

TRIBUTE TO KOREAN WAR
VETERANS FROM PUERTO RICO

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call to your attention the considerable valor during the Korean War of Julio Mercado of West Haverstraw, N.Y., Donato Santiago-Molina of Paterson, N.J., Guillermo Alamo of Newark, N.J., and Asuncion Santiago-Cruz of Philadelphia, PA. I also wish to call to your attention the deeds and tragic deaths of John A. Pabon and Ramon Gaya-Arce, who were tragically killed in action as members of the 65th Infantry Regiment, which was comprised of soldiers from the great island of Puerto Rico.

Fifty years ago, on June 27, 1950, U.S. forces launched a military effort to battle communist North Korea. Soon after, they were joined by soldiers from Puerto Rico, plucked from their Caribbean homeland to fight on a distant continent. Many were dirt poor from hill country and didn't speak a word of English. Some became U.S. soldiers because they needed a job; others were drafted.

Waging war on some of the world's harshest terrain, through the sweltering heat of summer and the bone-chilling winds of winter, the steely group of Puerto Rican soldiers fought with incredible determination and courage.

These Puerto Rican soldiers gave their hearts to the fight and helped sweep the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel. Working side by side with the U.S. forces from Maine to California, they then attacked Chinese forces that had entered the fray on behalf of the North Koreans.

Through months of bitter battle, in which the warring factions worked themselves into a bloody stalemate, the Puerto Rican soldiers fought valiantly along side GIs from Maine to California, sacrificing their lives for the ideals of democracy.

Negotiators finally signed an armistice agreement at Panmunjon on July 27, 1953. The North Koreans returned to the northern side of the 38th parallel, while democracy was allowed to once again flourish in the Republic of South Korea.

In later years, the Korean War would be called "The Forgotten War." But for the Puerto Rican soldiers who gave everything they had to preserve freedom, this war will never be forgotten.

As we prepare to commemorate "National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day" on July 27, let us thank the Puerto Rican soldiers who demonstrated their love for America, although they did not have a vote—and still don't—in the affairs of this great nation.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring to your attention the actions of three individuals who have worked selflessly to raise public awareness of Korean War veterans from Puerto Rico. Specifically, Puerto Rico Senator Kenneth McClintock, retired U.S. Army Sgt. Angel Cordero of Paterson, N.J., who serves as a Junior ROTC instructor at Eastside High School in Paterson, and Ruben Pabon, Jr. of Northvale, N.J. should be lauded for enlightening us of the Puerto Rican veterans' valiant efforts on behalf of our nation. Sadly, Mr. Pabon is waiting for the body of his late broth-

er, Cpl. John A. Pabon, to be recovered from Korea some fifty years after the end of the war.

Let us all pray that democracy can reach every corner of the Earth, from Havana, Cuba to Beijing, China. And, just like our brave soldiers in the Korean War, may we remain ever vigilant against those who threaten our inalienable rights.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me, our colleagues, the people of New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the United States in recognizing the outstanding and invaluable service to our nation of Julio Mercado, Donato Santiago-Molina, Guillermo Alamo, Asuncion Santiago-Cruz, as well as John A. Pabon and Ramon Gaya-Arce, who are no longer with us.

As we honor these men today, we in turn bear in mind the stand of the many courageous Puerto Rican soldiers against Communism, which has laid the foundation for the peace and freedom that America and many nations enjoy today. We also recall the grief of the Puerto Rican families who lost their children in this war, and remember the gratitude still expressed by the people of South Korea.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE NEW
JERSEY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
MEDAL RECIPIENTS

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the recipients of the Distinguished Service Medal, New Jersey's highest military commendation.

Through extraordinary courage and patriotism, each of these recipients went beyond the call of duty during their military service. Because of their dedication and sacrifice, America succeeded in its fight against naked aggression, defeating the dark forces of tyranny, so that the world could continue its pursuit of democratic ideals.

It is not difficult to comprehend the gratitude America feels for the sacrifices and contributions these veterans made to ensure our freedom; and the Distinguished Service Award is a wonderful way to show our appreciation. I personally want to recognize and thank the following individuals from my district for their distinguished military service: Salvatore F. Acerra; Thomas J. Beeh; Anthony J. Brescia; Joseph E. Callandrillo; Walter F. Camporeale; Harold E. Cerbie; Richard B. Clark; John P. Conlon; Anthony R. Costantino; John O. Coughi; John F. Dellaluna; Maximilian Desonne; Peter J. Di Stefano; George H. Edler; Max J. Elsasser; Craig J. Fallon; Sol C. Feith; Joseph T. Fitzgerald; Edwin H. Gaffney; John M. Habermann; Richard Hamilton; Sean Healy; John T. Hoey; Norman Holtzberg; Albert J. James; Edward K. Janiga; Robert J. Jones; John Keselica; George F. Kimball; Chester Latko; Harry Lazarov; John G. Le Pore; Patrick T. Lioi; Angelo Mack; Nelson Martinez; Emil A. Masciandaro; Anthony M. Melone; Robert Menzel; Conrad J. Minutillo; Augustine A. Monahan; Alphonso J. Mosca; Michael J. Napolitano; Donald T. Nevins; Vincent L. Ortizio; Robert V. Palmeri; Ralph C. Pasqua; John H. Phillips; Howard J. Plunkett Jr.; Joseph A. Pona; Antonio Raffaele Jr.;

James A. Robinson; Ivan Romero; Joseph E. Rooth; Richard F. Rush; William A. Sears; Granger W. Searvance Sr.; Francis H. Seidal; Anthony Sikora; Albert F. Skirpstunas; Joseph H. Skrocki; James W. Smith; Edward J. Stacy; Walter Suty; Francis P. Trench; Francis H. Vannucchi; Miguel Vazquez; Dominick J. Vitone; Frank B. Wasniewski; Sanford L. Weiss; Eugene J. Wickeresty; Joseph Wigodner; L. Harry Wolpert; Francis Woods; and Anthony F. Zucaro.

Today, it is my honor to recognize these exceptional individuals. With courage, honor, and integrity they have each made invaluable and enduring contributions to America. I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing them as well.

LIVE A LITTLE

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I have for some time felt that we have over-emphasized the importance of holding down the cost of medical care as a general principle. The notion that if the total amount we spend on medical care in all of its facets as a percentage of the gross domestic product exceeds some arbitrary figure we will be damaged economically is demonstrably false. A dozen years ago or so, people were convinced that America's economic performance was being retarded because we spent too much on medical care. No one can now make that argument, given the strength of our economy, and the continued high percentage that medical care absorbs of our gross domestic product compared to many other countries.

Indeed, I believe this notion that medical care costs must be held down despite the good that is accomplished by medical care expenditures has caused us serious problems in recent years. The ill-advised, ill-named Balanced Budget Act of 1997 inflicted serious cuts on the Medicare program from which health care providers and patients are still suffering, and undoing this terrible mistake is long overdue.

Because I feel this very strongly, I was especially pleased in a conversation with journalist Jonathan Cohn to learn that he had written on the subject, and I asked him to send me a copy of the article. Having read it, I am delighted to share it with my colleagues. It is a year old, but it is not old in any other sense. Mr. Cohn's arguments are cogent and supported by our experience. As Mr. Cohn notes, "among all of the things a nation's wealth could buy, surely the health of its citizens is near the top." I am very pleased that Mr. Cohn has set forward the argument for adequately funding our medical care needs in so a persuasive a fashion, and because this continues to be a matter of some debate in the Congress, I submit his article from the June 7 New Republic on this topic to be reprinted here.

[From The New Republic, June 7, 1999]

LIVE A LITTLE

(Jonathan Cohn)

My grandfather survived three heart attacks and a stroke over the course of his lifetime. And he did so thanks to some of the

best medicine that insurance could buy: a heart bypass operation, extensive hospitalization, plus literally thousands of hours of one-on-one nursing care after the stroke left him partially paralyzed. I remember when the stroke hit: the doctors predicted he'd live maybe nine more months. That was in 1986. He passed away last year.

It would be near impossible to add up my grandfather's medical bills, but I'm sure they totaled hundreds of thousands of dollars. He benefited from a wide range of pharmaceutical products, the most advanced medical technology in the world, and care from highly trained specialists. Above all, he benefited from a health care financing system willing to subsidize such extravagance at every level—from the training of the surgeons to the research that invented blood-thinners to the salary of the worker who lifted him in and out of his wheelchair every day.

I thought about that last week when I read an article on rising health insurance premiums. It was merely the latest confirmation of a trend many economists have long predicted: that, after years of stability, the real price of health care in America is about to start climbing again. According to a study published last fall in the journal *Health Affairs*, the nation's total health care bill will likely go up by 3.4 percent annually over the next four years—compared with a rate of just 1.5 percent in the period from 1993 to 1996. By 2007, the study predicted, health care will soak up 16 percent of the gross domestic product. That would be quite a lot of money, particularly when you consider that we already sink more than 13 percent of GDP into health care—more than any other nation and well more than we spent in 1970, when health care was just seven percent of GDP.

The predictions are probably right. Today, about 85 percent of Americans who hold private insurance are enrolled in health maintenance organizations or other forms of managed care, which hold down costs by emphasizing preventive medicine; controlling access to tests, treatments, and specialists; and simply bidding down the services of doctors and hospitals. Most of the people in these plans shifted over from costly fee-for-service insurance only in the past few years, and that transformation is the primary reason health care spending has remained stable during that time. But the cost containment from HMOs seems to have been a onetime phenomenon. Now expenditures on health care are going back up, if at a somewhat reduced clip, in part because people are starting to demand some of the things HMOs have been denying them, in part because the population is living longer, and in part because researchers continue to come up with expensive new technological innovations that patients want, from Viagra to the protease inhibitors that keep HIV in check.

Once the bill for all of this spending comes due, in the form of higher insurance premiums and more government spending, you can bet that a chorus of experts and high-minded officials will start insisting that we're spending too much. Some will do what former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm did back in 1992: they'll come right out and say we need to stop coddling the elderly with the kind of "long-shot medicine" that sustained my grandfather and made him more comfortable in his final years. Others will strike more cautious tones, preaching the need to be more efficient in our outlays, but the end result will be much the same: less generous care particularly at the margins. In a sense, we're already hearing early versions of this argument in the ongoing debate over Social Security and Medicare—two programs in which the current level of expenditures is widely believed to be unsustainable over the long run.

But this may be a case where the average citizen, who intuitively wants to keep spending that money, knows more than the average expert, who insists it's not possible. After all, we spend far more on computers than we did 20 years ago, but nobody makes a fuss about that. The reason is that computers have made economy stronger and our lives discernibly easier. Well, the same logic ought to apply to health care. Among all of the things a nation's wealth could buy, surely the health of its citizens is near the top. And, while some critics might carp about inefficiency in the system, that inefficiency keeps a good chunk of our country employed—while enabling the population as a whole to work longer and harder.

To be sure, many critics question whether our robust health care spending really translates into robust health. They argue that, even though European nations spend less on health care, the differences in health care "outcomes" and life expectancy are minimal. But it is notoriously difficult to measure the impact of health care spending. For one thing, those comparatively frugal counties benefit from the pharmaceuticals and treatments largely subsidized by big spending in the United States. What's more, the benefit of more health care spending may be simply to provide a few more weeks here and there, or to make life just a little more comfortable for some of the nation's sickest people. This is not the kind of thing that makes a big difference statistically, but it is the kind of thing a society might rightly deem important. After all, this is what usually happens in societies as they progress economically: the percentage of labor time spent on producing bare necessities—food, shelter, and clothing—shrinks, freeing up greater resources for making life more pleasant.

This isn't to say we parcel out all of our health care dollars wisely. Among other things, we currently subsidize emergency care for the uninsured, which is at once very expensive and not terribly efficient at keeping people healthy, while denying them the basic care most other nations offer as a privilege of citizenship. But the solution to this problem is not to worry excessively about how big the bill has gotten; if anything, we should be making the case for spending even more money and then making sure it's meted out on a more egalitarian basis. (Sound crazy? No less a sober mind than MIT economist Paul Krugman once made a similar argument, speculating that spending as much as 30 percent of GDP on health care might not be unreasonable.)

Yes, there is one catch. If you want to spend that much money on health care, you have to find the money to spend. But that's not a problem—or, at least, it shouldn't be. We have enjoyed enormous gains in productivity over the past few years, which means as a nation we are creating more wealth—wealth that can easily be directed to health care rather than to, say, sport utility vehicles, either in the form of higher insurance premiums or (heaven forbid!) higher taxes. "The alternatives uses of our resources are not necessarily more noble," Mickey Kaus once wrote in this space. He's right. There are a lot of things we could have bought my grandfather in his final months. But none was as valuable as the time itself.

HONORING LIEUTENANT COLONEL
DEBRA M. LEWIS

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to Lt. Col. Debra M. Lewis, the departing Commander and District Engineer of the Philadelphia District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Colonel Lewis fills many roles in her life. She is a mother to Emily, wife, daughter, sister, equestrian, mentor to many, friend to even more, and last, but not least, a U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel. She brings great strength, vitality and dedication to all the facets of her life, but it is her allegiance to her country that prompts me to honor her today.

As Commander of the Philadelphia District of the Army Corps of Engineers, she oversees the Delaware River Basin, approximately 13,000 miles spread across the five states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Maryland. More than 550 civilian and military personnel dedicate their efforts to carry out Corps projects at the request of local and state agencies, as authorized by Congress. Flood control, navigation, military installation support and environmental restoration are key missions of the Philadelphia District, which is a lead partner in the plan to preserve and protect the region and its water resources.

I have also enjoyed working with Colonel Lewis on many occasions. Her professionalism, expertise, and dedication to the Army Corps of Engineers have been an integral part of the success of the Delaware River Main Channel Deepening Project. I have also enjoyed working with Colonel Lewis on my vision for Philadelphia—the redevelopment and the revitalization of the Delaware River waterfront. Her support has enabled this new project to move forward.

Colonel Lewis came to the Philadelphia District two years ago uniquely qualified to serve as its first female commander. A woman of many firsts, Debra Lewis is a member of the first class to graduate women from West Point. She was also the U.S. Military Academy's first female captain of its highly successful intercollegiate equestrian team, and also the 1980 Academy Equestrian of the Year. Her initiative and perseverance have seen her through many challenging circumstances.

In addition to her other pursuits, Colonel Lewis enjoys collecting quotations. Her personal motto: Attitude is everything. But I would offer one from Harvey Firestone, who once said, "You get the best out of others when you give the best of yourself." It is my opinion that Lieutenant Colonel Debra M. Lewis is the embodiment of that sentiment.

Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant Colonel Debra M. Lewis should be commended for her 18 years of military service in the United States Army and is congratulated for a job well done for her performance as Commander and District Engineer of the Philadelphia District, United States Army Corps of Engineers. I offer her my very best wishes for continued success.