

(April 26, 2005) Lipinski Honors the Life of Thomas Brown

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Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of an outstanding American - Mr. Thomas Brown of La Grange, IL, who passed away on April 11, 2005.

To say that Tom Brown devoted his life to service is an understatement. A native of Cicero, IL, Mr. Brown married his childhood sweetheart, the former Helen Sauer in 1942 - right before joining the Army Air Corps as a bombardier. While flying a mission on March 26, 1945, Lieutenant Brown's bomber was hit by enemy fire over Austria, and the father-to-be became a prisoner of war.

Not satisfied to sit on the sidelines for the remainder of the war, Lieutenant Brown joined his fellow prisoners in overpowering the guards - and then stealing a German plane! The escapees flew the plane to Allied-occupied Yugoslavia, where they crash-landed the plane after being shot at by Allied troops. Lieutenant Brown received the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, the Victory Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in the storybook escape.

Upon returning to the states after the war, Tom Brown did what most veterans did at the time - he went to work, in his case, in the family plumbing business, and he raised a family with Helen.

Mr. Brown's devotion to service led him into local politics, and he served on the La Grange Village Board from 1968 to 1973 and as Village President from 1973 to 1977. In 1983, Mr. Brown took a position as La Grange Code Enforcement Officer and Plumbing Inspector, working until his retirement in 2002.

He was well-known around the community for his wit and easy-going personality. As current La Grange Village President Tim Hansen said, Tom Brown was "the classic old Irish character.

"He was just terrific at limericks and he had a knack for putting people at ease. Both he and Helen have been great friends to the village - just stalwarts in their commitment to helping the village or the church or whatever cause needed them," President Hansen said.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my deepest condolences to Mrs. Brown and the Brown children, as on the passing of Tom Brown, who represented so well the "Greatest Generation."

