

CELEBRATING TAIWAN'S
NATIONAL DAY

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Republic of China on Taiwan, which celebrates its birthday today. Taiwan has much to celebrate. It is a modern country led by a democratically-elected President, Mr. Chen Shui-bian. President Chen was elected on March 18, 2000, and this free and fair election resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from the ruling Kuomintang Party (KMT) to the more progressive Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This election demonstrated to the world that Taiwan is democratic and is worthy of the respect it has received from democratic nations.

In addition to the freedom to select their government leaders, the people of Taiwan can also celebrate their other freedoms, such as the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech. I believe that the freedom and democracy in Taiwan set an example for other nations in the area to follow.

The people of Taiwan can also celebrate their stunning economic success. Taiwan is the nineteenth largest economy in the world and is the United State's eight largest trading partner. This economic achievement has given the people of Taiwan the twenty-fifth highest per capita gross national product (GDP) in the world and one of the highest living standards in Asia and the world. In recent years, Taiwan has led most Asian nations in its production of computers, chips, and telecom equipment and has contributed mightily to the worldwide high technology boom.

Mr. Speaker, let me say again that Taiwan has a lot to celebrate today. On the occasion of Republic of China's National Day, it is important to remember that the United States has a strong relationship with Taiwan and its people. We share a mutual respect for democracy and freedom, as well as a strong economic bond, and I hope that this relationship will continue to flourish in the year to come.

TRIBUTE TO RONALD BONKOWSKI

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the former Mayor of Warren, Ronald Bonkowski, passed away. His sudden death stunned all of us who knew him and thousands of citizens in Warren and elsewhere in Macomb County who knew him through his service in public office.

Today, the date of the funeral for Ron Bonkowski, there appeared in the Macomb Daily a tribute to him, and I insert it into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD as a testimonial to his life's work. I know that I express the feelings of my constituents in extending condolences to his wife, Christine, and their four children and his mother, Estelle Bonkowski.

BONKOWSKI WILL BE MISSED

Ron Bonkowski will be missed. By his family, friends and by the political types that take pride at being Warren residents.

In the years Bonkowski served the public, from his earliest days on what was then the county board of supervisors, to the Warren City Council and for three terms as mayor of Warren, he did not define his public service as work.

"Politics is an art. First you must love it, and secondly, know when to walk away from the turf of politics," he told editors of The Macomb Daily during a visit with the newspaper's editorial board.

When word spread through Warren that Bonkowski, 62, had fallen victim to an apparent aneurysm early Friday, the only way to describe the reaction was that across the city, county and state there was an expression of disbelief.

The towering Bonkowski had been troubled in recent years with severe back pain, a medical problem that triggered his decision to retire from elective politics. He had recently purchased a winter home in Arizona to escape our bleak winters in favor of the dry, warm climate of the Southwest.

Bonkowski's keen financial mind and accounting knowledge proved to be an asset while serving as Warren's full-time mayor, and through the years earned the respect of mayors across the state.

He won praise from mayors such as Dearborn Mayor Mike Guido, who while attending a Michigan Week function in Macomb County at the time Bonkowski was serving as mayor, said: "When I look at Warren's operating budget, and the services its population expects and is getting, you have to admire Bonkowski's financial wisdom at being able to get the best out of every tax dollar."

During visitation hours at the D.S. Temrowski Funeral Home for the public to pay respect to the former Warren mayor, many who came shared their thoughts openly: "He was a smart man. And always boasted about the positive image of Warren. We need more Ron Bonkowskis . . ."

Former city attorney Walter Jakubowski, now a 37th District Court judge, said of the many good character traits he learned from the former mayor was "to be true to yourself and be loyal, and no bull . . ."

And at today's services at St. Martin DePorres, the former mayor will be remembered as a good family man, proud of his Polish heritage, and thankful for having been given the opportunity to serve as the mayor of Warren.

We share the community's loss of its former mayor. He was taken from his family and friends at too young an age.

But in his length of public service, he accomplished what some politicians just dream of achieving. His booming voice was tempered with love and compassion for the people who called Warren their home.

Ron Bonkowski will be missed, but never forgotten for his contributions to the City of Warren.

TRIBUTE TO VALMY THOMAS, THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS "FIRST MAJOR-
LEAGUER"

HON. DONNA MC CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate and pay tribute to my constituent,

fellow Virgin Islander, the father of one of my Washington staff members and my friend, Valmy Thomas, on the occasion of his induction into the Puerto Rico Baseball Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, although Valmy Thomas was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico in 1925, he is a "Crucian" through and through. Valmy took to playing baseball as a youth even though the main sport of his father's generation was cricket. He remembers cutting his own bats in the brush and having to substitute a tennis ball for a baseball, because he wanted desperately to play ball.

Valmy spent over seven years with the Navy, stationed in Puerto Rico, where he played baseball with a number of local teams. In 1950-51, he was Rookie of the Year with Santurce. In 1951 Valmy became another of the black players who went to Canada's Provincial League under a working agreement with the Pittsburgh Pirates who owned his U.S. rights. He played one year for St. Jean, a Montreal suburb but even though he was doing well, he left the club for economic reasons, even though it held up his progress to the majors. He pretty much "voluntarily retired" to protect his eligibility but played summers in the Dominican Republic from 1952 through 1954.

Valmy's shot at the majors came courtesy of the friendly working relationship between New York Giants owner Horace Stoneham and Pedin Zorrilla. To make this happen, though, he had to go back and play the 1955 season in St. Jean. The Giants organization was able to draft him from the Pirates.

Valmy's first stop in the majors was in Minneapolis, where the frigid early-season weather disagreed with his Caribbean blood. When the Minneapolis GM told him he was jeopardizing his chances of going to the big leagues, he replied that he would be increasing his chance of catching pneumonia if he stayed. He wrangled an assignment to the desert climes of Albuquerque and on the strength of his .366 average there, the Giants wanted to call him up the fall of 1956. Because he didn't want to go up and sit on a cold bench, he waited until the next spring to go up to the majors.

Valmy's first season with the New York Giants was his best. He also saw good action for the San Francisco team and the '59 Phillies who had obtained him in a trade. He spent most of 1960 and 1961 in the minors, though he did some time with the Orioles and Indians. He became the first black to play in Las Vegas, which was partly segregated. He is the only major-leaguer to play five years, each in a different city. He was also an innovator, wearing a light flexible chest protector inside his uniform even when he was at bat.

Valmy won two more championships with the Cangrejeros in Puerto Rico in 1958-59 and again in 1961-62, brining his total to five before he wrapped up his Puerto Rican career in 1962-63. After his retirement from baseball, Valmy returned home to St. Croix where he served as a sports consultant with the Bureau of Recreation for six years, setting up many baseball events. These included a series between pro-am Virgin Islands teams and Puerto Rican Winter Leaguers, exhibition games between the Red Sox and Yankees in