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Ernest F. Hollings

U.S. Senator, South Carolina

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A TRIBUTE TO RETIRING SENATOR J. STROM THURMOND

ERNEST F. HOLLINGS*

As the longest-serving junior Senator in the history of the United States Senate, it is my honor to pay tribute to the longest-serving senior Senator and the longest-serving Senator in the history of the Senate.

The story is told about a Washington matron, at an evening reception, rushing up to a Spanish Ambassador and allowing: "Mr. Ambassador, this bull fighting, the number one sport in your country, I think it is revolting." After a pause, the Ambassador turns to the matron and says: "Madam, you are mistaken. Bull fighting is our number two sport; revolting is our number one."

That has been the record of J. Strom Thurmond in the field of public service—he is revolutionary. At the age of 29, he served as the youngest county superintendent of education in the history of our State, as superintendent in Edgefield County; four years later he was elected as the youngest State Senator from his home county; five years after that, he became the youngest presiding circuit judge. He had studied law under the tutelage of his father, Judge J. William Thurmond, and was admitted to the Bar in 1930.

When Germany declared war on America, just a few days after December 7, 1941, Strom Thurmond, then a presiding circuit judge, took off his robes and volunteered for service in World War II. He was exempt from service under South Carolina judiciary rules, but he did not hesitate. He made the invasion on D-Day, June 6, 1944, into Normandy, and served in five campaigns with valor and courage, coming back to retire as a major general in the U.S. Army.

After the war, he ran for Governor and was elected in 1946, helping start the State on the road to a dynamic, modern economy. In 1948, he organized the only truly successful third party movement in this country, the States' Rights Party, and carried four states as a presidential candidate.

In 1954, he was the first, and only, U.S. Senator ever elected as a write-in candidate. In 1964, having been a Democrat, he changed parties. He saw the future of the State of South Carolina and the South in the Republican Party, and he has led the move ever since. He has been re-elected eight times.

There is no question in my mind that he has had the most distinguished of service in Washington, serving as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and the President pro tempore of the Senate.

But I think people back home know him best of all for his constituent service. Whether it is helping a constituent find a job, helping a family get a relative admitted to the hospital, sending a letter to the deceased's family,

* U.S. Senator, State of South Carolina.

helping when the soldier is brought back home, or whatever else, South Carolinians could always count on Senator Thurmond. He has made his fame looking out for the people of his home State.

The State, in Columbia, is running a series of 100 articles in which people tell their personal anecdotes about Senator Thurmond. Some are from mayors, former governors, and politicians he has helped over the years, but many are from random people on the street who have come in contact with him in some way that has touched their lives.

Senator Thurmond was born when Teddy Roosevelt was President. Elihu Root, who was the Secretary of State for Teddy Roosevelt, once remarked: "Politics is the practical art of self government and someone must attend to it if we are going to have self government." Root also made the cogent observation: "The principal ground for reproach against any American citizen is that he is not a politician. In representative America, every citizen counts."

Senator Thurmond of South Carolina has counted at every particular turn during his seventy years of illustrious service. I think he is a living example that the best politics is no politics. It is my privilege to pay tribute to him now. I know walking into the Senate Chamber next year, without Senator Thurmond there, will not be the same. He has made history, and I congratulate him.