

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 781

By Dickerson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of John Witt Rich of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. John Witt Rich; and

WHEREAS, John Rich was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a highly successful businessman and philanthropist, John Rich was the founder of Delta Coals Inc. and the Rich Foundation in addition to being perhaps the greatest cornerstone of support for both the academic and athletic endeavors of Vanderbilt University in school history; and

WHEREAS, born in Marks, Mississippi, on January 8, 1928, John Witt Rich was the son of Lucile Roberts and John C. Rich and graduated from Marks High School in 1944 prior to receiving a football scholarship to attend Vanderbilt University in 1945; and

WHEREAS, offered the scholarship on the recommendation of his high school football coach, Mr. Rich started the first Vanderbilt football game he ever saw as the blocking back in the Commodores' single wing offense and as a cornerback on defense; and

WHEREAS, with the end of World War II and the return of many veterans and legendary coach Red Sanders to the helm of Vanderbilt's football program, John Rich's football career plummeted from a starting position to sixth on the depth chart; and

WHEREAS, faced with limited playing time and less than promising grades, Mr. Rich enlisted in the United States Army in 1946 and served in Japan during the occupation through discharge in January of 1948; and

WHEREAS, returning to Vanderbilt where he was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity, John Rich was unsuccessful in a spring stint with the football team but found his athletic niche as a member of the baseball team where he played for three years; and

WHEREAS, after graduation Mr. Rich worked briefly for SunLife of Canada, Brown & Bigelow, and as manager of the Marshall County Recreation Center before obtaining an interview with Jett Potter, through the assistance of his friends Joe and Roscoe Davis, and was offered a job with the Nashville Coal Company; and

WHEREAS, spending the rest of his life in the coal business, Mr. Rich started Delta Coals Inc. in 1969 with related mining ventures in Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Colorado and a sales agency for coal producing companies in Virginia and Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, a devoted fan of his alma mater and its commitment to excellence both in the classroom and on the field of play, John Rich tirelessly gave of his time and talents to Vanderbilt University and was deeply honored to serve as a Trustee on the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust; and

WHEREAS, John Rich played a significant role in the construction of Vanderbilt Stadium in 1982, and later the expansion of McGugin Center and the creation of the football practice fields in 2002, which were named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, a member of Vanderbilt University's first Hall of Fame class in 2008, John Rich was chosen to be a Trustee in 1988 and served with distinction until 2003 when he became a Trustee Emeritus; and

WHEREAS, a community leader, Mr. Rich's business success allowed him to give generously to numerous organizations, including the Westminster Presbyterian Church, the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, Vanderbilt athletics, and the Vanderbilt Blair School of Music, in addition to many other institutions and Nashville charities through the Rich Foundation since its founding in 1994; and

WHEREAS, an avid fisher and golfer, Mr. Rich was a founding member of the Golf Club of Tennessee and was an active participant in the land acquisition and founding of the Golf House of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, John Rich was also deeply devoted to his family, and he enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife of sixty-one years, Norma Tate Rich, and was the proud parent of Amy Lucille Rich (Edmond J. Schmidt III), David Tate Rich (Nora), and John William Rich (Karen); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich was the adored grandfather of ten treasured grandchildren: John R. Rich (Jessica), D. Tate Rich, Jr. (Mariel), E. Grace French (Brad), E. Lucile Rich, Thomas E. Tompkins (Caroline), Kathryn T. Dick (Hagan), C. Rich Tompkins, W. Miller Rich, Martha N. Rich and Jackson P. Rich; and four great grandchildren: Helen E. Rich, Lucille Grace Rich, Diane K. French, and T.E. (Tripp) Tompkins; and

WHEREAS, John Witt Rich leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of John Witt Rich, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Rich.

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