

service to your country. You've reminded Americans that we can never become complacent and must keep our defenses strong. We will remember Pearl Harbor and always be on alert.

TRIBUTE TO ROLLIN "RUFFY" JOHNSON ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS A VFW ASSISTANT DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 5, 2001

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to a U.S. military veteran—a special veteran, one who after completing his own tour of duty has spent a career providing assistance to other veterans. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Rollin "Ruffy" Johnson on the occasion of his retirement as a Veterans of Foreign Wars assistant state service officer for the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

It is conventional wisdom that no person in any organization—and that includes you and I, Mr. Speaker—is truly irreplaceable, but Michigan veterans may look long and hard before they come up with an individual who has worked and battled so hard for the rights for our former military men and women as Ruffy Johnson has. I guess that, in Ruffy's case, his work on behalf of veterans blends innate Yooper cussedness with the personal style of a person who has claimed that his nickname "Ruffy" comes from his early days of enjoying a good fight. If you combine those characteristics with the important task of fighting for veterans' benefits, you know you have a mixture that can make people at the Department of Veterans Affairs sit up and listen.

After graduating in 1951 from Negaunee High School in Michigan's U.P., Ruffy enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving the first two years on the destroyer U.S.S. Beale and two more years at a base in the Mediterranean. His four-year hitch completed, he returned to the U.P. and was one of the first dozen civilians hired at K.I. Sawyer, a Strategic Air Command Base near Marquette, which is now closed. Following his Sawyer job he worked for a number of years for the U.S. Post office, but he took the job that really concerns us here in 1988, when he accepted a position with the Department of Michigan Veterans of Foreign Wars as an assistant state service officer in Detroit.

At least one Detroit colleague remembers Ruffy arriving from the U.P. with his wife Doreen in their pickup truck, and that colleague recalls checking to see if there was a hunting rifle in the rear window. Doreen remembers there was no gun, but she believes the rack was probably there.

Mr. Speaker, I said that Rolling Johnson was a fighter for veterans. An example of his tenacity is what occurred after Ruffy learned that veterans were being pressed for the co-payments of their prescription drugs. He inquired about the appeal process and was told by the VA there was no appeal. Well, Mr.

Speaker, the VA had tangled with the wrong guy, and through the tenacity of Ruffy Johnson, a national appeal process was established.

Ruffy was transferred from Detroit back to the U.P. in 1992. His initial veterans' service area was the eastern U.P. but by the end of the decade he was assisting across the Upper Peninsula. I know what's involved in that effort, Mr. Speaker, because I have put more than five hundred thousand miles in driving around my congressional district. Ruffy has clearly been up to the task, serving above and beyond the call of duty by going to every convention and every meeting that involved veterans. He was instrumental in creating a program to name a U.P. Veteran of the Year, and he has been active as a judge in those great VFW programs, Voice of Democracy and National Youth Essay.

Ruffy has held numerous positions at his own local post, Negaunee's Post 3165, including serving as post commander in 1980–81. He is currently 14th District Junior Vice Commander.

Ruffy has counseled widows of veterans on the benefits they are due, fought to keep veterans in nursing homes, and helped process myriad claims for deserving former military individuals. All his great attributes aside, however, Ruffy has one blind spot. Maybe it was those years in Detroit, but despite the advice of friends, despite the wishes of his own children, he remains a Detroit Lions fan in the heart of Green Bay Packer country. We'll forgive him this flaw.

Mr. Speaker, on Dec. 8, Ruffy Johnson will be honored by friends, peers, his wife of 45 years, his career-Army son, and two of his three daughters who are able to make it, at a gathering in Ishpeming, Michigan, I ask you and my House colleagues to join me in saluting Rollin "Ruffy" Johnson, a true friend of veterans in northern Michigan.

TRIBUTE TO MS. DEBBIE TAMLIN

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 5, 2001

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the floor of the House to congratulate and call attention to one of Colorado's truly outstanding citizens. Ms. Debbie Tamlin of Fort Collins, Colorado, this week, has been named Realtor of the Year by her peers and colleagues of the Fort Collins Board of Realtors, a commendation she richly deserves for a variety of reasons. Debbie is a true professional who never lets up until her clients are well served. Her standard is excellence, and her dedication to her profession is legendary.

Debbie is proprietor and president of her own firm ZTI Group. She has been a real estate broker in Colorado for over twenty years, and president ZTI Group since 1989. Recently she was awarded for her work receiving the Distinguished Service Award twice from the Colorado Association of Realtors (CAR), and the 2001 Political Service Award from CAR.

Debbie is a familiar face at the Colorado State Capitol, at the County Courthouse, at

City Hall, and even here in the nation's Capitol. She is clearly my community's most forceful and most competent advocate for the improvement of laws to benefit consumers and to build a stronger, healthier community. As one who for thirteen years has been on the receiving end of Debbie's lobbying, I can tell you, she's not to twist arms, make threats, or mislead. She's a skilled negotiator, a brilliant intellectual, and an honorable decent woman whose word is her bond, and whose integrity precedes her. Of course she's persuasive. Many of the best laws related to property rights and housing at the federal, state, and local level have only been accomplished because of Debbie Tamlin's devotion to her community and her profession.

Debbie Tamlin is a political activist. She's backed me in each of my efforts to represent Colorado, and I humbly warrant I would not have succeeded were it not for her assistance. In fact, there are many leaders in office today who owe their election victories to Debbie. Conversely, there are many aspirants whose political ambitions have been dashed because of Debbie * * * well, let's just say because Debbie didn't see things exactly their way.

Mr. Speaker, Coloradans know and appreciate Debbie Tamlin's numerous achievements, but to me, Debbie is a close friend, one I've known since I first arrived in Colorado. She's a devoted mother, a pious believer, and one of the most honorable people I've ever met. Whenever there is a cause, Debbie is there to be its champion. Whenever there is a need, Debbie is there to help. Whenever there is a challenge, Debbie is there to face it. She's a profile in courage, a heroine of endless generosity, and a loyal friend to many.

Debbie Tamlin is an authentic American and an enthusiastic patriot. She loves the West and all its traditions. She embodies the spirit of freedom and the hope of a brighter tomorrow; and she inspires all around her to achieve great things that once seemed only distant dreams. She's a leader—one whose mark on her community is unmistakable and always positive—the kind of leader who makes her friends and neighbors proud, sets the bar high, and leaves us in awe. She is respected across the country and beyond even that. Her passion for excellence in her professional life and personal life make her extraordinary. She is a splendid woman.

Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for any of us to describe the essence of a particular State. Colorado, for example, is known for many things—a rich history, rugged mountains, wild majestic skies and hard-working people. Debbie Tamlin is the face of Colorado. Her life's work embodies the qualities we all admire. She's a loving wife, a caring mother, and gentle soul and impressive figure in Colorado's bright future.

I am grateful for our colleagues from throughout the nation who join us tonight in expressing our warmest commendations and congratulations to Debbie. She's more than the Realtor of the Year, she's Debbie Tamlin. May God continue to richly bless her and her family.