

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the life of Bert Stephen Crane for his unwavering leadership and recognizing his accomplishments and outstanding contributions to the community. God bless him always.

HONORING JAMES "JIM" WEST, A BELOVED LEADER IN THE MODESTO COMMUNITY

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the life of a beloved leader in the Modesto community, James "Jim" West, who died at the age of 81 on Sunday, March 13, 2016, surrounded by his loving family.

Jim was born on January 22, 1935, to Donald and Ruby West. He grew up in the heart of the Central Valley, Modesto, California, and graduated from Modesto High School in 1953.

Jim furthered his education at Menlo College before attending Kansas State University, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in feed technology.

In 1958, Jim joined the thriving and successful company his grandfather had started in 1909, the J.S. West Milling Company. The family-owned business is known for their production of eggs, feed, and propane.

Through years of hard work and dedication, Jim became shareholder, secretary, and vice president of the J.S. West Milling Company board. Jim's reputation as an honest businessman helped build the J.S. West Milling Company's successful and trustworthy name.

Jim was also dedicated to improving the community he lived in. He was active in several industry and civic groups, most notably as president of the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association in 1993 and chairman of the American Egg Board in 1997.

He was an active member of the Western Poultry Scholarship and Research Foundation, Memorial Hospital Foundation, Delta Blood Bank, and Modesto Junior College Foundation. He was also a proud member of the Modesto Rotary since 1969 and later served as president.

Jim had a genuine love for the people and the community he worked tirelessly to help. He was known for his kindness, generosity, and strong family values. Succeeding Jim are his wife of 44 years, Jessie West, their two sons, and three daughters.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and recognizing the life of Jim West for his unwavering leadership, many accomplishments, and contributions to the community. God bless him always.

NASCC 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Naval Air Station at Corpus Christi as it celebrates its 75th anniversary this month.

NASCC or, as it was once known, the University of Air, has been training pi-

lots, navigators, aerologists, gunners, and radio operators since 1941.

NASCC was founded in 1938 under the 75th Congress to train new pilots and technical crew to bolster our Nation's air forces. The air base serves the southeastern portion of the United States, from Texas to Florida, and trains naval aviators nationwide along with other pilots from our foreign allies.

Today NASCC is not just a naval base. It includes tenant commands for the U.S. Army, Coast Guard, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Corpus Christi Army depot rebuilds and updates rotary winged aircraft—helicopters—and is saving our country millions of dollars. The depot facility and other tenants make the base extremely cost effective for both the Army, Navy, and taxpayers.

The Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Patrol operate a variety of aircraft from the base, including predator drones surveilling our border, which is great because we have a new generation of pilots interacting with UAVs getting their training at NASCC.

NASCC's current commander officer is Captain Randolph F. Pierson, who joins a long line of leaders to serve in Corpus Christi.

During World War II, it was said there wasn't a naval aviator who hadn't earned their wings at the air station. These World War II naval aviators were critical members of the U.S. military, giving the U.S. an edge in battles across the Pacific and over Europe with our superior air power.

It was American air power, combined with U.S. naval power, that played a critical role in turning back the tide of Japanese at the Battle of Midway.

It was American air power that dealt a decisive blow against the Japanese in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, winning one of the last largest air battles in history.

After World War II, it was American air power that flew food supplies to the starving people of Berlin during the Berlin Airlift.

This was all accomplished with graduates of the Corpus Christi University of Air, NASCC.

Today the training program is approximately 18 months and, due to the increased complexity of modern aircraft, it just takes longer. Six hundred people per year are trained at the facility and go on to serve their country in the U.S. Navy and Marines as pilots, engineers, and technical crew.

These folks learn skills through the program that propel them through a successful life in the military and a successful life in the private sector after their service ends.

Some of the notable flyers who have earned their wings at NASCC include former President George H.W. Bush, who was in the third graduating class. He was commissioned just 3 days before his 19th birthday.

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi graduates also include several Mem-

bers of Congress, including fellow Texas Representative PETE OLSON, Representative JOE WILSON of South Carolina, and Senator JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona.

Some NASCC grads are not content to remain in the blue skies of the Earth. Many astronauts who led the charge into space after getting their wings at NASCC include Neil Armstrong and John Glenn.

Other notable graduates include game show host Bob Barker, actor Tyrone Power, Vice Admiral James Stockdale, and Medal of Honor winner Edward "Butch" O'Hare.

The Navy's distinguished flying team, the Blue Angels, were headquartered in Corpus Christi until 1955. Today, CNATRA, the Chief of Naval Air Training, now Admiral Bull, based in NASCC, commands the Blue Angels.

The people of the United States owe much to the graduates of NASCC. These heroes have fought for our country since the construction of the base in 1941.

I believe it is important to not only honor the men and women in uniform who serve at bases like NASCC and those around the country, but also to honor their families and the civilian workers who make it all possible.

Due to its importance to our country during World War II and over the years until today, it is my privilege to let you know about NASCC.

After 75 years of operation, the Naval Air Station is still training pilots, still serving the country, and still being a symbol of pride to Texas and the entire Nation.

PUTIN'S INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. STEWART) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, in the tumult of a Presidential election, a lot of important and newsworthy events don't get enough attention.

One such event last week was the Czech Republic's release of Ali Fayyad, a dangerous Hezbollah terrorist who was indicted in 2014 by the United States for conspiracy to kill officers and employees of the United States.

The United States had requested Mr. Fayyad's extradition to the United States, and the Czech courts had approved that extradition request. But the Czech Minister of Justice, who is aligned with Vladimir Putin, refused to honor that decision and released this terrorist.

Fayyad has deep ties with the Russian black market for weapons and was an adviser to the former President of Ukraine and a close ally of Vladimir Putin.

It appeared at one point that Mr. Fayyad was exchanged for several Czech nationals being held hostage in Lebanon, but journalists have since shown that the hostage situation was a sham staged by his family and defense team.