

nonetheless re-established their lives here, worked hard, and became proud American citizens, thankful for the opportunity to live in freedom. Many of their descendants have become leaders in the fields of science, business, academia, and the arts, and have served their country bravely in military uniform. They have also created a vibrant community. Yet they also bear the pain of what their parents and grandparents went through and are actively engaged in the effort to seek proper recognition of what happened to the Armenian people in 1915. Today, as we recall the events of the Armenian genocide and pay homage to the victims, we also honor the Armenian-American community for its unwavering commitment to this human rights struggle.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE
OF FIRST SERGEANT LUKE J.
MERCARDANTE

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of United States Marine First Sergeant Luke J. Mercardante.

Luke Mercardante was the First Sergeant for Combat Logistics Battalion 24, the logistics element of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Luke was 35 when killed in the line of duty on April 16th in Kandahar province of Afghanistan while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

First Sergeant Mercardante's position required him to serve as a leader, but leadership came naturally. He is remembered for his love for country and ability to inspire those around him. Other Marines described him as the "picture-perfect Marine."

Mercardante enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1992, graduating from Parris Island as the company honor graduate. He later served on a deserter apprehension team and was responsible for apprehending more than 130 deserters. As a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, Mercardante trained more than 1,200 men, turning them from civilians into Marines. Later, he served at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina as the training chief and brig security for the base. He was assigned to the Virginia Military Institute as the assistant Marine officer instructor and was voted an honorary member of the class of 2007, as well as faculty mentor of the year in 2005.

First Sergeant Mercardante's personal decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with 3 gold stars in lieu of 4th award, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with 1 gold star in lieu of 2nd award, and the Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

Luke was engaged to Kimberly Hull and planned to marry when he returned from Afghanistan. He is survived by Kimberly, his mother Gertrude, father Patrick, brothers Patrick Jr., Frank and Mark, sister Bridget and his children Luke II and Cailin.

On behalf of the people of the United States whom he served with courage and valor, we honor and commemorate the life and service of First Sergeant Luke J. Mercardante.

HONORING DR. LON NUELLE'S PAS-
SION FOR THE ARTS AND EDU-
CATION

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my friend, Dr. Lon Nuell, who passed away March 12.

Leon Richard Nuell served on the Murfreesboro City School Board for 12 years and taught as an art professor at my alma mater, Middle Tennessee State University, for 37 years. He was up for re-election to the school board this year and received nearly 400 votes posthumously as a testament to his legacy.

Lon did many things to improve the quality of education for children in Murfreesboro, including banning the practice of corporal punishment, championing full-time art teachers in each city school and establishing the Murfreesboro City Schools Foundation, an organization that fundraises for local schools.

Lon was a founding member of Congregation Micah in Nashville and the Tennessee Holocaust Museum. He facilitated the acquisition of two exhibits to educate the public through art—exhibits the Tennessee Holocaust Museum is now releasing to tour the United States. Lon was the faculty advisor of MTSU's Hillel and helped establish Friends-in-Faith, an interfaith group with members representing almost every religion in Middle Tennessee.

Prior to his unexpected passing, several community programs—Read to Succeed, Success by 6 and Project Pass—were establishing a literacy center in a space provided by First Baptist Church on East Main Street in Murfreesboro. It is fitting tribute that they have named the center the Lon Nuell Family Literacy Center. Lon believed in education for everyone and in the strength of collaboration.

Lon will be sorely missed by the community, his friends and family; wife, Christie and three sons, but his legacy will live on.

AGGIE MUSTER

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I may not exactly be the biggest Texas A&M fan around. And, I possibly ruffle a few maroon feathers from time-to-time poking fun at the Aggies. But, one thing I can say without a doubt is that there is no school known to man that has as loyal a following and dedication to tradition as Texas A&M. Trust me I know, I hear about every little quirky thing they do from my friend and former case manager, Patti Chapman—or "Aggie Mama" as her license plate proudly reads, and from Congressman Louie Gohmert from East Texas, with his maroon boots adorned with the Aggie logo.

You can always spot an Aggie, either from their personalized license plate, their maroon pickup adorned with A&M stickers, or the ring—don't forget the ring! And I have yet to meet an Aggie that doesn't work in to any

conversation that you are having that they are an Aggie and what year they graduated, especially if you are not one. But with all their whooping and hissing, comes one tradition that I have the greatest respect for—Aggie Muster.

Last week, on April 21st, Aggies all around the world paid tribute to those that have gone before them. This time honored tradition began in June of 1883 as a reunion of sorts of former students reliving their college days from the ball field to the battlefield. By 1889 it had evolved into a celebration of Texas Independence, and in 1922 it became the official ceremony it is today that is held every year on April 21st—San Jacinto Day—the day Texas won its independence in 1836—to account for every Aggie around the world by honoring the "Roll Call of the Absent."

According to tradition, "if there is an A&M man in one hundred miles of you, you are expected to get together, eat a little, and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas." The most famous example of this edict was the Muster of 1942 under the command of General George Moore during World War II. Amid fierce enemy fire, General Moore and 25 fellow Aggies mustered in the trenches on Corregidor in the Philippines. A war correspondent observed the make-shift ceremony and the world was introduced to the Aggie spirit.

During times of war, Muster is especially poignant. Texas A&M has produced more officers in the United States military than even West Point. It has the distinction, other than West Point, of having more Medal of Honor winners than any other university in the United States. When General George Patton was in Europe going to combat in the Third Army, he made a comment about the Texas Aggies and the soldiers that he had under his command. He said, "Give me an army of West Point graduates and I will win a battle. You give me a handful of Texas Aggies, and I will win the war."

The Aggies' long tradition of duty and service to our great nation dates back their beginning, to the days when A&M was an all-male military academy. Texas A&M trained nearly 4000 troops during World War I and over 20,000 Aggies served in World War II, 14,000 as officers. The entire graduating classes of 1941 and 1942 enlisted in the military. The Aggie War Hymn was written by Aggie Marine J.V. "Pinky" Wilson while standing guard on the Rhine River during World War I and it remains the most recognizable school fight song across the country—probably the world.

Today, Muster is observed in more than 400 places worldwide and this year's "Roll Call of the Absent" honored 970 people around the world, including those remarkable young men and women who gave their lives for our country today. While this is a time to honor those that have died, it also is a time when Aggies, young and old, come together to reconnect and celebrate a way of life known only to those that proudly call themselves an Aggie.

Muster means different things to different people. Every Aggie will tell you something different, something personal about what it means to them as an Aggie. One thing that is consistent in every answer is their dedication to tradition. It is the rich heritage of tradition that sets Texas A&M apart from all the rest. It is the Corps, the Aggie War Hymn, the 12th Man, Midnight Yell, Bonfire, State pride, and