

THE PRESIDING OFFICER OF THE SENATE

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, first I thank our Presiding Officer, the Senator from New Jersey. He always has a clean desk. What does that mean? That means he is paying attention to what is going on in the Senate. He is not at the desk reading a magazine or a piece of paper, a newspaper. He is alert. I watched him. This is the way he always presides. That is the way Presiding Officers ought to conduct themselves when gracing that desk in this, the greatest legislative, parliamentary, deliberative body in the world.

He does it with a great dignity and style. I thank him. He sits there many evenings at this hour when most Senators have gone on their separate ways. I thank him.

I thank the other Members of the new class—I say it in that fashion—who have worked at that desk. There are some of them—I will not call their names at the moment—who make me proud of the Senate. The fact is, the way they preside is a model for legislative bodies everywhere to watch. Too often as we sit in that chair, we forget that millions of people are watching the Senate. They are watching the Chair.

I have been a member of the State legislature in West Virginia and the West Virginia House of Delegates. Those people in the State legislatures watch the Presiding Officer of this body.

This is the premier upper house in the world. They should see the premier act of presiding on the part of the Senator who sits at that desk. Teachers, college professors, students, political column writers, and editorialists watch. We ought to remember that when we are sitting in that chair.

I congratulate the Presiding Officer. I congratulate Senator CORZINE. I thank him.

GLORIA GILLESPIE

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as we head toward Christmas and the close of this session of Congress and this turbulent and tragic first year of the new millennium, I want to pause to remember a young woman who passed away this summer. Gloria Margaret Gillespie was a friend of mine.

Many Members of the Senate and staff will remember Gloria, for she worked in the Senate hair salon for 29 years. She cut my hair. Probably for the first time that my hair was ever cut at that salon she cut—28 years or 29 years ago. She worked there for 29 years.

She loved her work, and she loved her friends and she loved life. Gloria had a cheerful, loyal, uplifting spirit. And her time on this Earth was far, far too brief. She was only 54 years of age when she passed away in Berea, KY, this past July—54.

Five years ago, Gloria began a battle with cancer. She had smoking-related lung cancer. But instead of withdrawing, she used her illness as a forum to warn others about the dangers of smoking.

Gloria did not win her battle with cancer, but to the end, even in the face of great pain, she remained a fighter and a friend to all—someone who loved the Senate and someone who loved life.

Gloria Gillespie knew that each day is a gift. Each day is a gift. She cherished each waking moment. She found great joy in seeing people alive. From childhood, Gloria possessed a deep and abiding faith in God. That strong faith made her courageous and deeply appreciative of the sheer wonder of the world that God created.

Her unflinching optimism was contagious, as was her impish laughter. She brought a special kind of joy to all of her endeavors. She made the load a little lighter for all who knew her.

Gloria is survived by her parents, C.H. and Mary Frances Gillespie of Berea, KY, one niece, Lisa Gillespie, and one nephew, David Gillespie.

Along with all the members of her family and her legions of friends, I shall miss Gloria. But I shall think of her during this Christmas season, and I shall never, never, never forget her.

MARIAN BERTRAM

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I rise to remember a longtime Senate employee who passed away on October 15 of this year. Marian Bertram dedicated 27 years of her life to public service and to the United States Senate. She began her work at the Democratic Policy Committee in 1971, eventually serving as the chief clerk of that committee. She retired from the Senate in October of 1998.

Marian Bertram served four Democratic Leaders, beginning with Mike Mansfield and continuing on through my own tenure as Democratic Leader, George Mitchell's, and Senator DASCHLE's leader terms.

She gained a deep understanding of the Senate's intricacies during those years and researched and wrote the Democratic Policy Committee's Legislative Bulletin. She also shouldered the challenging task of producing voting records and vote analyses for Democratic Members.

Marian was an able and very dedicated Senate employee and through it all she was unflinching good humored and professional.

My sympathy goes out to her many friends in the Washington area who were shocked and saddened by her untimely death this fall. We shall remember her with great affection and with thanks for the many years she gave so unselfishly to this institution.

SENATORS AND SENATE LEADERS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, let me say just a word or so before I make my final speech of this year. I thank all Senators on both sides of the aisle for the work they do on behalf of this great Nation. They work here at a sacrifice. We are paid well, but there are many here who could earn much more money in other fields. There are many who come here after earning much more money in other fields but who want to give something to the Nation, who want to serve. Here is the place—in this Chamber—where Senators, since 1859, have served the Nation.

So I salute all Senators. I salute the leaders of the Senate—our Democratic and Republican leaders of the majority and the minority.

I have been a majority leader. I have been a minority leader. I have been a majority whip. I know the kinds of problems with which they are confronted every day. I know the demands that are made upon them by their colleagues. I know of the expectations that surround this Chamber and the expectations of our leaders. They spend a lot of time protecting our interests and working on behalf of our interests. They spend many hours here when the rest of us are probably sleeping. They carry to their beds problems that we don't know about. Many demands are made on these leaders.

I sit here and I hear criticism of our majority leader. He is the majority leader and was chosen by his colleagues for this job. He sets the schedule. He decides the program.

So not only do I salute him for the great work that he does on behalf of the Nation every day, but I also have empathy with him. I know he must go home troubled at night—troubled because he could not fulfill the expectations of this Senator, or that Senator, troubled because he is sometimes unjustly criticized. I had all of these things happen to me.

So I thank TOM DASCHLE. He can't be everything to everybody. He has to do what he has to do. He has to do what he thinks is best. He has to promote the interests of the Senate. He has to promote the interests of getting on with the work.

So does our majority whip. These are two fine Senators. There isn't a Senator here who doesn't think that he could do that job right there better—that majority leader's job. Every Senator thinks he can do it better. Every Senator thinks he can do the whip's job better. But they do the best they can.

I want to pray for them in this season that we are entering. I want them to know that we Senators, upon reflection, cannot help but thank them for the work they do.

Somebody has to do this so we can leave the Senate when our speeches are made and go home. But they have to stay.

Senator REID, the whip, stays around here. He stays around the Chamber. He renders a tremendous service to his country.

I want to take this moment to thank him, to thank TOM DASCHLE, to thank the Republican leader, to thank the Republican whip, to thank the Senators—the ladies and the gentlemen—who preside, all of the members of the staffs in the cloakrooms and in the hallways, in the corridors, and those who provide the security of this Chamber, and the people who work in it. I thank them all.

Somebody appreciates you. You may not realize it, but somebody is watching you. Somebody appreciates what you are doing. The people at the desk up there, somebody appreciates you.

So I just want to express that appreciation.

THE REAL STORY OF CHRISTMAS

Mr. BYRD. Now, Mr. President, we are just a few days from Christmas, a few days from the morning when millions of children tumble out of their warm beds, awaken their parents, rush to the family room, and look, with gleeful delight, at the bows, the boxes, and the bundles under the tree.

This is one of my favorite times of the year—a time of joy, a time of love, a time of family gatherings and warm memories.

I remember the Christmas presents waiting for me when I was a boy back there during the Great Depression in the hard hills of Mercer County in southern West Virginia. There was not an electric light in the house—no electricity, no running water, but there was an orange or a drawing book or a set of pencils or a set of water colors, or a geography book that I had been wanting.

My family did not have great material wealth, but we always had a wealth of love. The two old people who raised me, they are in Heaven tonight. They are in Heaven. We did not have fancy toys in those days. We celebrated the season for its true meaning: the birth of the Christ Child.

Now, I respect every man's or woman's religion. I respect their religion. If it is Moslem, I respect their religion. I can listen to the prayers of any churchman or any layman. I can respect them all because who am I? I am unworthy of God's blessings. I can respect them.

So my wife Erma and I have passed those lessons on to our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren.

In recent years, however, that meaning has been drowned out by a society that is focused more on the perfect gift or the latest gadget or the hottest-selling toy. Our attention is on store sales and Santa Claus rather than on the true meaning of Christmas.

Now, I am a Christian. I believe in Christ. I am not very worthy, but I be-

lieve in Him. I respect anyone who does not. I respect anyone who believes that He was, that He lived, He was a historic figure, He was a prophet. They may not believe He is the Messiah—I do—but it does not lessen my respect for others.

I will listen to them at any time. But I think all of us have to agree that this was a great event that happened that split the centuries in two, and the years that were before Christ are numbered, the years that are after Christ numbered differently. This was some, some happening. No matter what we believe or do not believe, it is still recognized by all that there was a man named Jesus Christ.

And so no matter what our religion, I think we ought to understand this was more than just an ordinary happening, more than just an ordinary man.

At its core, the season has not changed. Christmas will always be, to me, about a family that found no shelter but a manger, and also about a newborn child who would become, in my viewpoint, the Saviour of the world.

As Luke wrote in his Gospel:

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Good tidings. Great joy. How many people think of those words standing in the long lines of their local shopping malls?

I worry that too many of us, in the hectic pace of the modern world, have forgotten the true spirit of Christmas, have forgotten what this is really all about. They have forgotten the true meaning. The story of the birth of Christ has been overshadowed by the pressures and the strains of a commercialized holiday.

Families will spend hours at shopping malls, waiting in long lines, rather than in the company of loved ones or in a church or in a place of worship celebrating in song or prayer. They will become obsessed with purchases and the gifts they may receive. Children will meticulously craft the perfect list of toys and will worry that grandma will again, this Christmas, buy them another sweater that they will never wear. Sadly, the Christmas season has become the shopping season. A time for joy and spiritual reflection has drowned in the shallow waters of greed.

That does not need to be. We can return to the true meaning of Christmas. During this holiday, I urge all Americans to reflect on their families and their faith—whatever their faith—and to read the story of Jesus' birth in the Gospels. Look up into the night sky and pick the Star of Wonder that led the wise men to Bethlehem to offer gifts to the Christ Child. Join with family and friends to sing a Christmas

carol, share a meal, and reflect on the blessings we have been given. Visit each other, one another's church or synagogue or whatever. Go join and visit and enjoy this season. Perhaps the materialism that has come to dominate the season will fade and we can begin to truly understand the great and glorious story of Christmas.

And so, Mr. President:

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer

Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile:

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"

"A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two!" "Only two?"

Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three—"But no,

From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"

And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?"

Two thousand! and who'll make it three?

Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand

What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:

"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;

A game—and he travels on.

He is "going" once, and "going" twice,

He's "going" and almost "gone."

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

COMMENDING SENATOR BYRD

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, it is my honor to address you in the chair. Your remarks with regard to Christmas are ones that stir one's heart and feelings. I am the lucky one to be here this evening to hear you speak. I hope everyone across America has the sense of how you love this body, the great Senate, and the people we serve.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. In my capacity as a Senator from the State of West Virginia, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

There being no objection, the quorum call is waived.