

FLOOR DEDICATION BY REP. MIKE KELLY FOR ABIE ABRAHAM VA CLINIC

I thank the Chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support today of my bill, H.R. 5317:

To designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the “Abie Abraham VA Clinic,”

as amended, and urge its adoption.

Abie Abraham, of Lyndora, Pennsylvania, — who passed away in Butler in 2012 — was a man who exemplified extraordinary valor and lifelong service to the United States, in both domestic and international assignments.

Abie was stationed during World War II with the 18th Infantry in New York; three years with the 14th Infantry in Panama; 15th Infantry, unassigned in China, while the Panay was sunk; 30th Infantry in Presidio, San Francisco; and the 31st Infantry in Manila, Philippines, for nine years.

During World War II, Abie fought, was captured, endured the Bataan Death March, and, as a prisoner of war for three and a half years, was beaten, stabbed, and shot, and survived malaria and starvation until he was eventually rescued by the 6th Rangers.

Yet Abie stayed behind at the request of General Douglas MacArthur for two and a half more years disinterring the bodies of his fallen comrades from the Bataan Death March and the prison camps, helping to identify their bodies and see that they were each properly laid to rest.

After his promotion in 1945, Abie came back to the United States where he served as a recruiter, and then also served two years in Germany until his retirement with 30 years of service as a Master Sergeant.

Abie received numerous medals for his service, including the Purple Heart, and was even featured in several documentaries on The Discovery Channel and The History Channel.

Indeed, Abie’s service to our country and to our veterans was truly ceaseless. From 1988 to 2011, Abie was a volunteer at VA Butler Healthcare, where he spent 36,851 service hours caring for our veterans.

Abie was also a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Purple Heart Combat/Infantry Organization, the American Ex-POWs, the Disabled American Veterans, and the American Defenders of Bataan.

Time does not allow us to cover every detail of Abie’s extraordinary life. I would encourage members of our body to read his life story in his own words, particularly his books “Ghost of

Bataan Speaks” and “Oh, God, Where Are You,” which Abie wrote to help people understand what our brave men endured at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army as prisoners of war.

As the Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars wrote in support of Abie:

Government buildings should be recognized as more than steel, brick and mortar. A structure, especially ones that provide human services and can literally change lives, should be seen as an instrument of great importance and impact. Assigning a name of distinction to a federal facility truly accomplishes two vital purposes: the dedication pays due honor to a person who created such a great example of service to country, and it focuses the attention of those who work at or utilize the facility on the high level of service performed by the building’s namesake. And hopefully, it creates a desire among employees and those utilizing the services provided to make their own unique mark on America.

Mr. Speaker, Abie Abraham is the epitome of the values of our nation, our military, and our veterans, and a great inspiration to all Americans. It is truly fitting that the new health care center in Butler County, Pennsylvania, be named after him.

I thank the members of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation for their support in honoring Abie.

I thank the Pennsylvania Departments of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion for their support and their dedication to this initiative.

Lastly, I thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member and their staffs for working with my staff on this important matter.

I urge adoption of H.R. 5317, as amended, and I yield back.