

Mr. Speaker, there are many individuals who have led the way to give us progress, framework and choices we now have known as a quest for livable communities. One who has dedicated his professional life to enhancement of the environment and preserving the American quality of life is Lawrence Nye Stevens, who is here with us today in the Capitol with his family and friends, having just celebrated his 84th birthday. We are honored to have him seated with us in the East Gallery. His curiosity, vision and good old American ingenuity to make this a better place have put him years ahead of his time.

His experiences with soil erosion on a cattle ranch in Montana in the 1930's convinced him that something needed to be done to protect the land, and led him to earn a graduate degree in geography that focused on land utilization and soil and water conservation. This training was put to good use during World War II. Commissioned in the U.S. Navy, Larry was in charge of the study of military geography in the European Theater.

After the war, he was Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs where he started a long career working in the Department of Interior in various capacities. In 1968, he was recognized by his peers and honored with the Distinguished Service Award by the U.S. Department of Interior.

Under the leadership of Secretary Stewart Udall, Larry Stevens became Deputy Director of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. This commission had a profound effect on America's ability to catalogue our resources. For example, in 1966 an Outdoor Recreation Commission report was prophetic. I quote:

But parks and other recreation areas are only part of the answer. The most important recreation of all is the kind that people find in their everyday life. Do they find enough of it now? Do children have to be driven to school, or can they walk or cycle to it safely over wooded paths? Are there streams for an afternoon's fishing, or have they all been buried in concrete culverts? Are the stands of woods all gone, or are a few left for a picnic or a stroll? What this means, in short, is an environment. Thus our challenge: Can we shape future growth so that recreation is an integral part of it? It will require a fresh approach.

A third of a century ago is the first time that I found the word 'environment' used in this fashion. It was the term President Nixon selected in the landmark National Environmental Policy Act.

We sometimes forget the leaders who have shown us the way and the people who provide key research analysis and advocacy like Larry Stevens. He is a man of strong convictions. He has long been concerned about the waste that we see around us, waste of taxpayer money, waste of energy, minerals, food and fiber, and by the loss of prime agricultural land to unwise land use. He has cautioned us throughout his life that we cannot afford a 'quick fix' philosophy that increasingly pervades our economy and society. He has truly been a pioneer in the area of planning and smart growth.

He has also been a strong advocate in the use of cycling, and that is how I first met him. He was Executive Director of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality when that committee authored a publication called 'From Rails To Trails.' We all owe Larry and the citizens' committee appointed by the President a great debt of gratitude for highlighting this idea.

Recently Larry wrote in the Harvard 50th Anniversary Report that 'Each day I try to ride at least a few miles on my 10-speed bicycle, an ingenious and remarkably efficient machine.' I agree with Larry and acknowledge his active participation in the creation of the nationwide network of 'rails to trails.'

We who are in the business of trying to make communities more livable, providing tools for our citizens to thrive in the global economy, where citizens and private institutions work in partnership with government at all levels to ensure safety, economic security and healthy communities, we are all still living with the challenge of how we shape our growth so that recreation is an integral part of it and the preservation of the American heritage is not lost. Larry Stevens is one of those unsung heroes.

It gives me particular pleasure to acknowledge Larry Stevens for his commitment to the environment as

a private citizen, as a mentor to many of my friends and a professional public servant. His imagination, commitment to environmental quality and friendship have benefited our quest for more livable communities.

America is in his debt.

Lawrence Nye Stevens--Unsung Hero of American Environmental Quality

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