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House of Representatives

A TRIBUTE TO

NICHOLAS H. BURLAK

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 3, 2010

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I recently was informed by a group of citizens who live in my district of a remarkable story about one of their neighbors. I admire their spirit in making sure that the inspiring story of their friend and neighbor, Nicholas H. Burlak, is more widely known. And I ask that my remarks here be printed to call attention to Mr. Burlak's remarkable achievements, so that they may serve as an example to others.

Nicholas Burlak was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1924, and when the Depression came, his father moved the family to Ukraine in search of work. When World War II broke out in 1941, when the Hitler-Stalin pact fell apart and Germany then attacked its erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, Nicholas Burlak tried to return to the United States, the home of his birth, to enlist in the Marine Corps. But this was physically impossible. He then did the next-best thing—determined to fight the Nazis, and to defend his country of birth as best he could, Mr. Burlak became an American volunteer in the Soviet Army. Subsequently he was wounded four times in battle, twice suffered shell shock and received several medals for bravery as he participated in the terrible battles between the Soviet and Nazi armies, ultimately fighting his way with other Russians to Berlin. Among the signatures left by Russian soldiers on the walls of the Reichstag in 1945 was one in English—“Bethlehem, PA, USA—Donbass, Ukraine, Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan, Berlin, Germany May 1945—Nicholas.” That was the heroic and patriotic American, Nicholas Burlak, who did

not allow his separation from our country to prevent his allegiance to it.

With the sixty-fifth anniversary of the end of World War II, the Russian government awarded Mr. Burlak a medal. I believe it is appropriate for his fellow countrymen in the United States, now that he has returned to live among us as he always wanted to do, to join in commemorating the extraordinary dedication of this brave young man who has become a very valued member of our country today.

Madam Speaker, Nicholas Burlak's commitment to his fellow and sister citizens did not end with his joining in the war against the Nazis. In 2007, for example, he received the Eloise K. Houghton Award in recognition of community spirit and outstanding volunteer service from the Newton Community Development Foundation, a very important organization in my hometown, which provides help to others.

Madam Speaker, Nicholas Burlak understood how important his story was and how many people could learn from and be inspired by it, so he wrote a book—under the pseudonym of the time of M.J. Nicholas, entitled “Love and War: An American Volunteer in the Soviet Red Army.” It is not just an inspiring book, but a gripping one, and I welcome the chance, Madam Speaker, to mention it here, as part of the tribute that our country should be paying to Mr. Burlak. It is a tribute to him and to his neighbors that they are so inspired by his story that they took the initiative in writing to me and calling this to my attention, and I am very pleased to have the chance to express my admiration of Mr. Burlak and my appreciation to his neighbors for giving me the chance to do this.