IN TRIBUTE TO KATHARINE GRAHAM

HON. FRANK R. WOLF
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2001

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, to our colleagues who spend so much time in Washington, D.C., The Washington Post is required daily reading if we want to stay on top of the news of the nation and world. To the handful of us who are privileged to represent congressional districts in the Washington metropolitan region, The Washington Post is our hometown newspaper and we today share in the loss of its legendary leader.

I would like to share with our colleagues the July 18 editorial from The Washington Post in tribute to Katharine Graham.

[From the Washington Post, July 18, 2001]

It’s one of the wonderful mysteries of journalism that, though a thousand people’s labor may be necessary to produce each day’s issue, every newspaper takes on an identity of its own. That character is shaped by people you may have heard of—the top editor, an advice columnist, a chief political correspondent, your county’s school paper—and by many whose names you probably don’t know: the copy editors, the ad sellers, the press operators and distributors.

The Washington Post is an example of how extraordinary it was for a woman to occupy her job, but for years she was the only female head of a Fortune 500 corporation. You get a sense of how anomalous this was when you realize that she was a brainy University of Chicago graduate with journalism when you become that of the society figure. Both her Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiography, “Personal History,” and “Ladies Who Lunch,” her memoir of her time in the world of Washington insiders, prove just how extraordinary it was for a woman to occupy her job, but for years she was the only female head of a Fortune 500 corporation.

One of Mrs. Graham’s public faces over time became that of the society figure. Both in Georgetown and in her summer home in Martha’s Vineyard, she hosted dinners (including the incumbent) and generals and secretaries of state. She liked doing these things—Mrs. Graham knew the pleasures of gossip, and she believed, among other things, that Washington should be fun—but there was a serious aspect to them too. Beneath the high-society veneer was an old-fashioned patriotism: a belief that liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, even politicians and journalists, shared a purpose higher than their differences and ought to be able to break bread together. Her potential for bringing people together was even greater than it appears in retrospect. There was nothing harmful to national security in the papers, but the Nixon administration claimed otherwise, and the country that was not above threatening The Washington Post Co.’s television licenses. Mrs. Graham’s lawyers advised against publication; they said the entire business could be ruined. But after listening to several sides to the story, Mrs. Graham said, “Let’s go. Let’s publish.”

In those circumstances, she didn’t believe that the government ought to be telling a newspaper what it could not print.

She proved that again the following year, when The Post again came under enormous government pressure—almost physically. For months, alone, the story behind the Watergate break-in. The White House insisted that The Post’s reporting was false, and launched a series of public and private attacks against the newspaper—and, on occasion, against Mrs. Graham. Such pressure would have caused many publishers to rein in their newsrooms, but Mrs. Graham did not; instead, she strongly backed Mr. Bradlee and his team.

Some two years later, partly because of the newspaper’s persistence, Mr. Nixon was forced to resign.

No less important to the paper’s success was the fact that Mrs. Graham was a tough-minded businesswoman who never lost sight of that. Journalism depended on running a newspaper that turned a profit. She concentrated on the business success of the newspaper, leading it through a difficult strike by pressmen in the mid-70s, even as she oversaw the diversification and expansion of The Post Co., which added new broadcast television stations and cable networks under her leadership.

All those decisions would have been lonely and frightening for any chief executive; given Mrs. Graham’s unusual position, they were all the more unusual. It’s hard now to recall how extraordinary it was for a woman to occupy her job, but for years she was the only female head of a Fortune 500 corporation.

As Memorial Day passes and Veterans’ Day quickly approaches, we as a country cannot escape our obligation toward our American heroes. World War II veterans have never asked for a monument and were content without it, but it is time for us to say thank you for their courage and sacrifice through gestures such as a memorial. I am grateful that American soldiers proved their valor and accomplished the greatest deed of all: heroism. How can we allow Americans to forget the heroic efforts of veterans more than 50 years ago?

VETERANS HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON
OF IDAHO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2001

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Speaker, as the graduation season comes to a close, I would like to recognize a few special graduates from the state of Idaho. Local high school students presented about 50 World War II veterans with high school diplomas they never received due to the war. These men put their education on hold, joined arms, and fought valiantly for our beautiful country. The high school diplomas are well deserved and long overdue.

Retired servicemen appreciate the homage that our high school students paid to their service, and I am pleased to see the youth in Idaho recognizing the great deeds of past generations. The Greek historian Herodotus once wrote, “Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks.” When faced with the dangers of war, our American soldiers proved their valor and accomplished the greatest deed of all: heroism. How can we allow Americans to forget the heroic efforts of veterans more than 50 years ago?

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