along with Senator STEVENS and his wife Catherine. It was a long trip, and I know that DAN did not expect a large number of his colleagues to make that journey. It was not a hard trip to make. It would have been harder not to make it in my case, given the closeness of our families over the years. And for me I knew there was nowhere else I could be than being present with DAN and his family to celebrate the life of Maggie.

During the visitation period prior to the funeral service, I was deeply moved by watching literally a couple thousand people express their condolences to DAN, to his son Kenny, Kenny's wife, Jessica. Each expression was heartfelt. It was personal. These were relationships that were solidified over years of friendship with DAN INOUYE, with his wife Maggie, and the constituents and friends of theirs from Hawaii.

I was also moved by the peacefulness of the funeral service, and most especially by the very touching and eloquent eulogy delivered by Maggie's longtime friend, Sumi McCabe.

I would like to close by offering my thoughts and prayers, once again, to DAN, to his son Kenny, and to his daughter-in-law Jessica.

As we mourn the loss of this wonderful woman, let us remember that her spirit will be with us and that her inspirational legacy will live on in the generations to come of her family.

So again, to our friend DAN, we want to express our deep sense of loss and our sense of solidarity with him.

Mr. President, to lose, just a few days later, of course, the wife of our great friend and leader, Senator BYRD, was a major blow as well. Certainly, the history of Erma Ora Byrd is well known to all of us.

As Senator MCCONNELL just pointed out, she was the daughter of a coal miner. She had been the life mate, for 69 years, of our colleague from West Virginia. It was clear to anyone who had the fortune of knowing them that they loved each other very deeply.

Erma Ora James was born in Floyd County, VA, in 1917. The daughter of a coal miner, as I just mentioned, her family moved to Raleigh County, WV, where she met ROBERT while attending the Mark Twain Grade School.

They were married when they were both 19 years of age in 1937. Shortly thereafter they began a loving family that has grown to two daughters, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Even though she was content to remain out of Washington's limelight, Erma became quickly known and loved for her commonsense values and her devotion to her family.

Erma also became well respected for her advocacy on issues affecting children across West Virginia and, of course, our Nation as well. Two academic scholarship programs at Marshall University and West Virginia University, respectively, have been named in her honor as a result of her efforts.

Four years ago, at the couple's 65th wedding anniversary, Senator BYRD said of his wife:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond. She is a priceless treasure, a multifaceted woman of great insight and wisdom, of quiet humor and common sense. I wish that more people could know the joy I have had in finding one's soul mate early in life and then sharing that deep companionship over many happy years.

Mr. President, my thoughts and prayers, along with those of our colleagues, I know, are with Senator BYRD and his family in these hours. I wish to extend my sympathies to ROBERT; his daughters, Mona and Marjorie; their husbands, Mohammed and Jon; ROBERT and Erma's grandchildren, Erik, Darius, Fredrik, Mona, and Mary; and ROBERT and Erma's great-grandchildren, Caroline, Kathryn, Anna, Emma, Hannah, and Michael.

Knowing of Senator BYRD's love for poetry, I am reminded of a passage in Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," which happened to be my father's favorite poem. Gray's "Elegy" says in one of its stanzas:

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)
a friend.

ROBERT gained a wonderful friend, obviously, and a companion—a life companion—in Erma. It is my hope that her spirit remains with us and will inspire all of us and future generations to come.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I wish to take a minute to offer my sincerest condolences to Senator BYRD on the passing of his beloved wife Erma. In a love story that is both moving and inspiring to all people, ROBERT BYRD's grade school sweetheart became his lifelong best friend in a marriage that spanned almost seven decades. While this makes the loss that much more profound, I would imagine it makes the

memories that much sweeter and the love all the more enduring.

As somebody who is fortunate enough myself to be married to a wonderful woman for the past 14 years, I can only imagine the difficult transition this causes for our dear colleague from the State of West Virginia, but I pray that the Byrd family will find strength in this difficult time. I pray that Erma may now rest in eternal peace.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I join many of my colleagues who have been speaking today and yesterday extending their heartfelt sympathy to Senator ROBERT BYRD of West Virginia for the loss of the diamond of his life, Erma. She truly was the light of his life. On many occasions, I have eased over into the chair next to Senator BYRD, and we have talked about how blessed we are with our two wives. He knows my wife Tricia and often asks about her, typically the courtesy that Senator BYRD extends to all of us.

I have asked him about Erma and how she was doing. We talked a lot about what a difference they have made in our lives. There is no question that he is going to miss her greatly, as will all of the family, I know. To all of them, we extend our heartfelt sympathies. We know the children and grandchildren are with Senator BYRD now and with Mrs. Byrd.

I remember an occasion on a Friday afternoon standing here when Senator BYRD asked me to yield. You are not always sure what Senator BYRD is asking you to yield for because it could be that you violated some rule of the Senate. But he asked if I would yield so that he could speak on the beauty of the grandson. I had just had my first grandchild, and it happened to be a grandson. He spoke so beautifully, so eloquently, totally from memory, and ended with a beautiful quote of what a grandson means to a grandfather. I was moved by it, literally to tears. And of course, when it came out in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, I had it framed. It hangs on the wall of my son's home in Paris, KY. Obviously, he doesn't think much of it right now, doesn't fully appreciate it. But some day, he will read that, and I know he will think of his grandfather and where he has served.

I tell that story to remind my colleagues about the kind of man Senator BYRD is. He can be a tough adversary. He can cause leaders to have a lot of heartburn. I have had it a couple of times when I was standing here in this place. But it is because he reveres the institution, because he does care about us as individual men and women. He knows about every one of us. He knows about our families. And not only does he love the institution, but he loves knowledge and great history and poetry.

Many have quoted from his favorite poem in the last couple of days. I don't have a poem. I don't have some great saying from memory. I only rise to join all the others in saying how much I ad-

mire and appreciate this Senator who is an institution in his own right in this body. I know how much he is suffering right now.

Sometimes we get so busy these days in this institution, trying to make it move forward or trying to keep up with the mail and the constituents and the flying back and forth, we really need a few who have very firm rudders and their sails set in the right direction for the best interests of the country. I know that is true of Senator BYRD.

Again, I extend my best wishes to him. When he returns, I will join all my colleagues in paying my respects to him and my appreciation for the example he set for himself and Erma, his wife of 69 years.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Erma Ora Byrd, the wife of our esteemed colleague, ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia. It has always warmed my heart to watch the Senator from West Virginia speak of his wife in conversation, of which we have had many, or as he has stood on this Senate floor. He has mentioned her name, and whenever he mentioned it, he immediately got this glow on his face in reverence to his friend, his wife, his love of nearly seven decades.

Love of this magnitude should be celebrated. And their marriage of 69 years should be celebrated. As a matter of fact, recently I talked to Senator BYRD about his marriage, and he said: I just hope that we can celebrate 70 years of marriage. Well, they did not get to 70 years. They got to 69, plus. And although her body failed her this past weekend, and their time together on this Earth ended, the love they shared—Senator BYRD and Erma—that love is timeless and that love is forever.

ROBERT BYRD is known throughout the country for his intellect and his patriotism, for his devotion to this country, to the State of West Virginia, his reverence for the Constitution, and his reverence for the Senate. But as famous as he is, and as eloquent as he is, and as far as he has gone in this Senate—he has been the leader here; he has been the chairman of committees here—he never would fail to share the credit for his many accomplishments with his wife, who inspired him and humbled him.

Erma never sought the spotlight, nor, according to ROBERT, would she allow her husband to bask in it for any longer than absolutely necessary. She strived to be a model of duty and service—service to one's family and service to one's country.

Erma Byrd has always been by her husband's side, ever since they were married, both of them at the age of 19. Imagine: the age of 19. Their love never waned. It is as strong now as it was on the very day they said their wedding vows. And I would posit that it has actually grown deeper, far deeper. That love is a bond that will never be broken, and even in her death her spirit will remain by his side to guide him on.

Erma had been struggling with illness for the past several years. God ended her battle, allowing her to be at rest. Although Erma's struggle with illness is over, and the deep pain that ROBERT felt as he watched her struggle with this illness is over, we should all know that he needs us now, his friends and his colleagues. He needs us to be his friend as he grieves for the loss of his soulmate.

Although we mourn her loss, we must not forget to also celebrate the rich, full life she made with her husband, her children, and her grandchildren.

The good Senator from West Virginia has always had a penchant for poetry, especially when it was used to help him describe Erma. So in closing, I will quote a poem by Charles Jeffreys that the Senator himself has used to describe his marriage to Erma:

We have lived and loved together
Through many changing years;
We have shared each other's gladness
And wept each other's tears;
I have known ne'er a sorrow
That was long unsoothed by thee;
For thy smiles can make a summer
Where darkness else would be.

Like the leaves that fall around us
In autumn's fading hours,
Are the traitor's smiles, that darken,
When the cloud of sorrow lowers;
And though many such we've known, love,
Too prone, alas, to range,
We both can speak of one love
Which time can never change.

We have lived and loved together
Through many changing years,
We have shared each other's gladness
And wept each other's tears.
And let us hope the future,
As the past has been will be:
I will share with thee my sorrows,
And thou thy joys with me.

When ROBERT BYRD spoke these words, he meant them deeply in his soul toward his one love. And so my husband joins me, and our family joins me, and I know all of our colleagues feel this way: We offer our thoughts and prayers to our dear friend Senator BYRD, to his family, and to the good people of West Virginia during this difficult time. I know my friend ROBERT will dedicate his future in the Senate not only to the people of West Virginia, whom he serves so proudly, but to his incomparable soulmate who so inspired him.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday in the Senate Judiciary Committee, there was a historic vote, a