

IN TRIBUTE TO KATHARINE
GRAHAM

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2001

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, our nation has lost one of the true giants of American journalism. Katharine Graham, 84, the former chairman and chief executive officer of The Post Co. and former publisher of The Washington Post, died on July 17 from head injuries she sustained in a fall while on a business trip in Idaho.

Mrs. Graham was a remarkable woman of courage, grace and integrity who lead the Post through what has been called two of the most celebrated episodes in American journalism: the publication in 1971 of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate scandal. She is credited with transforming the Post into one of the nation's leading newspapers.

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]

KATHARINE GRAHAM 1917-2001

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 reporter—and by many whose names you probably don't know: the copy editors, the ad sellers, the press operators and distributors. Few of those who work here, though, would dispute that at The Post a single person is responsible first and foremost for making our newspaper what it is today. That person is Katharine Graham, who died yesterday at the age of 84.

Mrs. Graham's imprint was the product both of her values, which suffused the paper, and of the crucial decisions she made about its leadership and direction. At The Post and Newsweek, she chose great editors, such as The Post's Benjamin Bradlee, and then gave them the independence and resources they needed to produce strong journalism. She also supported them at crucial moments, when their work was doubted or under attack by powerful forces in and outside of government. Two of those cases helped define her career, and The Post: her refusal to bow to the government's efforts to block publication of the Pentagon Papers and her backing of the paper's coverage of the Watergate scandal.

Her decision in 1971 to publish the Pentagon's secret history of the Vietnam War, after a federal court already had blocked the New York Times from doing so, was even harder than it appears in retrospect. There was nothing harmful to national security in

the papers, but the Nixon administration claimed otherwise, and its henchmen were 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 the arguments on both sides, 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 as it pursued, almost 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 paper'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 the fact that high-quality 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 so. 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. You get a sense of how anomalous this was when you realize that she was a brainy University of Chicago graduate with journalism experience, both at this paper and elsewhere; and yet when the time came for her father to bequeath The Post to the next generation, it was her husband, Philip Graham, who took over. No one, least of all Katharine, found this strange. Only when her husband died did Mrs. Graham take over the paper; her insecurities in doing so are well documented in her Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiography, "Personal History."

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 presidents (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 credentials for bringing people together were strengthened by her scrupulous refusal to use her position (not to mention this editorial page) to advance her personal or corporate financial interests; she gave generously to many institutions and causes in and outside of Washington, yet sought little credit for it.

In what she amusingly called retirement, Mrs. Graham seemed only to become more

active. With the publication of her autobiography, so astonishingly honest and unsentimental about herself, the well-known publisher became an even better-known author. And yet, as public a figure as she was, we here at The Post flattered ourselves to think that we saw an essential side of her that others did not. We were the beneficiaries of her investment, year after year, in a superior product: in new sections, new local, domestic and foreign bureaus, new and diverse talent. We were the beneficiaries of her gradual and graceful passing of the baton to the next generation, a transition that she made seem easy but that—as the experience of other great newspaper families shows—can work only with the greatest of care. We got to hear her brutally frank assessments of puffed-up Washington celebrities, delivered in salty language that forever altered the pearls-and-Georgetown image for anyone who heard them. Most of all, we got to see the respect she brought, and the high expectations she held, day in and day out, for fair-minded journalism. The respect was more than reciprocated. We will miss her very much.

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 high school students are giving, 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?

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 Americans have finally pulled together to honor these brave men and women of World War II with a national memorial.

High school students throughout Idaho have discovered a way to say thank you to the saviors of our country. As young Idahoans helped veterans to don the traditional cap and gown this year, it reminded me that throughout these 50 years we have not forgotten these men or their important role in our American history. Through the ongoing construction of