



Name in English: Ladda Tammy Duckworth

Name in Chinese: [譚美. 達克沃斯]

Name in Pinyin: Not known

Gender: Female

Birth Year: 1968

Birth Place: Bangkok, Thailand

Current location: Hoffman Estates, Illinois

Representative, 8th Congressional District of Illinois

Profession (s): Military Officer, Politician

Education: Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, University of Hawaii, 1989; Master of Arts, International Affairs, George Washington University, 1992; Comparative Politics & International Relations, Northern Illinois University, Ph.D. study interrupted by Iraq War service

Awards: 2010, Honorary Ph.D., Northern Illinois University; 2007, Veterans Leadership Award, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; 2004, Purple Heart, United States Army; 2004, Air Medal, United States Army; 2004, Army Commendation Medal, United States Army; Meritorious Service Medal, United States Army; Combat Action Badge, United States Army; Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, United States Army

Contribution (s): In 2013, Tammy Duckworth held several first distinctions in Congress on assuming office in the House of Representatives; first woman combat veteran; first disabled woman; first member of Congress born in Thailand.

Her life story has been extraordinary. Her father was a United States Marine veteran who'd fought on Okinawa during World War II and won the Purple Heart there. His family had a history of military service dating back to the American Revolution. He met her Chinese Thai mother in Thailand when he was working the United Nations refugee program. He later worked with international corporations on international development programs. Because of this work the family moved all around Southeast Asia, giving Tammy the opportunity to learn Thai and Indonesian. Eventually the family settled in Hawaii when she was 16 years old. An honors student, Tammy skipped ninth grade and graduated from McKinley High School in Honolulu in 1985. Principal Richard Sakamoto later said, "She was one of the best students, because of her determination. She was something else, very intelligent, very goal-oriented. She was an athlete. She participated in basketball, volleyball and track."

After earning a bachelor's in political science from the University of Hawaii in 1989 she entered the master of international affairs program at George Washington University in Washington DC. There she decided to follow her father's family into military service by joining the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the university. She was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army Reserve in 1992 and picked helicopters as her military

occupation specialty as it was one of the few combat assignments open to women. After completing flight school she joined the Illinois Army National Guard in 1996. At the same time she was already studying at Northern Illinois University for a Ph.D. in Comparative Politics & International Relations specializing in Southeast Asia. Her outstanding work was recognized with a prestigious Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship given by the university's Center for Southeast Asian Studies. She also worked as a research assistant for the Center for Governmental Studies and coordinated a university project measuring radon levels in DeKalb County homes. By the start of the Iraq War she was working as supervisor for the charity Rotary International while continuing her doctoral studies.

Her life was interrupted when her Illinois Army National Guard unit was activated and deployed to Iraq. On November 12, 2004, after having flown over 120 hours in combat missions without incident, Captain Duckworth's Black Hawk helicopter was struck by a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) hitting directly under her seat. The impact destroyed both of her legs, which were later amputated, and shredded her right arm, among other serious injuries. She wondered why she couldn't work the control pedals, "I found out later the pedals were gone, and so were my legs." Her co-pilot safely landed the helicopter and Duckworth passed out as she reached up to turn off the engines. She lapsed in and out of consciousness for eight days. Doctors later told her that she'd lost half the blood in her body.

It was during her six month recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC that she was promoted to major and met Senator Bob Dole, a World War II veteran who'd lost his right arm fighting in Italy who'd later become Senate Majority leader and unsuccessful Republican candidate for President in 1996. "When we met, I was overwhelmed by the extent of her disability, but even more so by her courage," Dole was quoted as saying. "With her determination, she'll be an excellent candidate for Congress." The meeting with Senator Dole would inspire her to enter public service, albeit for the Democratic Party.

She started out as an advocate in front of Congress for veterans, impressing the members with her determination to stay in the Illinois National Guard. About her injuries she said, "This didn't change who I am. I'm an air assault pilot. I'm not about to let some guy who got lucky with an RPG decide how to live my life." She was invited to attend the 2005 State of the Union address by Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois where she met and impressed Senator Barack Obama, the other US Senator from Illinois. "Very rarely have I met a more impressive person than Tammy Duckworth," Senator Obama would later say, "She just has the poise and exudes the type of character that I think would make her an astounding public servant."

By May 2005, she began flying civilian aircraft again and remained listed as "Continuation On Active Reserve" status with the Illinois National Guard, one of only two severely wounded veterans to hold that distinction. She eventually earning promotion to lieutenant colonel.

The United States, as it has throughout its history, had come woefully underprepared for war. This included having an inadequate number of facilities and personnel trained to deal with returning and wounded veterans at both the state and federal levels. The need to address these inadequacies led to Duckworth's appointment as Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs in 2006 where she worked on improving and expanding employment, housing, and other services for returning veterans. In the same year she ran for a seat in the US House of Representatives for the 6th District in what had been a historically Republican district, narrowly losing by only 2.6% of the vote. Attacked for her opposition to the Iraq War she said, "I've already had an RPG blow up in my lap. After that, take your best shot. I'm going to get up and fight for what I think is right."

In 2008, she participated in the Chicago Marathon on a hand cranked bicycle and completed it in the respectable time of 2 hours, 26 minutes and 31 seconds. She also spoke at the Democratic National Convention that year that nominated Senator Barack Obama for President.

In 2009, she was nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed to the post of Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. She held this position until she resigned in 2011 to campaign for the newly redrawn 8th Congressional District in Illinois, which had a slight Republican majority, and only a 12% Asian American population. She was invited to speak at the 2012 Democratic National Convention to highlight her candidacy. Duckworth won with a comfortable 9.4% margin in a campaign which was notable for the missteps of her opponent including the accusation that Duckworth was politicizing her military service. Stung by the outrage from many, including his own supporters, he declared Duckworth a "true hero."

External Links:

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-10/news/ct-met-tammy-duckworth-asian-vote-20121110_1_asian-american-candidates-asian-voters-duckworth-campaign

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-07/business/sns-rt-usa-campaignillinois-duckworth-update-3l1e8m6ai-20121106_1_democrat-tammy-duckworth-illinois-house-seat-democratic-candidates

<http://www.niu.edu/mediarelations/news/2010/april/duckworth.shtml>

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/29/us/politics/29web-duckworth.html?ref=ltammyduckworth&_r=0

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2006/Jan/08/In/FP601080334.html>

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