Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a moving article from the Washington Post, which I request to be inserted and printed in the RECORD at the end of my statement.

The article, entitled "Changing the World One Clip at a Time," by Dita Smith, describes a most unusual, uplifting tribute to the 6 million victims of the Holocaust by a class of Tennessee Eighth-graders and their teachers.

In 1998, the students of Whitwell Middle School, together with two dedicated teachers, Mr. David Smith, and Ms. Sandra Roberts, took it upon themselves to collect 6 million paper clips and turn them into a Memorial Sculpture in commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust. What made the ambitious project even more unique was the fact that it was conceived and carried out by homogeneous white, Christian town of just 1,600.

In fact, the project didn’t even originate as a project, but rather, an intimate extra-curricular activity to educate the predominantly uninformed students about the tragedy of the Holocaust.

This voluntary after-school course had such a profound impact on the small-town students, that they decided to take action. The eighth-graders derived their idea from the Norwegians, who, during World War II, pinning paper clips to their lapels to express solidarity with their fellow Jewish Citizens.

Inspired by this gesture, the students set up their own web page asking for donations of paper clips.

Their initiative quickly caught fire, and what began as a local cause, soon became an international phenomenon.

The students were overwhelmed by the outpouring of all sorts of paper clips from all over the world. They even received a donation from President Clinton.

To date, the students have collected 23 million paper clips, well surpassing their 6 million goal.

For the last leg of the project, the students have determined to find the necessary funding for an authentic German Holocaust era railroad car in which to load and display their paper clips and countless letters.

I have worked closely with Nancy Galler-Malta, the Educational Director, and Rabbi Justin Schwarz, the religious advisor of the Rockland County Hebrew High School to help them see this project through to completion.

Their task is a daunting one, but judging by the tenacity exhibited by the students, thus far, I have no doubt that they will succeed.

I invite my colleagues to help the Whitwell Middle School realize their noble goal, and in the process, spread their vital message of tolerance and compassion and to remember this devastation, inhumane chapter of world history.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CHANGING THE WORLD ONE CLIP AT A TIME

(By Dita Smith, Washington Post Staff Writer)

WHITWELL, Tenn.—It is a most unlikely place to build a Holocaust memorial, much less one that would get the attention of the president, that was the subject of a book, a book that would become an international cause. Yet it is here that a group of eighth-graders and their teachers decided to honor each of the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust by collecting 6 million paper clips and turning them into a sculpture.

This is remarkable because, for one thing, Whitwell, a town of 1,600 tucked away in a Tennessee Valley just west of the Smokies, has no Jews. In fact, Whitwell does not offer much opportunity to practice racial or religious tolerance. The community is white, Christian and very fundamentalist," says Linda Hooper, principal of the middle school, which has 252 students, including six blacks, one Hispanic, zero Asians, zero Catholics, zero Jews.

"During coal-mining days, we were a mixed community," explains the town's unofficial historian, Eunice Hewett Harris. "Now there are only a handful of black families left." Whitwell is a town of two traffic lights, 10 churches and a collection of fast-food joints joined by a 3-mile drag. It was a thriving coal town until 1962, when the last mine closed. Some of the cottages built by the mining companies still stand, their paint now faded, their porches sagging. Trailers have replaced the houses that collapsed from age and neglect during lean economic times. Only 40 miles up the road is Chattanooga, home of the red-brick Rhea County Courthouse made history during the 1925 Scopes trial, the "monkey trial," in which teacher John T. Scopes was convicted of violating Tennessee law that made it unlawful "to teach any theory that denies the divine Creation" and to teach Darwinian evolutionary theory instead.

Almost as soon as the students in this Sequatchie River Valley hold firmly to those beliefs under the watchful eyes of their church leaders. "Look, we're not that far away from the Ku Klux Klan," founded only 100 miles west, in Pulaski, Tenn., says Hewett Harris. "I mean, in the 1950s they were still active here." Such is the setting for a Holocaust Memorial not only to remember Holocaust victims but, above all, to sound a warning on what intolerance can wreak. The Whitwell students and teachers had no idea how many lives they were about to touch.

The Holocaust project had its genesis in the summer of 1998 when Whitwell Middle’s 31-year-old deputy principal and football coach, David Smith, attended a teacher training course in nearby Chattanooga. A seminar on the Holocaust as a teaching tool for tolerance intrigued him because the Holocaust had never been part of the middle school’s curriculum and was mentioned only tangentially in the local high school. He came back and proposed an after-school course that would be voluntary. Principal Hooper, 59, loved the idea. "We just have to crack the shell of their white cocoon, to enable them to understand the world outside them," she says. They have to give our children a broader view of the world," she says. "We have to crack the shell of their white cocoon, to enable them to survive in the world out there." She was nervous about how parents would react, and held a parent-teacher meeting. But when she asked which of their children knew anything about the Holocaust, only a few hands went up, hesitatingly. Hooper, who has lived in Whitwell most of her life and had taught English at the姊妹ary school, explained the basics. Just one parent expressed misgivings: Should young teenagers be shown terrifying photos of naked, emaciated prisoners? She said she wasn’t sure. "Well," the father asked, "would you let your son take the class?" Yes, she replied, and the father was on board. There wasn’t a question about it.

One Lisa Sparks from Tyler, Tex., sent a handful. Then a letter landed from Colorado. One girl—nobody remembers who it was—said: Let’s collect 6 million paper clips and make a sculpture to remember the victims. The idea caught on, and the students began bringing in paper clips, from home, from aunts and uncles, friends, family, as the school’s computer expert, set up a Web page asking for donations of clips, one or two, or however many people wanted to send.

Three weeks later, the first letter arrived. One Lisa Sparks from Tyler, Tex., sent a handful. Then a letter landed from Colorado. By the end of the school year, the group had assembled 100,000 clips. It occurred to the teachers that collecting 6 million paper clips at that rate would take a lifetime.

HELP FROM AFAR

Unexpected help came in late 1999 when two German journalists living in Washington, D.C., stumbled across the Whitwell Web site. Peter Schroeder, 59, and Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand, 58, had been doing research for a book about the U.S. Holocaust Museum, tracing concentration camp survivors to interview. Schroeder-Hildebrand was author of "I’m Dying of Hunger," a book about a camp survivor who described how prisoners were made to evolve in a very homogeneous white, Christian town of just 1,600.

The Whitwell Web site came up during a routine search under "Holocaust." The idea of American children in a conservative Southern town collecting paper clips intrigued the couple. They called the school, interviewed teachers and students by telephone, then wrote several articles for the nine newspapers they work for in Germany and Austria. Whitwell and the Schroeders were hit with a blizzard of paper clips from the two countries. The couple soon had 46,000, filling several large plastic containers. The thing to do, they decided, was to drive them to Whitwell, 12 hours away. They received robocalls of interest in the project.

The entire school showed up. None of the eighth-graders had ever met anyone from outside the United States, let alone anyone from Germany or Austria. They were surprised to meet other Holocaust perpetrators. At the end of the four-day visit, the students told their principal. "They are really quite normal." The Schroeders were so impressed they wrote a paperback about Whitwell. "The Paper Clip Project," which has not been translated into...
There are days when I wished we could just school, contains about 40 letters, with paper even if we did, we would go on. We cannot threat,’’ says the silver-haired Hooper. ‘‘But examined in the principal’s office to make sure erts opens the packages, which have been ex-

Laura Jefferies is in charge of the ledger and has arrived from Germany, two smaller ones two-to three-hour meeting. A large package 
ing the mail that has accumulated during 

cafeteria is disciplined and relatively quiet. loose-mannered kids—they reply ‘‘yes, 

mean myself into other people’s shoes.’’ Mean-
pant in last year’s walk. ‘‘It made me think, 

truck and driven to the woods. ‘‘I was truly 
camps. The students are blindfolded, tied to-

jackbooted Nazi guards marched them off to 

the ‘‘walk’’ to give students at least an in-

resent the millions of shoes the victims left 
fences. Wire mesh is hung with shoes to rep-

While, the counting goes on. It is daunting. 

piles. Drew Shadrick, a strapping tackle 

without us. There is no way we could 
stop this now.’’ When the students fall be-

no longer about us. There is no way we could stop it all be-

hind, it’s Roberts who spends hours sorting and filing, The students crowd around Rob-

bers desk and receive a letter at a time. They carefully empty all paper clips onto lit-
tile piles. The Drew Bledsoe Memorial Tackle 

on the football team, is the chief counter and 

stands over a three-foot-high white plastic barrel, about the size of an oil drum. He ac-
counts each clip, drops it into the barrel, keeping track on a legal pad. Two other bar-
rels, which once contained Coca-Cola syrup and were donated to the corporation, are 

filled to the rim and scaled with transparent plastic. ‘‘It takes five strong guys to move one of those barrels,’’ says Roberts. Against 

the wall this day are stacks and stacks of 

boxes. In early February, an Atlanta syna-

gogue had promised 1 million paper clips, and sure enough, a week later a pickup truck delivered 84 boxes bought from an office supply 

store. Half are still unopened.

All sorts of clips arrive—silver-tone, bronze-tone, plastic-coated in all colors, small ones, large ones, tri-

angular clips and artistic ones fashioned from wood. Then there are the designs made of paper clips, neatly pasted onto letter paper. ‘‘If the Germans would de-

stroy the design, the students count the clips, then replace them in the barrel with an equal number purchased by the group. The art is worn by students during the occasional school publications. ‘‘We’ve collected a few dollars arrives. The money goes to-

ward buying supplies. Both Roberts and 

Smith won teacher awards last year, and their $300 in prize money also went toward 

supplies, and helping students pay for what 

has become an annual trip to Washington and the Holocaust Museum.

The students file all letters, all scraps of paper, even the stumps, in large white ring 

binders. By now, 5,000 to 8,000 letters fill 14 

neat binders. The letters are from 19 coun-

dies and 45 states, and include dozens of 

rainbow pictures, and flowers, peace doves 

and swastikas crossed out with big red bars— 
in the shape of paper clips. There are poems, 

personal essays. ‘‘Today,’’ one letter reads, ‘‘I am sending 71 paper clips to commemorate the 71 Jews who were deported from Bucekburg.’’ One 
of her many students, a 12-year-old girl, 

memorate his mother and four siblings murdered by the Nazis in Lithuania in November 1941. ‘‘For my handicapped brother,’’ says another let-

ter. ‘‘I’m so glad he didn’t live then, the 

Nazis would have killed him.’’ For my grand-

mother,’’ says another, ‘‘I’m so grateful she 

survived the camp.’’ ‘‘For my son, that he 

may live in peace,’’ wrote a woman from 

Germany. Last year, a letter containing eight paper clips came from President Clin-

ton. Another arrived from Vice President Gore, a native of Tennessee, thanking the students for their ‘‘tireless efforts to pre-

serve and promote human rights,’’ but in-

cluding no clips. Every month, Smith writes 
dozens of celebrities, politicians and sports 
teams, requesting paper clips. He gets many 
refusals, form letters indicating that the ad-

dresssee never saw the request. But clips have come from the NFL’s Green Bay Packer’s (Happy Days fame), Henry Winkler (the Fonz), Tom 

Hanks, Elle Wiesel, Madeleine Albright. 

Among the football teams that contributed 

are the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Indianapolis Colts and the Dallas Cowboys.

So many clips in memory of specific Holo-
cau victims have come in that one thing has become clear: Melting them into a statue 

would be inconceivable. Each paper clip should represent one victim, the students be-
lieve, and so a new idea has been hatched. They want to get an authentic German rail-

road car from the 1940s, one that may have actually transported victims to camps. The 

car would be turned into a museum that would house all the paper clips, as well as 

display all the letters.

Dagmar and Peter Schroeder plan to travel to Germany next week to find a suitable rail-

road car and have it transported to Whitwell. They are determined to find such a car and 

the necessary funding. Like counting the clips, the task is daunting.

WHITWELL’S LEGACY

Whatever happens, for generations of Whitwell eighth-graders, a paper clip will never again be just a paper clip, but instead carry a message of patience, perseverance, empathy and tolerance. Roberts, asked what she thought she had accomplished with the project so far, said: ‘‘Nobody put it better than Laurie Lynn [a student in last year’s class]. She said, ‘Now, when I see someone, I think before I speak, I think before I act, and I think before I judge.’’ ‘‘And Roberts adds: ‘I’ve seen that crazy—yes, ma’am, and ‘yes, sir.’ Even lunch in the cafeteria is disciplined and relatively quiet. Yet, there is an obvious and warm bond be-

between students and teachers. The group’s first item of business is open-

ning the mail that has accumulated during the past three days. That takes half of the two-to three-hour meeting. A large package has arrived from Germany, two smaller ones from Austria and more than a dozen letters: Laura Jeffries is in charge of the ledger and keeps a neat record of each sender’s address, phone number and e-mail address. One group of students responds to the e-mails sent via their Web site. The school’s principal, Roberts 

opens the packages, which have been ex-

amined in the principal’s office to make sure they contain nothing dangerous. ‘‘We’ve had a few incidents where kids brought in from the Holocaust deniers, but we have never received a threat,’’ says the silver-haired Hooper. ‘‘But even if we did, we would go on. We cannot live in fear. We would defeat the entire pur-

pose.”’ The large package, from a German school, contains about 40 letters, with paper clips pasted onto each page. Roberts sighs. ‘‘This is the work,” she says. “There are days when I wished we could just stop it. But it has gotten way beyond us. It’s