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Senate

REMEMBERING BOB “MAC” McQUILLEN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life of Bob “Mac” McQuillen, who passed away on February 4, at Catholic Medical Center in Manchester, NH, at the age of 90. Bob was a veteran of two wars, a nationally renowned musician, a respected teacher, a police chief and a friend to all who had the joy of knowing him. He was an icon in New Hampshire and in the folk music world.

Mac, as he was known by friends, was born in Massachusetts in 1923 shortly before the Great Depression and moved north with his mother to New Boston, NH, as a teenager. In 1943, he answered his country’s call in World War II, joining the U.S. Marine Corps and serving in the South Pacific. Although he came from a musical family, it was only when he befriended a guitar player during the war that he came to appreciate music. When he returned to New Hampshire in 1946, that love of music grew immeasurably as he traveled around Cheshire and Hillsborough counties in the southwest part of the State, attending contra dances in town halls and churches. Mac fell in love with contra dancing and the rhythm of the music, taking up the accordion and piano in a local band. He even met his wife-to-be, Priscilla Scribner from Dublin, NH, at a contra dance. Mac reenlisted in the Marines in 1951, and for a time before fighting in Korea, he taught marksmanship at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. It was a critical experience for him as it was in this capacity that he discovered one of his life passions, teaching.

After his tour in Korea, Mac attended an esteemed institution in New Hampshire, Keene

State College, graduating in 1959 with a degree in education. Mac put his education to good use right away, teaching shop class and weight-lifting at Peterborough High School, which is now called ConVal Regional High School. He was also one of the bus drivers, and it didn’t take long for him to become one of the most popular teachers in the school.

Throughout Mac’s 35 years of teaching, he played music constantly and composed over 1,500 of his own tunes. He also created a fund to teach young people contra dance music. In 2002, for his impact on traditional music and dance in New England, Mac received the Nation’s highest honor in traditional and folk art, the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mac’s ability to find the good in everyone and his upbeat outlook on life will be sorely missed. His dedication to his community, his Nation, and to traditional folk music will always be remembered; and his songs, his jokes, and his spirit will live on in the hills, barns, churches and town halls of New Hampshire.

Along with his many admirers and mentees, Mac is survived by two of his three children: his son, Daniel; his daughter, Rebecca; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and also his former students, colleagues and lifelong friends. He is predeceased by his wife, Priscilla, and his son, William. The generosity of this patriot, mentor, musician and friend will be dearly missed by all.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring Bob “Mac” McQuillen and his rich life of service.