

a plaque. I am sure Jim has no plaques at home any more. I am going to read the inscription on this plaque, Jim; and I am going to read it from the paper since my eyes cannot read the inscription on the plaque. But I hope you can.

It says: "Presented by the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress to the Honorable Jim Wright for his exemplary service to the State of Texas and the Nation as a combat pilot in World War II and recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, as a mayor and State legislator, and as a Member of the United States Congress for 34 years, including his distinguished leadership as Majority Leader and Speaker of the House of Representatives. Washington, D.C., May 13, 1999."

On a more personal note, I am presenting Jim on behalf of all of us a scrapbook, which includes personal letters from many of us here and others who feel so strongly that Jim has contributed to the Congress and the country in ways which cannot be fully expressed but for which we are all deeply grateful.

So, Jim, these are some of the letters, and I am sure there will be others coming in the mail. We would invite you, Jim, to say whatever you would like. We are delighted you are here, and we are very proud of your service.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you so very much, Matt, and thanks to each of you, my former colleagues. I shall treasure and cherish these mementoes for as long as I live.

I guess I am lucky to be here in a way today. Two months ago yesterday I was fortunate to have some rather complicated surgery. Good surgeons removed this jaw, and it was cancerous, and then they reached down to my lower left leg, for the fibula bone, from which they carved a new jawbone, and this is it, and it works.

They also removed about one-fourth to one-fifth of my tongue, and that frightened my wife and others when they heard of it. I did not know about it at the time.

But in addition to that bit of modern alchemy, they took a piece of skin from the upper part of my left leg and attached it, grafted it, to the tongue, and I hope you can understand me.

All of this occasioned a comment from my long-time friend and former administrative assistant, Marshall Lynam, who said, "You know, Mr. Speaker, we spent 40 years trying to keep your foot out of your mouth, and now it seems you got your whole leg in it."

Words would fail me were I to try to express adequately how much I appreciate this, particularly coming from those of you, almost all of you I served with, and whom I knew and became so attached to during all of those years.

Like most of you, I guess, I had a lot more financial success before and after I served in Congress, but this experi-

ence of serving in this body will forever be professionally for me the outstanding achievement in my life. I enjoyed it thoroughly—most of the time. I think that would be true of all of us, truth to tell.

I do want to encourage our Association and encourage individuals among us to participate in these splendid activities by which we spread knowledge and understanding of this peculiar institution, so peculiarly human, maybe the most human institution on earth.

You know, the House and Congress can rise to heights of sparkling statesmanship and we can sink to levels of mediocrity, because we are human, prone to human error. But the more people are able to understand it, people abroad with whom our Nation must deal and youngsters on the college campuses, the stronger and firmer will be our hold upon the future.

Since I left Congress in 1989, almost 10 years ago, I have been on between 45 and 50 different college campuses throughout the country, and that is the most fun I have, aside from being with my grandchildren. I guess it is second, because they are so vibrant, they are so alive, they are so quizzical, they are so questioning, all over the country. I have had the privilege of being at the University of Maine and the University of San Diego State. I have had the opportunity to visit Gonzaga University and the University of Miami. So it is spread across the country, and all of them, all of them, are interesting. They are all worth spending some time with. I would encourage that.

I would hope that we, wherever we go and whatever we say and do, will have the grace to glorify this institution, so human, so imperfect, and yet so fraught with great opportunities, to uphold its standards and defend its honor, so often attacked, so frequently misunderstood, to the end that there might be a better and firmer appreciation of this hallowed form of government that was endowed by those who wrote our Constitution. Because I am convinced that, with all of its faults and flaws and human imperfections, it still is, just as it was in Abraham Lincoln's time, and may it forever remain, the last, best hope of earth.

Thank you for this great honor.

Mr. MCHUGH. It is very clear that Jim Wright is as eloquent with his second jaw as he was with his first.

Jim, we are truly proud of you and take joy in your being with us today and giving us the opportunity to honor you for your many years of service.

I would like at this point sort of extra-record to invite our former distinguished minority leader and friend, Bob Michel, to say a word.

Mr. MICHEL. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, thank you so much for the opportunity to say just a few things, particularly prompted by our Associa-

tion's giving the award this year to our former Speaker, Jim Wright. When I got the notice of it, I thought there could be no better choice and am so appreciative he has been so well received and under the conditions.

I tell you, I have been privy to several of the columns that Jim has written, very descriptive, and they move you just about to emotional tears with his eloquence.

I hope those of you who have not yet maybe had the opportunity to express your feelings in the letters that we find in the book that we have given Jim that you will do that. You can always add letters to that. It is a nice package of mementoes to keep.

You know with what sincerity Jim appeared here today with his very nice remarks, and I just want to join in congratulating him and the Association, particularly, for their choice in selecting our former Speaker to receive this honor today.

Thank you again, Jim, all the best to you.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you very much, Bob. Thanks to all of you for being with us today and participating, especially since it was a special opportunity to honor Jim Wright.

We have a program for the rest of the day. We hope that many of you will be able to participate in it. Of course, tonight we have our dinner.

So, again, thank you for being with us. This does conclude the 29th Annual Report of the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress. Thank you.

Mr. ERLNBORN (presiding). The Chair again wishes to thank the members of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress for their presence here today.

Before terminating these proceedings, the Chair would like to invite any former Members who did not respond when the role was called to give their names to the reading clerks for inclusion on the role. Good luck to you all.

The Chair announces that the House will reconvene at 10:45 a.m.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 28 minutes a.m.), the House continued in recess.

□ 1047

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS) at 10 o'clock and 47 minutes a.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title: