

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1132

By West

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Leon Rhodes upon his illustrious career in country music and his fiftieth anniversary as a musician with the Grand Ole Opry.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this General Assembly should pay homage to those inspirational artists who perform pure and passionate country music; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding guitarist whose phenomenal career has spanned more than six decades is Leon Rhodes; and

WHEREAS, born on March 10, 1932, Leon Rhodes was raised to appreciate the value of music by his pianist mother, Mary May Meharg Rhodes, and his father, James Edward Rhodes, who played both the guitar and french harp; and

WHEREAS, passionate about country music since childhood, Mr. Rhodes taught himself to play the guitar at the tender age of ten; and

WHEREAS, a mere six years after receiving his first guitar from his father, Leon Rhodes joined Big D Jamboree's staff band in Dallas, Texas at the age of sixteen and began making his mark on the country music world; and

WHEREAS, before becoming a respected and esteemed figure in country music, Mr. Rhodes showcased his natural talent and affinity for the sport of fast-pitch softball as a professional pitcher and third baseman, playing in five world tournaments by the time he was twenty-seven; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rhodes's extraordinary musical ability and talent was discovered by Texas Troubadour members Buddy Emmons and Jack Drake while he was performing at the Long Horn Ballroom in Dallas, Texas; and

WHEREAS, in October of 1959, Leon Rhodes joined Ernest Tubb and the famed Texas Troubadours and moved to Nashville to pursue to his dream of country music stardom; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry welcomed his first appearance in 1959, and he has been a fixture in the world of country music ever since; and

WHEREAS, from October 1959 until December 1966, Mr. Rhodes toured with Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours, performing 250 shows each year and earning the respect and admiration of his colleagues and fans alike for his hard work, dedication, and talent; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rhodes became a household name when Ernest Tubb called out, "Play it pretty, Leon," as Leon Rhodes displayed his masterful guitar prowess; and

WHEREAS, known as one of the seven wonders of country music guitar playing, his guitar picking was an essential component of thousands of recordings and live performances by musical legends John Denver, Connie Smith, The Gatlin Brothers, Sammy Davis, Jr., George Strait, George Jones, Roy Clark, Julie Andrews, Crystal Gayle, Loretta Lynn, Sammi Smith, Gene Watson, The Osborne Brothers, Jean Shepard, Dottie West, George Morgan, Moe Bandy, Roy Orbison, Marie Osmond, Little Jimmy Dickens, Ricky Skaggs, Buddy Emmons, Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell, Stonewall Jackson, Mel Tillis, Sonny James, The Chipmunks, Debbie Boone, Porter Wagoner, Donna Fargo, B.J. Thomas, and Paul Anka; and

WHEREAS, Leon Rhodes received the honor of playing with President Richard Nixon on March 16, 1974, during the opening night ceremonies at the new Grand Ole Opry House; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rhodes's appeal also reached into the world of television. He was a member of the staff band on the nationally televised show, "Hee Haw," for more than twenty-three years and lent his remarkable guitar skills to numerous Nashville-produced shows, including "The Ralph Emery Show," "The Dinah Shore Show," and "The Marty Stuart Show;" and

WHEREAS, a devout Christian whose deep faith is expressed in all his endeavors, Mr. Rhodes always acknowledges that his talents are a treasured gift from God; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, he was honored with the Super Picker Awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and was a Country Music Association Awards Finalist several times; Gower Guitars even manufactured the "Leon Rhodes Model Flat-Top Acoustic" guitar as a tribute to his unique sound; and

WHEREAS, even with all his fame, Leon Rhodes has remained one of the nicest and friendliest people you could ever meet; and

WHEREAS, his momentous achievements aside, Mr. Rhodes is most proud of the love and support he shares with his wife of more than forty-five years, Judith Arndt Rhodes; his children, Diane, Leon, Tonja, Todd, Tag, Tara, Tammy, and Tandy; his twenty-four wonderful grandchildren; and his five precious great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Leon Rhodes epitomizes the creative spirit and commitment to this State's cultural heritage, and he truly serves as an exemplary Ambassador for Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize Leon Rhodes for his legendary career in country music, congratulate him on his fiftieth anniversary as a musician with the Grand Ole Opry, thank him for all he has done to preserve and extend the musical heritage of this State, and wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.