

WOMEN AND COURAGE

This week our televisions have allowed us to sit ringside as Judge Ruth Bader Ginsberg testified at her confirmation hearings too become the second woman to ever serve on the Supreme Court of the U.S. Her selection has brought praise from many quarters—and she is the most recent in a long list of women whose courage has set them apart and allowed them to achieve positions traditionally reserved for men. The Wall Street Journal recently stated: “Read a lot of Judge Ginsberg’s opinions, and you are struck by the voice....It is a voice of scrupulous honesty, freedom from cant and strong moral commitment.” Today we celebrate the achievements of as it has been said “One of Our Texas Queens”—The Honorable Birdie Sue Harwood, the first woman mayor of Texas. A grand lady, whose talents and fortitude brought her to leadership over her City at a time when she herself could not vote, when the electorate was all male.

To her family members who are here, to our honored guests, to my newly found, but special friend Walter H. Richter, friends and fellow Texans....THOSE WHO HAVE COME TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF A TEXAS GREAT, as we say in Texas...HOWDY.

When I served on the Dallas City Council my Mayor was a woman, Annette Strauss, and Annette is a great person and public servant. She had a saying that is appropriate for today. She said...Texas is a place where men are men and women are mayors. And when we were serving it was true that many many cities in the State had women mayors. How proud our honoree today would have been to see her example decades later taken to heart. And these types of events like today are important to remind us of the struggles that have been fought and necessarily the progress still needing to be made.

Another Texas hero is the Honorable Barbara Jordan. And there is the poignant story about Dr. Jordan. She told us of her realization at one point in her life as she read those great words in the Declaration of Independence—We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are

created equal—her realization that those words did not apply to her. But the Barbara Jordan's of the World—the Birdie Sue Harwood's of the World—they are not deterred by what has been, by what might be expected. Their sense of self-esteem and vision for service and accomplishment would never allow them to be deterred. Barbara Jordan set about securing equality for herself and her people. In Mayor Harwood's case, she broke a barrier for Texas to become the first woman mayor. And as we have just said, with one comes more. But if she were here, I am certain, Mayor Harwood would have a message for us. She would caution us to strive on and in all things be courageous.

During this years Academy Awards I was walking past a television set and heard a few words of one of the presenters. It was Barbara Streisand speaking. She was saying "She would be glad when there did not have to be a 'Year of the Woman'", when there were so many women involved in her industry...that such an epithet would have no relevance. And how many times have we heard other women express the same sentiment....We will all be glad when we do not have any more "firsts" to have. And there always is great joy with the breaking of one more barrier, the marking of one more achievement, but the joy is still somewhat mixed, somewhat bitter-sweet. At each juncture, there has to be some recognition that there were years when the barriers remained.

For the last two years, many have celebrated with me as the first woman president of the lawyers of Texas, all 60,000 of them. But until last week the two largest bars in the United States still had never had a woman president. Last week the California Bar—150,000 lawyers—elected its first woman president. Now the only one of the largest bars

in the nation yet to have a woman president is the American Bar Association, the largest bar in the nation. And that will happen soon.

Recently we have celebrated the naming of the new Attorney General, the first woman to hold such post. One more position removed from the list of those which previously have been held only by men. And of course at the tope of that list are the President of the United States and the Vice President of the United States. All of us have confidence that before too long we will see a woman elected to one and eventually both of those positions. You can hear if you're listening to speculation that our Texas Governor is destined to remove one or both of those positions from the list of "never before held by a woman" and recently similar comments have made about the first woman Senator from Texas, Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Politics has been an area where at least at certain levels woman have been quite successful in making inroads. But each barrier is broken with risk and courage. And the success until recently seemed limited to offices closer to the people, mayors, councils, school boards. It was only the last election that my home city of Dallas sent a woman

Congressmember to Washington. We all know that Congress and of course the Senate are vastly male-dominated. Even our own State House and Senate are still significantly male-dominated.

You can muse about what the reason for this is and I have to conclude that a large factor is the control of financial resources. The larger the election, the more resources, especially financial, are needed. Statewide and national elections require millions of dollars for campaigns. Usually those millions contributed find their way into the coffers of male candidates. We see some progress and Governor Richards and Senator Hutchison proved they could garner the financial support for their candidacies, but these examples are still the exception and not a rule. And another explanation is a refrain you will recognize.

More prestigious offices are sought by politicians who are serving in lower office and who have a longer history of serving to develop massive support. That at least is the general rule. The profile of those individuals is predominantly male. So the "waiting your turn" rule acts as a subtle but important barrier.

I was interested to notice when I was introduced to grass roots workers in the two parties in my council race, most frequently the individuals were women. Frequently, I would be told of precincts that were controlled in large measure by a particular person for either party and that person would be a woman who had worked hard for her party for many years. However, that fact aside, the majority of candidates were still men. When I served our council had four women, counting the mayor. The council was enlarged to 15 but the council's first election had four women and lost mayor. Next election it gained one to 5.

Progress is steady and encouraging but from time to time we have to admit that equality in many arenas is still a goal. We take inspiration from individuals like Mayor Harwood to be leaders and courageous.

Today politicians too frequently do not have ideas – they take polls and then all too often their stands are the platform resulting from analysis of what the polls indicate the public they want to lead desires. Why should we be surprised that the ideas frequently cannot work? Leadership takes study and knowledge of the facts, a decision of a

correct course and commitment to the course despite possibly its lack of acceptance or popularity. In short, it takes courage.

A modern day renown leader of course is Sir Winston Churchill. We remember him as a hero – the object of affection and love. We do not remember that he was once in terrible disfavor and isolation.

By 1931, Sir Winston Churchill had experienced major defeat in military strategy, he had lost three elections for a seat in Parliament and he had championed an unsuccessful position with respect to the grant of dominion status for India. He was characterized by William Manchester at this time in his career as “a political pariah, out of joint with the times.”

Those who would be leaders must be willing to steadfastly hold to principles they believe right regardless of public reaction and acceptance.

This is the courage of a true leader. And we each should strive to be this kind of leader. That we do not receive acclamation or maybe lose an election is not a finding we were wrong. It simply means we

lost. Our position may be in fact exactly right and maybe next year we will be able to prove it.

Courage is lacking in would-be leaders many times today. Doing the political thing rather than the right thing is accepted as how the game is played. This should not be. It denies us of leaders with character and integrity. We need intolerance of politicians who put getting elected higher on their scale than integrity. We should not as a public respond to politicians whose behavior demonstrates a lack of conviction even though they seem to have a capacity for getting elected. We cannot afford it. Listen to the facts stated in recent report prepared for the State Bar of Texas.

Almost 3.2 million Texans, comprising 18 percent of the population, live in poverty.

- There are over 1 million additional Texans living in poverty compared to 1980.
- Texas' poverty rate is 43 percent higher than the national average.

It increased three times the National average.

- Texas has 7 percent of the nation's population, and 10 percent of the nation's poverty population.
- The poorest county in the nation is in Texas. (Starr)
- Two other counties (Maverick and Zavala) are among the ten poorest in the nation.
- Four of the nation's ten poorest metropolitan areas are in Texas. (McAllen, Edinburg, Mission, Laredo, Brownsville, Harlingen, and El Paso)

A number of demographic factors in Texas are significant:

- Texas is one of five states with the highest illiteracy rates in the country; 16 percent of Texans cannot complete a basic test of English skills.
- 200,000 Texans who live in colonies on the Texas-Mexico border are among the sickest residents to be found anywhere in the U.S.
- Ten percent of the nation's out-of-hospital births occur in two Texas counties which contain only 2/10 of 1 percent of the nation's population.

- Texas has the third highest number of teen-mothers in the country.
- Texas leads the nation in the number of births to children 15 years old or younger.
- Texas has one of the largest populations of undocumented aliens in the country.

Texas ranks 32nd in per capita income among the 50 states and D.C.,

however, Texas ranks:

48th in the amount paid out per recipients by Aid to Families with Dependent children (AFDC)

45th in per capita Medicaid spending

47th in overall health, education, housing and human services grants from the federal government

44th in health care coverage

48th in per capita mental health services

37th in spending for mental retardation services, and

47th in care for pregnant women.

Ladies and Gentlemen I do not use these statistics to depress you or dampen our spirits on these otherwise delightful occasion. But Mayor

Harwood was challenged by the events of her time and she rose to the occasion. We are called upon to similarly demonstrate courage in facing our challenges. It should no longer do to blame the Courts for what legislators and other government officials in our State have not had the courage to do. Allowing conditions to exist so long and get so bad that resort to the Courts is the only answer has not served our State well and we need to reverse this phenomenon. Politicians who would cry "the courts made me do it" or "I did not do that—the Courts did" should not be tolerated.

And in every little way we can, we have to start to reverse the statistics that describe our State.

There are the rare leaders who even give their lives in sacrifice to others and we all stand in awe of their courage. The Sister Theresa's, the Ghandi's. They are truly larger than life.

We have seen leaders who have been so courageous and bold in their statements of their beliefs they risked and lost their lives.....like Dr. Martin Luther King. Sometimes these greats tend to make us think we are insignificant.

These leader's lives and sacrifices should inspire us to give just some—with courage and dedication that we can change the status quo, the spiral downward in our American society.

You see I believe that Birdie Sue Harwood would have another message for us today. She spoke lovingly about her family, her friends, her colleagues, and her God. She would tell us that each of us in the roles of family, friends, colleagues can through personal courage make a real difference.

There are many more goodwilled people in this world than there are others. Why cannot the right minded prevail. Mayor Harwood would say to us today—the right-minded can prevail with courage and dedication. When she was elected Mayor she could not herself vote. She did not whine about that—she got elected. She would want me to remind you of the words of Susan B. Anthony in 1860:

“Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation.”

I am greatly honored by being able to share in this salute to Mayor Harwood and her legacy. Thank you very, very much.