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The meaning of hope: Indiana remembers Richard Lugar at Statehouse memorial

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By Erica Irish TheStatehouseFile.com

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INDIANAPOLIS — Draped in the red-and-white stripes of the American flag, a casket carrying former Indianapolis mayor and U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar rested in the Statehouse rotunda Tuesday amid the echoes of family, colleagues and time.

Lugar came home to Indianapolis as part of a public memorial following his death on April 28 in Annandale, Virginia, and is set to lie in state through 11 a.m. Wednesday.

He died after a short battle with a rare brain disorder and is survived by his wife, Charlene Lugar, and four sons: David, John, Mark and Bob Lugar.

Keeping watch alongside his relatives and friends were the eight statues guarding the rotunda, each representative of traits embedded in Lugar's life and career: agriculture, commerce, art, history, law, justice, oratory and liberty.

To Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, Lugar was devoted to a similar array of disciplines, as well as to understanding their place in the larger human experience.

"Our national history is imperfect, as each one of us is imperfect," Hogsett, alongside Gov. Eric Holcomb, said at the brief memorial service as the late senator lay in state. "In so many of us there is both love and hate, courage and fear, peace and violence. Richard Lugar keenly understood this."

And Lugar offered more than an innate understanding, Hogsett continued: He took action, in his formal work and in everyday life, to quell the darker side of being.

"He fought evil. He calmed fear. He did not attempt to use it," the mayor said. "He extinguished violence."

Bob Lugar, after speaking to a line of guests in the south atrium of the Statehouse that gathered to pay their respects to the family, said it was this very complexity that defined his father in public service. It is also the reality that prevented the public from appreciating his entire legacy.

"When people talk about my father, they tend to focus on his work in foreign policy, agriculture or commerce. But education was his original focus. That's where he got his start," Bob Lugar said, noting that his father's first role as a public servant was as a member of the Indianapolis Public School Board. "He wanted equality for all students and desegregation."

But these ideals followed Lugar to the world stage, too, where he led international negotiations that resulted in the expansion of nuclear disarmament initiatives across the globe, such as through the enactment of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program with Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn.

"He was so vital and so in this world to the very end," said John Hammond, a member of the Republican National Committee and partner at Ice Miller LLP. "He really led pathways to peace. He always avoided the other option, which has been the option since the dawn of man: war between and among peoples."

Hammond said he first witnessed Lugar when he was 13-years-old, when he attended his inauguration as mayor of Indianapolis with his parents. That initial interaction inspired Hammond to begin his own career in public affairs.

Lugar assisted his colleagues in advancing their careers in more direct ways, too, such as when he helped Lawrence Johnson, a former chairman for the



Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, Gov. Eric Holcomb, First Lady Janet Holcomb and House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, prepare to speak about the legacy of Sen. Richard Lugar at a memorial Tuesday. Photo by Bryan Wells, TheStatehouseFile.com



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Indiana Republican Party, connect with international brokers in Tokyo, Japan, when Johnson was only 28.

John Hammond, a partner at Ice Miller LLP, recalled seeing Sen. Richard Lugar for the first time at his inaugural ceremony as mayor of Indianapolis.
Photo by Bryan Wells, TheStatehouseFile.com.

"When I met him, his legacy was already established," Johnson said about their first meeting in 1980. "I was just following him. He was a very distinctive young man."

Even for those in attendance who did not interact with Lugar directly in his life, the legacy of the statesman resonated with visitors from all professions, beliefs and political affiliations.

"He's been instrumental for Indiana," said 70-year-old Kate Mays of Indianapolis, who first saw Lugar when he spoke at her son's commencement ceremony at Western High School in Russiaville, Indiana, in 1995. She currently works as an events manager for the Indiana Association of Realtors. "I don't know a lot about politics. I just have respect for him as a long-time Hoosier."

Hogsett, however, said it matters little to what degree a person knew Richard Lugar: The significance of his legacy, he said, is clear to all.

"To us, Richard Lugar meant and means hope," Hogsett said.

The family of Richard Lugar asks those who wish to offer memorial contributions to support the Lugar Center, a non-profit founded by Lugar in 2013. The center advocates for policy that advances energy security development, world nutrition, effective governance and international disarmament, among other topics. His son, John Lugar, serves as executive director.

Richard Lugar's funeral will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis. The service will be available via livestream, courtesy of the Lugar Center's YouTube channel.

Erica Irish is a reporter for TheStatehouseFile.com, a news website powered by Franklin College journalism students.

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