

4/22/2008 Honoring Lydia Porubsky and Porubsky Grocery and Meats

Honoring Lydia Porubsky and Porubsky Grocery and Meats

April 22, 2008

Madam Speaker, I rise before you today in remembrance of the late Lydia Porubsky who passed away February 11th at the age of 83. Mrs. Porubsky was known across Topeka, Kansas for a chili recipe and her six day a week presence at Porubsky's Grocery and Meats.

Lydia, alongside her husband of 49 years Charles, Sr., operated Porubsky's until Charles' death in 1998. Lydia, however, continued to be a fixture in the deli. She was the person every customer remembered thanks to her positions behind the counter and at the cash register. An amazing thing about Lydia is that she remembered you as well. The conversations and the small-talk she would engage in only enhanced the experience of eating at Porubsky's.

Porubsky's is also known for their great food. Not the least of which is the chili. Porubsky's developed a reputation over the years as having some of the most delicious chili in the area. According The Topeka Capital-Journal, Porubsky's was featured in Gourmet Magazine. This publication's editors discovered what the people of Kansas had been enjoying for over 60 years. Gourmet Magazine summed it up as well as anyone when it stated, "Porubsky's is not just a place to eat. It is a destination in itself." While the magazine was referring specifically to the food, people familiar with Porubsky's knew that Lydia was also a star attraction.

My personal experience with the Porubskys dates back to my time in the Kansas legislature. Several of my fellow legislators and I would make the trip to Porubsky's during our breaks. Meeting from January through June meant that we had at least three full months to truly enjoy Porubsky's hot chili and spicy pickles. With meat and cheese trays displayed, the restaurant was a warm respite from the cold and a welcome break from our political and governmental dealings.

But in a city with many dining options, it was Lydia's genuine interest in us that kept us coming back. Even today, as I travel Kansas, I will alter my plans so that I can have a ham salad sandwich at Porubsky's and enjoy this family's warm welcome and hospitality.

While Porubsky's and many family-owned establishments like it lack the bells and whistles of nationwide chains, the underlying quality that truly matters is the collection of people it takes to make it work. Charles Sr. and Lydia provided us with a model of small business ownership. My home state of Kansas is no stranger to family owned and operated undertakings. Our economy was built by people like the Porubskys who knew that if they did not work for it, it was not going to be given to them. Their love of family and the city of Topeka will never be forgotten.

This staple of Topeka enterprise will continue through the efforts of the Porubsky's sons, Matthew, Charlie, Jr., Mark, alongside the Porubsky's daughters Cecelia Pierson and Teresa Thomas who have all made their homes in Topeka. This restaurant, this way of life must be remembered and admired, Madam Speaker. We all know a "Lydia Porubsky" in our lives. Every one of us has someone who reminds us of what is really important as our lives and our jobs continue to speed up. I am sorry that my Lydia Porubsky has passed on. I am thankful for having had the chance to know her and her family. This woman, this business, will remain a part of our greater Kansas community and will enjoy a special place in my heart.

Madam Speaker, please join me in celebrating the life of Lydia Porubsky, offering our sympathy to her family, and praying for the continued success of Porubsky's Grocery and Meats.