

leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, then-Congressman Gerald Ford never sought the office of Vice President or President, but when in 1974 he faced the daunting task of assuming the highest office in the land, his steadfast dedication to the bedrock principles of hardwork, common sense, and duty—so emblematic of his upbringing and his remarkable career in Congress—prepared him to occupy the White House and served him well over the course of his brief but historic tenure.

With an unwavering moral compass, a certain grasp of purpose, and an always-steady resolve, President Ford guided us out of conflict abroad and quelled our concerns here at home and in doing so brought honor to the Oval Office and reassurance to Americans. It is fitting that in football as well as in his public life, Gerald Ford was ever the keystone, the center that held those around him together, who exemplified the essential underpinning that made progress possible.

On a personal note, last summer I had the esteemed privilege of cosponsoring—along with Senators WARNER, STEVENS, and LEVIN—an amendment offered by Senator JOHN WARNER to the 2007 Defense authorization bill that would name our Nation's newest carrier the "USS *Gerald R. Ford*." In fact, the Navy's entire class of future carriers would be known as the Ford class—in honor of the President we praise.

Later this month, that accolade—which the Senate passed unanimously—is expected to come to fruition. Such a bestowal by Navy Secretary Winter would be an appropriate tribute to then-Lieutenant Ford, who, as a sailor in December 1944, encountered a typhoon while aboard the carrier USS *Monterey* and demonstrated the virtues that would emerge as the hallmark of his unflagging service and sacrifice to our Nation, such as calm and courage amid turmoil, presence of mind to act decisively despite confusion and chaos, and an unflinching will of spirit to help others, even at great personal peril.

It has been recounted in the Bob Drury and Tom Clavin book "Halsey's Typhoon: The True Story of A Fighting Admiral, an Epic Storm, and an Untold Rescue" that Lieutenant Ford rescued wounded comrades, beat back raging fires, and helped salvage a ship that was ordered to be abandoned. Gerald Ford was integral to the effort driven by the simple belief of the skipper, Captain Ingersoll, that "we can fix this." As part of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet, they did not give up the USS *Monterey* in what reportedly was "one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. military history," a disaster where much of the fleet was decimated and more men were purportedly killed than in the Battle of Midway.

Mr. President, this story in many ways embodies the essence of this great son of Michigan. The story of the USS

Monterey is telling in that—like President Ford—it has for years taken a humble and unassuming place in the American narrative—and yet over time has rightfully grown in stature and acclaim. We also see a disposition and valor in a young sailor that would be brought to bear later in life as a statesman. Lieutenant Ford's reaction to conflagration and crisis was to take action and help tamp it down. Gerald Ford helped bring under control the flames that imperiled the USS *Monterey*. He would do similarly as President when charged to guide the ship of state—which he did with a fearless, unflappable demeanor. And which he did, to paraphrase President Lincoln, "with firmness in the right as God [gave him] to see the right." And through his eloquence of action, Gerald Ford moved us all to "strive on to finish the work we [were] in" . . . and helped "to bind up the nation's wounds." And for that we are eternally grateful.

Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with First Lady Betty Ford, their children, and the entire Ford family. May God bless and keep President Gerald R. Ford and may God bless the United States of America he so ably led.

HONORING HOLIDAY WREATHS AT ARLINGTON CEMETERY

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor the patriotic and exemplary contribution of Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company in Harrington, ME, who for the past 15 years has undertaken what has become an extraordinary tradition—to donate, transport, and oversee the placement of Maine balsam fir holiday wreaths on the graves of the exceptional service men and women buried and forever extolled at Arlington National Cemetery.

It is truly inspiring to see how the actions of one man can transform into such an honorable and moving tribute to America's fallen heroes. Unquestionably, I am immensely grateful to have been part of Morrill Worcester's dream, which began in December of 1992 when he called my office to ask if he could place his excess wreaths on the graves of soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. I never could have imagined that what occurred on that day would evolve remarkably into a nationwide gesture of unflinching gratitude for our troops.

During the season of thankfulness and giving, Morrill Worcester's tremendous generosity exemplifies not only the very best of the holiday spirit but also the inherent good will and can-do belief which is the abiding hallmark of Mainers. And what better way to celebrate the joy engendered by that time of year than to pay rightful homage to the countless courageous veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure and protect the many freedoms we cherish everyday. It is on oc-

casions such as this that I could not be more proud to be both a Mainer and an American.

This past December Mr. Worcester was joined by 800 volunteers, including Maine Civil Air Patrol Units, local VFW and American Legion Posts, military units, congressional staffers, schoolchildren, Scout troops, and an array of American veterans for the trek down U.S. Route 1 from Harrington to Washington, DC, with 5,000 Maine balsam fir holiday wreaths.

In fact, it was on Thursday, December 14, 2006 when the tractor-trailer with the logo "Wreaths across America" was parked at the top of the 11th section of the cemetery, with more than 500 volunteers gathered and ready to grace those monuments to heroism with red ribbons, making an already beautiful testament to bravery and valor even more stunning and glorious. The Maine wreaths were also laid on the grave of Edmund Muskie, former U.S. Senator from Maine and Secretary of State, and near the sites of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the USS *Maine* Memorial.

The many white tombstones that one day prior had stood barren now had come to life because of one man and hundreds of dedicated volunteers who, with full hearts and sharing hands, simply took the time to thank those who sacrificed themselves on our behalf—men and women whose undaunted service recalls the timeless words of President John Adams: "If we do not lay out ourselves in the service of mankind whom should we serve?"

With many of America's finest in harm's way, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is more imperative than ever that we remember always that freedom is not free—and there are those who gave the full measure of devotion to protect us and defend our liberty.

A NEW CHANCE FOR GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on April 20, 1999, two students walked into Columbine High School and carried out a shooting rampage, killing 12 fellow students and a teacher, as well as wounding 24 others, before committing suicide. A week later, we paused in the Senate to observe a moment of silence in tribute to those who died and to express our sympathy for their loved ones. Since this tragic event, many of us, on many occasions, have urged our colleagues to debate and pass sensible gun legislation.

Between 1999 and 2004, over 117,000 people have been killed by guns, criminals continue to gain easy access to guns and law enforcement officers do not have the tools they need to investigate gun-related crimes. The 109th Congress nonetheless has failed to act and has missed numerous opportunities to enhance the safety of our communities across the Nation. Congress has not reauthorized the 1994 assault weapons ban. Congress has not closed the