

Texas Congressmen at his mother's funeral in Trinity, Texas. As it turned out, I was the only Congressman that attended. I went up to him. And we didn't really know each other that well, but I said, Charlie, I'm here if you need me to do anything. I didn't really know your mother very well, but I know she must have been a good woman if you were her son. And he never forgot that. From then on, anything I needed from Congressman Wilson, if he could do it, he did it. But he also asked you things.

I will never forget out on the steps of the Capitol one time he came up to me and he said, JOE I need a favor. I said, What is it, Charlie? He said, Well, I need a Republican sponsor for an amendment in the Appropriations Committee. I said, Okay. What is it? He said, I can't tell you. I said, Well, how much money is it? He said, I can't tell you. I said, Well, how many years is it? He said, I can't tell you. I said, Well what can you tell me? He said, If you do this for me, I will do almost anything you want in the Appropriations Committee for you. So I didn't know. To this day, I don't know what that amendment was. But after reading some of the history of that time and that era, my assumption is that I was the Republican sponsor of an amendment that got funding for the black box programs in Afghanistan for Stinger missiles. Now I don't know that, Madam Speaker, but that's kind of the way he operated.

Another story I can tell you is that I was standing here back behind the rail one afternoon and we had a series of votes going on, and Charlie came up to me and he said, What are you doing in a month or so? I said, I don't know. He said, Well, I'm going to take a little trip. I said, Where are you going? He said, We'll go anywhere you want to go. I said, Where do you want to go? He said, Well, I have to go to Afghanistan, and I have to go to Morocco. And if you'll come with me, after that we'll go anywhere you want to go. I said, Well, I'll think about it. Well, I asked my chief of staff and she said no. I asked my wife, and she said no. So then I had to tell Congressman Wilson that I couldn't go. That's the trip that he took the Miss World on where he ended up going to Afghanistan.

Another story that I can tell you is that a couple of us Congressmen were walking down the street one day, and we saw Congressman Wilson walking over to the Capitol, and he had this very strikingly beautiful young woman that he was walking with. Congressman DAN BURTON said, Charlie, that woman is as pretty as Miss Universe. And he says, It is Miss Universe. And it was.

He also loved cats—I mean the four-legged cats. They ran all over his office and all over the Rayburn building on the floor. As far as I know, House Ad-

ministration never chastised him. When you walked into his office, right after Afghanistan, he had a live Stinger missile. He was very proud of that.

I see that my time is about to expire. So for all of his family members and constituents, there were a lot of Republicans that loved Charlie Wilson. He will be missed. He was a great patriot, a great son of Texas, and somebody that those who knew him, he was very, very loyal to. So God bless Charlie Wilson and his family.

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REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE WILSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay respects to my former colleague and friend, Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson. Charlie Wilson was bigger than life, and he was as real as the Texas day is long. I considered it a privilege and a joy to know him as a colleague and as a friend. Most Americans will forever know Charlie Wilson from the movie "Charlie Wilson's War." I have been asked by people who knew that I knew and served with Charlie whether he was really as colorful as he was portrayed to be in that movie. My answer is that that movie was the only time ever that Hollywood had to tone down reality in order to make it believable.

I have no idea whether Charlie ever read Shakespeare, but whether he did or not, the truth is, he personified Polonius' wise observation in Hamlet: "This above all: To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." It makes me wonder if somehow Polonius didn't know Charlie Wilson.

Charlie Wilson was not false to any man, any person or any constituent, not ever. He was the real thing, and I think in this sometimes cynical world, that is what all of us blessed to know him as a friend found so very endearing about him. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a number of Charlie's former colleagues who had served with him, members of the Texas delegation, have asked that we include their remarks with respect to Charlie, his life and his spirit.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert into the RECORD the remarks of RALPH HALL who also served many years with Charlie, and I would only just summarize one statement made by RALPH about his good friend Charlie. He said, He was a courageous and kind man with a strong sense of justice that compelled him to work for the good of others.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's request will be covered under general leave.

Mr. EDWARDS of Texas. Thank you.

While he was known as Good Time Charlie—and yes, he did enjoy life—the truth is that Charlie Wilson spent his entire adult life in the serious business of public service to our Nation. He graduated from the Naval Academy and then served our Nation as a lieutenant and as a naval intelligence officer. At the age of 27, he was elected to the Texas legislature where he was known as the liberal from Lufkin, supporting such progressive causes as the minimum wage, Medicaid, and the Equal Rights Amendment.

In 1972, he was elected to Congress where he became known as a champion of a strong national defense, a friend of average working families, and yes, someone who played a key role in bringing down the Communist Soviet Union. Who would have ever guessed, my friends and colleagues from Texas, that Charles Hazard of Trinity, Texas, many years ago, killing his 13-year-old neighbor's dog, would lead to the mighty Soviet Union falling someday. History is an interesting thing, and Charlie Wilson certainly will always be a part of it, as playing a key role in one of the most monumental achievements in our Nation's history.

Charlie Wilson did what every one of us, Republican or Democrat, would dream to do and would dream that it be said about us at the end of our public service careers: Charlie Wilson made a difference. He made a difference for his State of Texas, for his beloved constituents in east Texas. He made a difference for America, and, yes, he made a difference for the world.

To his widow, Barbara, and to his sister, my dear friend Sharon Allison in my hometown of Waco, Texas, I hope they know that our thoughts and prayers are with them. I thank you and your family for sharing with us and for sharing with the world this great treasure that God brought into this world. His spirit will be with us always. May God bless Charlie Wilson and the great land that he loved.

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes to remember a patriot, a great Texan, and a great friend, Charlie Wilson. I had the pleasure of serving with Charlie in the Texas State Senate and then in the House for another 17 years, and though we didn't see eye to eye on every issue, it was not often we disagreed.

Charlie was a courageous and kind man with a strong sense of justice that compelled him to work for the good of others. I think that, more than anything else, will be the enduring part of his legacy. He decided to commit his energy, and the efforts of this country, to helping the Afghani people against the Soviets, not just because it was the Cold War and it was us versus them, but because he saw the atrocities committed against the Afghani people and he knew that the United States could not sit by and just allow it to happen. It was actions like that and his dedication to American values that ultimately helped President

Reagan bring down the wall between East and West and bring democracy to so much more of the world.

Charlie was also known for his ability to party, and it is true that he knew how to have a good time. He was married earlier in his life before coming up here to Washington, and I remember once, he had been dating this Russian beauty, and there were loud talks and rumors in the tabloids that wedding bells were inevitable, and then one day I woke up and the headlines read that the matrimony was off. So I asked him what happened, and he said to me, "Ralph, you knew I wasn't going to marry that girl," and I said, "Charlie, how was I supposed to know that?" And he said, "You ever see a three legged fox get near a trap again?"

Well, he was a wise old fox indeed and managed, himself, to trap the love of his life, the beautiful Barbara Alberstadt, and she blessed the last 11 years of Charlie's life. We're all sad that he's gone, but I for one am proud to have served in this Congress with such an outstanding man, Charlie Wilson.

REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE WILSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I do rise in tribute to Charlie Wilson. He was a constituent of mine. He was an inspiration to me. For those that don't know, he was born in Trinity, Texas, and had education at Sam Houston State University, but he also attended the U.S. Naval Academy. He loved this country. He was willing to lay down his life for this country.

Between 1956 and 1960, Charlie Wilson served in the United States Navy, obtained the rank of lieutenant, and the man knew about defending America. It was a part of his heart and soul and was something he carried with him throughout his life. His political career began in 1960 when he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. And as my friend Mr. EDWARDS mentioned, the official version is that it began in 1960 when he was elected to the House of Representatives in Texas, but actually, it did begin when his neighbor poisoned his dog, and Charlie got so active as a young high school kid that he started taking people to the polls to make sure there were enough people to defeat the man that poisoned his dog. That was really his start in politics. But he saw what one person could do if they were determined enough and sincere enough and gave it their all.

But to give a little more of his history, he served in the Texas House of Representatives for 6 years and was then elected to the Texas Senate in 1960. Then in 1972, the Second Congressional District of Texas elected Charlie to the U.S. House of Representatives. And it wasn't until 1996 that he decided

not to run again. The slogan that he used throughout his campaign—it really pretty well summarized the man, "Wilson gets it done," and Charlie did.

He is from what some people call the Bible Belt, and what I've heard from constituents many times is, Yes, we knew about Charlie's issues, but the thing about Charlie, he was always honest about them. And I will never forget when we were naming the VA clinic for the man who is the reason it's in Lufkin, Texas. The VA Secretary came and he spoke, and then I had the honor of introducing Charlie, and Charlie got up and he was really emotional. He told the crowd there—there was a huge crowd there that assembled in his honor there at the civic center—and he said very emotionally, I love you people. Sixteen times you overlooked my personal indiscretions and allowed me to represent you.

Now, there are not many politicians that would stand up and say, You overlooked my personal indiscretions 16 times and let me represent you, but Charlie did. That was Charlie, and he made no bones about who he was or what he was.

And in fact, when Tip O'Neill had put him on the Ethics Committee and a reporter said, Well, what are you doing on the Ethics Committee? He responded a famous quote: "Well, I love women, and I love whiskey, and we deserve to be represented on that committee too." He made no bones about it. His constituents loved him. He was always honest about things, and that goes so far, and everyone should take notice of that fact, that America loves people who are honest with them. He took care of his seniors. I heard that over and over. You know, Charlie Wilson took care of those who couldn't take care of themselves. And it was one of the reasons that people loved him in east Texas, and it's one of the things that inspires me, having seen what he did.

You know, here I was a Republican, he was a Democrat. He always made time if I had questions: What do you think about Afghanistan? Because nobody knew more about Afghanistan than Charlie. He always had sage advice, and I really appreciated that. And I would like to also quote Jim Turner that followed Charlie in Congress. Jim described him as a dedicated public servant who fought hard for the people of his district.

And I would just like to also pay tribute—and I know that Barbara, his widow, is still mourning his loss and will for a long time to come. Barbara Wilson made a difference in Charlie's life. Barbara sustained and prolonged Charlie's life. He loved her. He loved her family. They loved him. And she made a difference in his life, just as he made a difference in this country. Just as Charlie showed what one man can do when he puts his mind to it, this body

ought to always be inspired by the memory of the great, late Charlie Wilson.

REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE WILSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I did not know Charlie Wilson, but I know friends of Charlie Wilson, and based upon what his friends say, he was truly a remarkable person. I admire people who march to the beat of a different drummer. I admire people who are original, who do things in a very good way, but they do the things that they do in their very own way.

It appears that Charlie Wilson was such a person. While he could easily have been a great Congressperson representing the people of his district and not traveling abroad, he took it upon himself to not only help the people of Afghanistan but to go there and be a part of it and to actually take others into Afghanistan as well to help people with a resistance movement. He marched to the beat of a different drummer. He did not allow the circumstances of what we call "the norm" to prevent him from doing unusual things in a most significant way.

I regret that I did not have the opportunity to meet him, because I believe that such a person has a positive impact on the lives around him; and as I listen to his friends speak so highly of what he was able to do here in the Congress of the United States of America, I only can say, Charlie, I didn't have an opportunity to meet you on this side, but I know that at some point, I'll have an opportunity to meet you, and I want you to share some of those many stories with me.

You have been a friend of this country, and this country loves you. God bless you, Charlie. I know that wherever you are, there's a good time being had.

OUR FUTURE IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we had a serious and earnest debate about our future role in Afghanistan. I firmly believe that there are respectful differences of opinion on this war, and that support for a war is not a litmus test for one's support for America. However, I'm grateful that this House has overwhelmingly rejected running from America's vital interests and the people of Afghanistan.

Our debate today presented a stark choice to Members, quite literally, to stay or to go in Afghanistan. It is one