

I am constantly amazed that an active God can take the bad decisions people make and, while God would not have wanted those to be the decisions people make, can turn them into incredible opportunities. In the life of Chuck Colson, that incredible opportunity became the founding of Prison Fellowship Ministries and the impact it had on so many other lives.

Twenty years ago, I became the first chair of the Missouri Prison Fellowship. As Chuck Colson was reaching out and trying to see how this idea could become an idea that would sustain itself and perhaps in the future within States. As a House Member, 10 years ago, I hosted a speakers series that was the Chuck Colson speakers series, and I was able to spend time with him virtually every week for 2 or 3 months as we had people come in and visit with House Members in a great speaker series.

I personally benefited from lots of advice and discussions with him. Just to sum up a couple things about him as I reach a conclusion that doesn't begin to express the impact he had on people's lives.

He founded Prison Fellowship Ministries in 1976. He founded Justice Fellowship in 1983. They have both grown to serve literally thousands of prisoners in this country and around the world. Prisons around the world saw Chuck Colson walk into them as well to try to help people.

In 1993, he won the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion; in 1994, he was instrumental in drafting the publication and publishing a document called the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." In 2008, he was awarded the Presidential Citizen Medal by President George W. Bush, and he is survived by a family who cared about him and lots of friends.

For almost 40 years, starting with the Mike Wallace interview—as I suppose only Mike Wallace could interview someone—there were doubters and skeptics who questioned his faith, who questioned the change in his life beginning in 1973, but of course, they questioned it less so every year. I would say, in 2012, that Chuck Colson passed any test about whom he had become. The test is both past, P-A-S-T, and passed, P-A-S-S-E-D. He won the race. Lives continue to be changed, and I would just say, I thank God for Chuck Colson, and I thank my good friend from Vermont for giving me a few moments on the floor.

TRIBUTE TO KENTUCKY STATE REPRESENTATIVE DANNY FORD

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I stand before you today to call attention to the great service of my dear friend, State Representative Danny Ford of Mt. Vernon, KY.

Danny was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives for the first time in 1982. He represents the 80th District, which for most of his tenure

has included the counties of Pulaski, Lincoln, and Rockcastle, Danny's native county. However, Representative Ford has decided his time in Frankfort, the State's capital, will end with his current term. But based on the outstanding service to constituents he is known for, I say with confidence today that if Danny had decided to run again he would have most assuredly won.

There are few men finer than Danny, a hard-working, honest family man and a devoted student of the State government process. An auctioneer and real-estate agent by trade, Danny has worked alongside members of his family in their various Mt. Vernon businesses throughout his life. As the grandson of a former Rockcastle county judge, he is most at home when he is at home, amongst the citizens of the 80th District whom he cares about so deeply.

Danny has said that "the greatest part of my job has been helping my constituents find their way through the mazes of State government." And that is exactly what Danny did. He believes in the philosophy of being attentive and accessible. No matter what, you could always count on Danny to be ready and willing to listen to any and all of his constituents' concerns.

Danny is truly a one-of-a-kind elected official. He has his own style of politicking that sets him apart from all the rest. He was known for operating in a low-key style because he felt that if you drew attention to yourself, you would become a distraction. Danny tried to stay out of the spotlight, but that is not to say it was because he wasn't getting things done.

He was able to push legislation that fixed key issues for the people of southeastern Kentucky. He helped to build interstates, repair infrastructure, build the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame in Mt. Vernon, and pass legislation that would make police cruisers more safe for the officer by adding cages separating the front and back seat. It is safe to say that Danny Ford truly cared about the people of the 80th District.

During his time in the Kentucky House of Representatives, Danny held such titles as Republican floor leader from 1995 to 1998, Republican minority whip from 1993 to 1994, and now again in 2011. He also was the longest serving Republican in the statehouse since 1900. Danny was looked to as a leader by both sides of the aisle. His opinion was greatly respected by the right and the left. And you can bet that when Danny Ford stood up to give a speech, every ear tuned in so as not to miss a single word of his eloquent preacher-style delivery.

In one of Danny's final interviews with Kentucky Educational Television, Danny said that after he retires he would like to return to work as an auctioneer, watch his grandson's basketball games, and spend more time with his family. And it is my understanding that he will be celebrating his 60th

birthday on April 25. Happy birthday, Danny; I truly wish you and your family all the best.

At this time I would like to ask my colleagues in the U.S. Senate to join me in commemorating Kentucky State Representative Danny Ford for his contributions to the citizens of the 80th District and the great Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Recently an article was printed in the Central Kentucky News highlighting the distinctive achievements and honorable service of Representative Danny Ford during his time in public office. I ask unanimous consent that article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Central Kentucky News,
Jan. 28, 2012]

REP. DANNY FORD CALLING IT QUILTS AFTER 30 YEARS IN FRANKFORT

(By Todd Kleffman)

Even before the House had voted to approve the redistricting plan that would reshape Danny Ford's 80th District, the auctioneer from Mount Vernon grew wistful, foreshadowing the end of his 30-year legislative career before he announced his retirement.

As he was railing against the Democrats' redistricting plan on the House floor, Ford took time to "thank the people of Lincoln County for allowing me to serve as their state representative for all these past many years."

After the plan—which basically removed Lincoln from the 80th District and replaced it with Casey County and pieces of Madison—was approved, Ford let it be known that this would be his last term, ending his run as the longest-serving Republican in the statehouse since 1900.

"That new district covers 125, 150 miles instead of 50 or 60," he said. "It's going to be a lot more difficult to serve."

"That has been the greatest part of this job, helping my constituents find their way through the mazes of state government," he said last week while spending the day with a reporter at the Capitol.

Despite his lengthy time in office, Ford never became a household name to folks outside Frankfort. That's due in part to his own low-key style and the fact he toiled for the minority party in the House, which is akin to being invisible, even if you are part of the Republican leadership. Ford currently serves as minority whip, a position he also held in 1993 to 1994, and was his party's floor leader from 1995 to 1998. He is the senior member of the House Budget and Appropriations Committee.

"I try not to be out front too much. That's not my style," Ford said. "When you draw attention to yourself, you become a distraction. Sometimes it's gentle persuasion that can make a difference."

Al Cross, the long-time political writer for the Courier-Journal who now heads the Institute for Rural Journalism at the University of Kentucky, has observed Ford in action during all his time in Frankfort.

"He has been like a lot of Republican representatives: he's not that interested in government doing much, so he didn't push a lot of legislation, and, being in the minority, he wasn't interested in jumping through a lot of Democratic hoops," Cross said. "If you're not in the majority, there's not a lot you can do."

"If you ask people around Frankfort, they'd probably remember Danny most for

his speeches. He's a pretty good orator. When he gets up to make a forceful speech, he reminds you of a revival preacher. He's pretty eloquent in getting his points across."

Ford's political acumen and communication skills were evident at the beginning of his political career in 1981. He was already established in his native Rockcastle County, where his grandfather had been county judge and his family operated a variety of businesses, including Ford Brothers Inc., an auction and real-estate company that also has an office in Pulaski County, a part of which comprises the 80th District.

If he was going to win the seat in his first run for political office, Ford figured he needed to step outside of his comfort zone. He spent little time campaigning in Rockcastle and Pulaski, focusing his effort almost entirely on Lincoln County, where he was virtually unknown.

Daly Reed, a soil conservation agent who died in 1989, greased Ford's path in Lincoln County. The two had only met briefly the year before at a Republican function but formed an alliance that Ford credits with launching his political career.

"We just hit it off. We went door-to-door, from 8 in the morning to 8 at night," Ford recalled of that first campaign with Daly. "He knew everybody and their family tree. When he'd introduce me, he'd say, 'This is Danny Ford, my adopted son.'"

Ford carried Lincoln County that year and has been nearly unchallenged ever since. Of 30 primary and general elections that have passed since he first took office, Ford has only faced opposition four times and only once failed to win Lincoln. That was in 2002, when Stanford attorney Paul Long won the battle on his home turf but couldn't overcome Ford in Rockcastle and Pulaski.

"I've been very fortunate," he said.

During the ensuing years in Frankfort, Ford said he took most of his cues on bills to sponsor from people and events in his district. He recalled a devastating crash that claimed two lives in Rockcastle County when a man who had been arrested for a DUI climbed over the backseat and commandeered a state trooper's cruiser and drove it the wrong way on Interstate 75. That led to legislation requiring all law-enforcement vehicles to be equipped with cages, he said.

In the current session, Ford is sponsoring a bill to outlaw the sale of so called "bath salts," potent amphetamine powders that people inhale to get high and thus often end up in the hospital. Varieties of the product have been legally sold at D&M Market in Crab Orchard and other places around the state.

"I've got a number of calls from Lincoln County that a lot of kids are fooling with it," he said.

Ford is also pushing a bill that will make products containing pseudoephedrine available by prescription only as a way to curtail the state's epidemic methamphetamine abuse. He is dead-set against a ballot measure to amend the constitution to allow gambling.

"I would hate to see our state revenue based on something so volatile," he said of the expanded gaming issue. "I'm very concerned about the kind of influences that will be trying to pass this thing."

Taking a stance against gambling is right up Ford's alley. He doesn't shy away from the socially conservative hot-button battles against gambling, abortion, and gay marriage. His front-and-center role in creating a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage and civil unions in Kentucky, which was approved overwhelmingly by voters in 2004, was the most intense experience in Frankfort, he said.

"I was at the forefront of that issue; I was really pushing for it. I was called a right-wing radical, a homophobe," he recalled. "But I'm comfortable standing up for what I believe in."

Representative Mike Harmon from the neighboring 54th District that covers Boyle County said Ford's values, experience and ability to work both sides of the aisle will be missed.

"Danny's a great guy, very conservative," Harmon said. "He fought for whatever concerned his district, whether it was roads or water or whatever. He could probably have easily won his new district. He was very well liked. There's always going to be some challenges when you're in the minority, but I think that he was respected by both sides."

Ford said patience and a willingness to compromise are necessary traits to be an effective legislator. It's important not to commit to a position too soon, before understanding both sides, he said, and sometimes it's a long road to seeing a project completed.

As an example, Ford said the improvements to U.S. 150 from Stanford to Mount Vernon began during Wallace Wilkinson's administration in the late 1980s. "They said they were going to start it in Stanford, and I said I didn't care where we started as long as we got it done. And we've just now gotten it finished."

Of all the governors he served under, Ford said he had the most trouble with Wilkinson, the Casey County upstart who surprised a field of better known Democrats in 1987. It was Wilkinson's political strategist, James Carville, who later went on to national fame as the architect behind Bill Clinton's two runs for the presidency, who made Ford uneasy.

"I never established much of a relationship with Governor Wilkinson, but that was probably because I did not like James Carville one bit," Ford said. "He was the most wicked man I've ever been around in my life."

Ford arrived in Frankfort at the end of John Y. Brown's term. Things have changed considerably since then, he said.

"It was much more of a partying institution back then, a lot of drinking and carousing and card playing. The legislature is more sober-minded now, more conscientious about doing its job."

He credited Martha Layne Collins for Toyota, "an industry that changed this state forever." Of Brereton Jones, Ford said, "He was a straight shooter." He described Paul Patton as "very sincere. Nobody treated me more fair." Ernie Fletcher, the only Republican, "tried to help and got some good things done," but was handcuffed by his minority status. Beshear "has been good to work with," Ford said.

After finishing this session and a possible special session, Ford, who will be 60 in April, said he is looking forward to working full-time with his son in the real estate and auction business. His 30 years in the legislature have earned him an annual pension of about \$40,700, slightly less than his highest salary as a representative—\$41,039—which he is being paid this year, according to the Kentucky Legislators Retirement Plan.

He has no plans on getting involved in choosing his successor in the 80th District, though he said he will support someone who shares his conservative ideals if such a candidate emerges.

When asked what advice for a long political career he might whisper in the ear of the person who takes his place, Ford kept it simple, in keeping with his style.

"Be attentive and be accessible. I came into this with the attitude of making sure I listened to what people had to say, and now that I've been up here and experienced the

legislative process all these years, it's made me more that way than ever. Just be accessible and available and listen."

RECOGNIZING THE HIGHLANDS CENTER FOR AUTISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an innovative, beneficial, and truly essential organization in a quest to better understand and serve fellow Kentuckians diagnosed with autism: the Highlands Center for Autism in Prestonsburg, Kentucky.

The Highlands Center for Autism is making great progress in an attempt to better comprehend the extent of a condition which many people are unfamiliar with. Autism is a term used to describe complex developmental brain disorders that young children are most likely to show symptoms of during their first few years of life. The Centers for Disease Control has released a statistic that predicts 1 out of every 90 children will be diagnosed with autism. Not even 10 years ago, fewer people had ever heard of autism, and if they had, they probably didn't understand the full extent of it. Now with new cases being diagnosed each day, understanding autism is becoming increasingly more important.

Therefore, now more than ever, there is a need for contributions from organizations like the Highlands Center for Autism. The professional team at the Highlands Center uses the breakthrough Applied Behavior Analysis—ABA—method, which has been proven to dramatically reduce symptoms and improve life quality. Dr. Shelli Deskins of Paintsville, KY, has experience working with the ABA method. She previously worked with victims of post-traumatic stress disorder in Hazard, KY. Since her tenure began at the Highlands Center in January 2009, she has worked fervently to transform it into the successful organization it is today.

The truly one-of-a-kind Highlands Center is a private, year-round day school that serves as a beacon of hope and respite for the students enrolled and their families. The Center operates on the ideal that all children deserve the opportunity to laugh and play to become healthy, happy, and productive adults. The staff and volunteers provide an optimistic outlook for those enrolled, and provides their families with home visits and frequent reports on each child's daily progress.

I am honored to be able to have the opportunity to stand before my colleagues of the United States Senate and honor the tremendous work being done by the Highlands Center for Autism. It is inspiring to know that an institution involved with making scientific strides such as this is located in the great Commonwealth of Kentucky. I would like to thank those involved with the Highlands Center for Autism and congratulate them for their unparalleled dedication and service to this cause.