

the way I had been trained, and the purpose that was in my heart, I was still smiling when I was sitting on the ice. That performance did earn me the bronze medal, but even more, that night I began an incredible relationship with the nation of Japan that has lasted 27 years. I was able to go back to Japan to talk about my faith soon after the Olympics. "How could I keep smiling when I fell in the Olympics?", is a question that has always been asked of me in Japan. Fifteen years after I spoke in Japan of my faith, I went back to Japan to skate. A young woman approached me and gave me a note. In the note she told me that when I had spoken of my faith 15 years earlier, she had wanted to take her own life. After hearing about the hope in Christ that I had when I fell in the Olympics, she decided to take that hope for her own and continue her life. That reward is one that is eternal; a reward that was given by a very powerful God.

One of the foundations of our free nation is faith in this Almighty God, Who is bigger than ourselves, or any situation. He is the One Who put the yearning for freedom into the human spirit, and it is He Who directs us towards the loving path of discipline and self-control—or self-government—that allows us to live in that freedom.

I had the gift of being born a free citizen in the United States of America. My success in skating was built upon the foundational element of being born in this country. I didn't have to flee my country to gain freedom of artistic expression, as some had to do during the era in which I skated. I didn't have to fear because I spoke to God.

I had the opportunity to visit some nations which did not allow their people to believe in God or to express that publicly. As a young lady I was amazed, and even depressed, when I was taken on tours of old and beautiful churches which were empty, unused, and explained a way as only great architectural works. God had been shut out, unwelcome; even unspeakable. I was even more depressed when we were taken on an Easter Sunday tour of a place where a bloody revolution had been started. One of the results of that revolution was the expulsion of God from a people rich in heart.

Because of that perspective, it disturbs me greatly to see instances in our nation become more and more frequent where people try to exclude God or create fear of talking about God in public. He has blessed this nation so richly. Why would anyone want to shut Him out? It is upon the principles of this God that this nation's foundation rests.

One of those principles of God is charity. I believe perhaps our nation has been the most charitable nation in the history of the world, and I believe that is because of our foundation of faith and freedom. We have been able to choose how we will earn a living with honor and honesty. And we have been able to freely choose, according to our conscience, how to spend what we earn.

I was not beholden to a government or its ideals that provided my training. My family did not believe that freedom was having everything provided. We all worked very hard and my family was very frugal. But at a point in my skating when I was going to have to quit, the charity of Mr. Walter Williamson as the sponsor of my skating allowed me to continue working to become the best I could be. This kind of charity one can never repay, nor did Mr. Williamson ever expect me to repay his charity to me, though I can pass on what I learned from it. He never exploited me or my name nor did he keep me beholden to him. His charity re-

mained a quiet, unassuming foundation of my ability to learn to be free in my skating.

In this great nation, hard work and charity have been the often unnamed foundation that has helped develop hopes and dreams.

The freedom of our nation allowed my parents to choose a coach who valued discipline and hard work. And Miss Kohout, with incredible charity, freely chose to stop sending bills for lessons as my skating started to blossom.

By God's grace I was the benefactor of the free and charitable spirit of my coach and sponsor. Besides the generosity of Mr. Williamson and Miss Kohout, there was a man and wife, who we had never met, who freely offered to pay for my skates. And some generous people in New York helped me with costumes, as well as street clothes and hair cuts, in order to present myself properly. Professional secretaries freely gave of their time and energy to help with my mail when it became too overwhelming, and my mom tells of her friends and neighbors who would each take a part of my costumes to bead. Friends, family and neighbors often traveled to my competitions for quiet moral support. My ballet teacher, Helen Olson, patiently worked with me for many years, though I had no flexibility and had no promise of dancing. There was a woman from Rockford who donated cowboy hats to go with my choreography to the music of Rodeo. An American soldier on leave in Davos, Switzerland volunteered to shovel snow from the ice a few hours a day so I could practice school figures while training for a World Championship, though the snow did not stop for three weeks. The stories of help and charity are endless—all made possible by freedom.

The freedom to give and receive and to work hard and have the choice of how to use what we earn through our hard work—this freedom, based on self-control and self-government, was a foundation of my skating. Without this freedom and charitable spirit I would not have had the opportunity to develop my skating talent for God and for all those that took part. Ultimately it was God Who gave me this freedom. It was His plan for my life.

Family, faith and freedom—The three deep foundations that supported my skating. The foundational skills of skating allowed me to gain freedom to express the joy God put in my soul. And my desire to express God's love on the ice changed the destiny of one young woman in Japan. God's power and love is all about changed lives, and nations that are renewed, free and civilized.

The foundations of these United States of America have, and can again allow the greatest nation on earth to continue to express what God has put into our national soul and spread that freedom for others to enjoy.

As I learn again the foundations of my skating. I hope you will join me in learning again the foundations of family, faith, and freedom, starting in our own minds, hearts and homes. I want all of our children to inherit a nation where God is not shut out, a strong nation that is free and civilized. I hope we can rise above the desire to just do things that appeal to our senses, and rebuild a nation that fulfills the yearning of the soul.

May God grant us the will to do so.

To end, I would like to dedicate the ice arena that will carry my name, to all those who have sacrificed so I could learn to be free on the ice; to all those who have sacrificed so our nation can be free, and to God Who has given us the foundations in the Ten

commandments and teaches us how to be free without fear of getting hurt. It is these unsung heroes who deserve the honor, and God Who deserves the glory.

Thank you for your kind attention as I have tried to share what the honor you have given me means to me.

IN HONOR OF MR. JOE A. GUERRA

**HON. HENRY BONILLA**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 5, 2000

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Joe A. Guerra for his excellence in public service. Mr. Guerra currently serves as the dean of the Laredo City Council and is mayor pro-tempore. Mr. Guerra has been a member of the Laredo City Council for 18 years with his last, and final term ending in 2002. He has served under four distinct administrations, J. C. Martin, Aldo Tatangelo, Saul N. Ramirez, and Elizabeth G. Flores. A true representative of the people, Mr. Guerra was instrumental in the inception of Laredo's citywide paving program, and is a strong supporter for the disadvantaged and elderly.

Jose Antonio Guerra was born on July 9, 1934 in Laredo, TX, to Jose M. and Josefina Valls Guerra. His lineage traces all the way back to the first Guerra who came to the New World from Montaña de Castilla, Spain, Jose Guerra Cañamar. He is the oldest of nine children, carrying on the legacy of the Guerra family raising and educating eight children, and enjoying the blessing of six grandchildren with his wife of 39 years, Josie Guerra. Joe attended local schools and graduated from Martin High School in 1953, following high school he received his Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Mary's University in San Antonio, TX, in 1957.

Following his college experience, Mr. Guerra returned to Laredo to join his family in the automotive replacement part business. Since 1969, he has been involved in the commercial oil and gas business, and is the owner/operator of a local service station. Not only is he involved in the city council and the local business community, he is also a member of the City/County Government Consolidation Committee which was created to study and establish a metropolitan government, the City of Laredo Water Issues Committee, and the Ad Hoc Insurance Committee.

A member of the Republican Party since 1964, Mr. Guerra attributes his success to the party's ideals and values. He served as Webb County Chairman to the campaign for Governor William P. Clements. He served on the committee working to promote George Bush for President in 1988, and 1992. He also worked diligently to ensure my election as Representative of the 23rd District of Texas. Currently he is working hard for the George W. Bush for President campaign efforts.

Mr. Guerra was asked to lead the "Pledge of Allegiance" at the fourth session of the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, which he proudly accepted with honor and dignity.

Mr. Guerra has made great contributions to society as a public servant. His commitment