

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

1-28-1970

Congressional Record S. 722 - Another Montana Gunned Down in D.C. - Harry Gelsing

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Congressional Record S. 722 - Another Montana Gunned Down in D.C. - Harry Gelsing" (1970). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 824.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/824

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 1970

THE JOURNAL

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the Journal of the proceedings of Tuesday, January 27, 1970, be dispensed with.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ANOTHER MONTANAN GUNNED DOWN IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, last March 12, Harry P. Gelsing was gunned down as he walked to his home at 810 Tuckerman Street, NW., here in the District of Columbia. Harry Gelsing was a Montanan. He was a medical researcher who had no immediate family and lived alone here in Washington. For 10 months—until January 15—Harry remained in the Washington Hospital Center paralyzed and lingering halfway between life and death. He died and he is now a statistic; a casualty of street crime; a loser in the war against crime.

It has been said that this murder stemmed from a senseless, brutal "let us get this guy" kind of attack by a gang of hoodlums. That is the kind of criminal we must deal with; that is the kind of senseless, wanton act we are seeking to prevent. In return, I think we must be absolutely relentless in our pursuit of these twisted misfits who cannot live or function normally in society; we must redouble our efforts to assist our police and law-enforcement officials. But that is not all we must do.

Harry Gelsing was a kind and gentle man. I knew him personally, and all of us who knew him can testify to the fine character of the man—to his warm and gentle nature. What a contrast he must have presented to those who attacked him, dragged him into an alley, and gunned him down mercilessly. Why? For kicks? For excitement? Or just because Harry happened to pass by at that moment?

I am sick of these occurrences. There have been too many others like Harry Gelsing, and like Thad Lesnik, another Montanan, who was gunned down some months ago, too many who have been brutally subjected to the senseless violence that plagues this Nation.

So we must do more. We must dedicate ourselves to finding new and better ways to fight crime; to cut down the inordinate rate of violence. I have advocated stiff mandatory prison sentences for those who use guns in committing crimes. My bill—the Lesnik bill—has already passed the Senate. I supported the law that seeks to stem the flow of firearms into the hands of the lawless and untrained, the addict, the criminal, the mental incompetent, and the unfit. In the end, these measures should help, but even they may not provide the full answer.

We need new and imaginative remedies. We need remedies that seek not only to restrict the number of weapons available to criminals and to impose severe penalties, but remedies that consider as well the deplorable state of the prisons and penal institutions of this Nation that now serve only as graduate schools for crime. We need remedies that consider other criminal breeding grounds—the urban areas, the ghetto, the crowded, congested, and decayed inner city, and other areas that have been neglected. We need remedies that will help us identify the twisted minds like those who attacked Harry Gelsing and Thad Lesnik; identify them before they are able to strike.

Last year, the Senate District of Columbia Committee passed all five crime bills requested for the District of Columbia by the President of the United States.

Last week the Senate passed the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970. I was happy to support that measure. It is a proposal that was carefully developed here in the Senate by the distinguished senior Senator from Arkansas (Mr. McCLELLAN), the distinguished Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HRUSKA), and others. Many of its features were requested by the administration as a way of complementing the Crime Control Act of 1968. But the fact is, none of its features were designed to meet the problem faced by Harry Gelsing.

That problem concerns the quality of life in the streets of our great metropolitan centers. I am no expert in crime control, but it seems to me that just as crime has affected the quality of life on city streets, so has the condition of life on some city streets itself produced a good deal of crime and violence. In the weeks and months ahead, I would hope that in seeking a better balance among our domestic needs and our foreign and security interests, we place far greater emphasis on the need to solve the problem of crime.

This week we hope to conclude action on the pending strong drug control bill, another weapon in our fight against crime.

Mr. President, I am today directing an inquiry to the U.S. district attorney for the District of Columbia asking for a complete report on the gunning down of Harry Gelsing, just as I did in the case of the gunning down of Thad Lesnik, of Fishtail, Mont., and requesting a continuing determined investigation of the murder of this fine Montanan. May I say, incidentally, that the attackers of Thad Lesnik were captured, tried, and sentenced to prison.

A story appeared in last Sunday's Washington Star about Harry P. Gelsing. It is a very human story about a man from Montana whose tragic death was occasioned by one of the most severe problems we face today. I ask

S 722

unanimous consent that the story be printed at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the news story was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GENTLE MAN'S MURDER LEAVES A MYSTERY

(By Harriet Griffiths)

Harry P. Gelsing was a gentle man, a medical research technician who lived alone, but not lonely amid his cultural interests and his friends.

At 62, he "had come to that part of his life when he looked toward retirement," an associate at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research said. "He was hoping to go back to Japan and stay for a year or so among all his friends there."

But last March 12, as the microbiologist walked from a bus stop to his home at 810 Tuckerman St. NW after a concert, a still-unexplained street attack destroyed those plans with gunfire.

Gelsing lingered for 10 months at Washington Hospital Center, partially paralyzed, his strength draining from the complications of his injury, faced with living out his life in a wheelchair, until Jan. 15, when he died.

Why was he attacked? His friends are at a loss. The police, who found no evidence of a robbery motive at the time, have no clues to the youthful assailant or assailants who pulled up in a car and cursed, beat and kicked the man before shooting him.

Some think it may just have been a kind of senseless, brutal, "let's get this guy" attack.

"He wouldn't have hurt anyone," said Lawrence Scheewe, attorney and friend who, like Gelsing, was graduated from Carroll College in Helena, Mont. "He was confused about the whole thing. He couldn't see what the purpose was."

To a fellow scientist at the research institute, Dr. Herman Schneider, "He was a very nice man, with wide-ranging interests. He was well liked. I worked later at the same laboratory in Japan where he had worked during the Korean war and afterwards. To a man and woman, the people he had worked with there worshipped him."

Mrs. Abraham Danzig, his landlady, counted up 13 years of knowing Gelsing: "He lived in our house for three years, and next door for over 10 years. They don't come any better. That man could not have any enemies."

"He liked to walk a lot. A book was always in his hands, even when he went for a walk. Most of his friends were family men, and they would invite him to their homes. He wasn't lonely. He had a lot of friends. In winter, he went to classes."

"He kept his apartment spotless, and he cooked. He didn't use TV dinners. Some times, he even baked. We were just like one family."

Gelsing left no immediate survivors. Those who arranged his funeral back in Helena, with burial in Resurrection Catholic Cemetery, suggested that expressions of sympathy might be in the form of gifts to the scholarship fund at Carroll College.

His friends said Gelsing was open handed to charitable causes, and it was understood he had helped one or more Japanese students through medical school.

"He did not deserve what was done to him," Mrs. Danzig said.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Wyoming for yielding me this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. HANSEN) is recognized for not to exceed 30 minutes.

S 721