

HONORING NEBRASKA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise to continue my tribute to Nebraska's heroes and the current generation of men and women who lost their lives defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of these Nebraskans has a special story to tell.

CORPORAL ADRIAN ROBLES

Today I will share the story of the life of Marine Cpl Adrian Robles of Scottsbluff, NB. Adrian was known throughout Scottsbluff for his big smile. His older sister Beatriz remembers it this way: "As soon as he smiled, even if you were mad at him, you would stop and have to smile."

Behind that big smile, though, was a tough young man. More than anything, Adrian wanted to be a marine. This longing to serve his country was a point of pride and tradition in Adrian's family. His grandfather, Pedro Torres, served as a fighter pilot in World War II. Pedro's stories of service and adventure inspired Adrian's quest to become a marine, and their bond was a source of joy throughout the family.

As Adrian's father Cesar recalls, "He loved his grandpa so much. He was a hero to him."

When he was 16, Adrian approached his parents and told them he wanted to be a marine. He didn't want to wait. He even prepared a waiver for them to sign, which would have allowed Adrian to join the Corps when he turned 17. While they admired the passion in their young son, Adrian's parents stood firm. They wanted Adrian to focus on completing his high school education.

Deterred but not discouraged, Adrian decided to join the high school soccer team. Soccer became an outlet for him, not only as an athlete but as a way to train and get in shape for the Marines. Adrian graduated from Scottsbluff High School in May of 2005. As expected, he immediately enlisted in the Marine Corps.

In the year that followed, Adrian completed basic training and served a full tour in Iraq by the end of 2007. His determination impressed his fellow marines. GySgt Trent Kuhlhoof served with Adrian during a tour in Iraq. Adrian was the kind of person who naturally bonded with everyone. As Sergeant Kuhlhoof remembers, "It was hard for me to get mad at him—for anything."

Adrian had discovered his calling. He worked toward excellence, and he loved being a marine. A marksman is the centerpiece of every Marine combat team, and Adrian was a good one. By the age of 21, he had earned three Good Conduct Medals, a rare feat in the military.

In the spring of 2008, Cpl Adrian Robles deployed to Afghanistan as part of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Division. Their mission was to train local Afghan military forces, but by the fall this changed to a security mission as

tensions rose in the dangerous territory of Helmand Province.

A few months later, on October 22, 2008, Adrian was on patrol when suddenly his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device. Corporal Robles was killed instantly. His unit was scheduled to leave Afghanistan 2 months later.

On November 2, 2008, hundreds of friends and neighbors from Scottsbluff lined the streets from the church to the cemetery. An honor guard and horse and carriage team transported the casket to its final resting place.

In a career of 3 short years, Corporal Robles earned three Good Conduct Medals, two Sea Service Deployment Ribbons, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Adrian's mother Yolanda recalls that his life's passion was to serve his country. She notes that he hated war and knew the dangers, but he loved being a marine. A brave, disciplined, and joyful young man, Adrian lived a short life, but his imprint is felt by the countless people who knew and loved him. Perhaps his devotion is summed up best by the tattoo on his left arm, which read: "Your Freedom. My Life. Without Complaint."

Adrian embodied the strength and determination that Nebraskans are known for all over the world. He lived passionately, and he earned his dream of being a U.S. marine. Cpl Adrian Robles is a hero and I am honored to tell his story.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Alaska.

REMEMBERING JOHN AND ERMA SCHNABEL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, we are about to begin the Memorial Day state work period and many of us will be traveling in our home states next week. I am blessed because I am going home to Alaska. Tomorrow I will be in Haines. This is a magnificent community in truly a magnificent State. But when I arrive in Haines, something will be missing, and that is the absence of two of Haines' most prominent citizens—John and Erma Schnabel.

John Schnabel passed in March at the age of 96 years old, and Erma, his wife of 65 years, passed shortly thereafter at the age of 87. John was regarded by his family and the people of Haines as a living legend. If you don't believe that is true, or if you say all of us have living legends in our community, no less of an authority than People Magazine referred to John as a "living legend" in an article which noted his passing. He was not just a local legend. He was known the world over as "Grandpa." He was the patriarch of the Discovery Channel series "Gold Rush: Alaska." But to us Alaskans, he was

simply one of the many exceptional people who populate our exceptional State. John was born in Kansas in 1920. He was the son of a wheat farmer. His father first moved to Alaska to seek a better life away from the Depression. He served in the military during World War II. He was a proud member of the American Legion. He married Erma in 1950 and they raised five kids.

Returning to Haines, John entered the timber business. He owned a lumber mill in town. He was one of the region's first industrialists. He was involved in everything. He operated a hotel, a lumberyard, a hardware store. He built four downtown commercial buildings. He was one of Haines' largest landowners. But changing political attitudes toward timber harvest in Southeast Alaska and the regulations that followed put John out of the timber business. Those powerful forces, however, did not put John down. He placer mined for fun and invested in small businesses. He was the mayor of Haines. He was an outstanding bridge player. He was an avid reader. I understand that David McCullough's biography of Harry Truman was one of his favorites, even though he was a loyal Republican.

It was only after John was recuperating from heart surgery that he entered the mining business in a big way. Think about it, most people rehabilitate from a heart surgery by doing more walking or going to the gym. John Schnabel decided he was going to work a mine. He worked the mine to remain active. He said it was doctor's orders. He did this until 2 years ago. Effectively, until the time he was 94, he was working the mine.

The Discovery Channel folks wandered by and found John Schnabel an interesting man. By 2010, Grandpa was a global celebrity—a reluctant celebrity but a celebrity nonetheless; the star of a reality TV show that ran for six seasons before he passed away.

John and Erma were friends of mine. I respected John's business acumen and his political leadership, but I really respected the relationship he had with Erma. The last time I visited with John and Erma was 2 years ago in August. I was there at the Haines Assisted Living Center. I came in and visited with John. John was talking politics with me and with anybody else who was listening, chatting around the room. Then, he left to go sit in the corner of the dining area, sat next to Erma. He didn't say anything for probably half an hour, 45 minutes. He just sat quietly with her, holding her hand. That really moved me when I saw them. Sixty plus years of marriage and still holding hands. John had always been the builder. Erma was known as the carer. She took care of the family. She took care of the community. Legend has it that there wasn't a person in Haines who had not dined at her table at one time or another.

They are both gone from Haines, but they are certainly together in Heaven.