

was unheard of for an Asian American at that time. He faced harsh protest from his teammates the entire two years he played at UCLA, but he became the first Asian American to play and letter in a major sport at a West Coast college or university.

Pat and his wife Lily had been married for just two months in December, 1941 when our government gave them just four days to pack only what they could carry and sent them to live in an internment camp.

While in an assembly center at the Santa Anita race track, Pat and Lily were able to avoid going to an internment camp when Father Flanagan of Boys' Town convinced federal officials that his orphanage in Nebraska needed someone with Pat's psychology background. Pat worked at Boys' Town for 18 years, providing counseling and administering psychological tests.

After Boys' Town, Pat was appointed chief probation officer of the Douglas County Juvenile Court and helped establish a separate juvenile court system for the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska Psychiatric Institute later recruited Okura to head up the Community Psychiatric Services division, where he became the state planner for mental health and launched five successful mental health centers in the state.

In 1970, Pat's work in Nebraska prompted then-National Institute of Mental Health, NIMH, Director Bertram Brown, to recruit Pat to become his executive assistant in Washington, DC. Pat saw this position as giving him an opportunity to help minorities and children and address delinquency. Pat worked at NIMH for 17 years, retiring in 1985.

In 1988, when the U.S. government paid the Okuras and all other former internment camp prisoners \$20,000 each, Pat and Lily used that money along with personal savings to start the Okura Mental Health Leadership Foundation, which helps Asian Pacific Americans overcome racial, language and other barriers.

Pat's lifetime involvement with the Japanese American Citizens League, JACL, was filled with major accomplishments as well.

After joining the JACL at the age of 25, Pat moved up through the leadership ranks, gradually assuming greater and greater responsibility in this civil rights organization. In 1937, at the age of 26, he served as the Executive Director of the Los Angeles JACL Office. Pat founded the Omaha JACL Chapter in 1947.

By 1962 he became JACL National President and remained in office for three years. As JACL national president, Pat had the JACL march with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1963, resisting opposition from some JACL members, who did not want to get involved.

Even into his 90s, Pat was an active member of the Washington, DC chapter of the JACL.

Mr. Speaker, I have only touched on the eventful and accomplished life of K. Patrick Okura, but clearly this was a man whose life represented a large part of our collective history.

IN HONOR OF RALPH B. THOMAS ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate Ralph B. Thomas of the San Diego Border Patrol Sector. Mr. Thomas celebrates his retirement after 28 years of service in immigration policy and operations. I am honored to have this opportunity to pay tribute to an exceptional public servant.

In 1960, after a long day of campaigning for the presidency, John F. Kennedy arrived at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to find thousands of students waiting to hear him speak. He challenged the assembled students with the following immortal statement: "Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man." These fateful words launched the Peace Corps.

A twenty-something Ralph Thomas learned of this challenge and answered it. In 1961, he joined the newly established international volunteer organization and traveled to the Philippines. He taught English as a Second Language in an elementary school and gave support to 35 volunteers in education and community development assignments as a volunteer leader.

Ralph Thomas completed his doctoral studies in Asian history and culture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1971, and taught Asian and American history at the University of Pennsylvania and Adrian College in Michigan.

His deep interest in urban and ethnic issues led to positions as Director of Black/White Curricula for the Education Development Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and as a process observer for the Detroit Education Task Force.

His involvement in immigration matters resulted from his friend and fellow Peace Corps/Philippines volunteer Leonel Castillo being named Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1977. After working as a Special Assistant to the Commissioner for two years, Ralph became Deputy Director of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. The Select Commission recommended a number of the policy changes enacted as part of 1986 and 1990 immigration reform legislation. Ralph returned to the INS as a special assistant and consultant for the first two years of the Reagan Administration.

In September 1983, Ralph was selected as an appellate examiner for the new Administrative Appeals Unit. In 1984, he was transferred to an inspector position in the Office of Refugees, Asylum and Parole. From 1986 to 1991, he served as Deputy Assistant Commissioner. Ralph spent six more years in the INS Office of Congressional and Public Affairs before coming to the San Diego Sector.

Ralph's career spans the arenas of international development, education, immigration policy and border management. His sincerity, modest demeanor and community involvement make him a true public servant. For example,

when impassable road conditions at Border Field State Park threaten to cancel a mass organized in memory of those who lost their lives crossing the border, Ralph stepped in. The mass took place as scheduled.

As Special Assistant to the Chief Patrol Agent of the San Diego Border Patrol Sector, Ralph has impressed me with his dedication to conveying the magnitude of the Border Patrol's work. I have experienced first-hand the rugged and steep terrain along the Imperial Beach-Tijuana border and flown over the expanse of the San Diego-Tijuana border with Ralph and Border Patrol Chief William Veal. Border Patrol agents are working hard to secure our borders.

On behalf of the people of San Diego, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for Ralph's commitment and my best wishes for his retirement. I wish him, his wife Janet, and their son, Michael, the very best in their new endeavors. My office will miss his hard work, hearty laugh and quick wit.

INTRODUCING THE ARTHRITIS PREVENTION, CONTROL, AND CURE ACT OF 2005

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Arthritis Prevention, Control, and Cure Act of 2005.

With more than 100 different forms, arthritis is one of the most widespread and devastating chronic diseases in the United States. These conditions are extremely costly to our health care system, our economic vitality, and erode the quality of life for nearly 70 million, or one in every three Americans who suffers from arthritis or chronic joint symptoms. It is estimated that 300,000 children are affected by juvenile arthritis, a disease with high prevalence yet widely unknown, that causes deformity, blindness and in some cases death. As the number one cause of disability in the United States, arthritis is a painful and debilitating disease affecting men, women and children alike—arthritis has no boundaries. Simple, daily tasks like brushing teeth, pouring a cup of coffee and even just getting out of bed become excruciating obstacles for millions of people with the disease.

The costs associated with arthritis are immense. The disease results in 750,000 hospitalizations, 44 million outpatient visits and 4 million days of hospital care every year. The estimated total costs of arthritis in the United States, including lost productivity, exceeds \$86 billion.

While the current impact of the disease is quite astounding, efforts now can help prevent and control arthritis for future generations. Despite myths that inaccurately portray this illness as an old persons' disease, two-thirds of those with osteoarthritis are under the age of 65. Maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active are both steps that can prevent this form of arthritis. More broadly, the pain and disability accompanying all types of arthritis can be minimized through early diagnosis and appropriate disease management.