

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 531

By Fincher

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Kaul Esmer Fincher on the celebration of his eighty-fifth birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pay tribute to those distinguished veterans and exemplary citizens who are celebrating special occasions in their estimable lives; and

WHEREAS, Kaul Esmer Fincher will celebrate his eighty-fifth birthday on August 20, 2009, a milestone that will be commemorated as yet another precious souvenir of life's rich pageant; and

WHEREAS, the son of George (Carl) Fincher (January 18, 1892-May 26, 1966), who was a decorated World War I veteran, and Mary Lucille Gerald's Fincher (March 20, 1907-April 25, 1982), Kaul Esmer Fincher was born August 20, 1924, in Englewood in McMinn County, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one of Mr. Fincher's favorite childhood memories is eating extra ice cream outside the Mayfield Dairy in Athens, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Fincher family later moved to Lanett, Alabama, where the young Kaul grew up swimming in the Chattahoochee River and walking to West Point, Georgia, to attend school and then work in a cotton mill after school; and

WHEREAS, he played football on the offensive line and was so gifted that in 1975, Mr. Fincher was named as the offensive guard on the 50-Year All-Star Team selected by the *Valley Daily News* Poll; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Fincher is a decorated combat veteran of both World War II and the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, he volunteered for the United States Army, in which he served with distinction, receiving his Combat Infantry Badge at the Battle of Okinawa; he was discharged at the end of the War with the rank of Technical Sergeant and entered the inactive Reserve; and

WHEREAS, Kaul Esmer Fincher returned home after World War II and graduated from high school with several other veterans from Lanett, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, thanks to the GI Bill, Mr. Fincher was able to attend college after the War; he and several of his high school football teammates were recruited by SEC schools, but decided instead to attend Livingston Teachers College (now known as the University of West Alabama), where he started all four years as offensive guard; and

WHEREAS, these Livingston teams defeated several powerhouses, including Florida State University; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Fincher also played baseball for Livingston before graduating in 1948; he then coached at Troy State University for one season and bought a Studebaker with his earnings; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Livingston, Kaul Esmer Fincher attended Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, which is now part of Vanderbilt University, and received his master's degree in education; and

WHEREAS, while attending Peabody, Mr. Fincher met the lovely Bette Morgan of Cookeville, Tennessee, on a blind date set up by their friends; sparks flew and the courtship progressed rapidly, but was rudely interrupted when the Communist North Koreans invaded South Korea; and

WHEREAS, the inactive Reserve was activated, and Mr. Fincher was called upon once again to serve in the infantry; and

WHEREAS, before he was sent overseas, he and Bette Morgan were married on November 9, 1950, just before he shipped out; and

WHEREAS, Kaul Esmer Fincher arrived in Pusan, South Korea, in early 1951, during the dead of winter; assigned to the 24th Infantry, 19th Regiment, Company E, Sergeant Fincher served as a mortar man, manning a 60mm mortar and serving on the front lines for more than six months; and

WHEREAS, rising to the rank of Sergeant First Class, Kaul Esmer Fincher and his unit crossed the 38th Parallel several times, fighting Communist Chinese and North Korean soldiers; at one point, being surrounded by the Chinese, Sergeant Fincher spent six days behind enemy lines before expertly leading his unit back to the American lines; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Fincher returned home to American soil in late 1951, and began working for the Putnam County, Tennessee, school system, for which he taught until his retirement in 1988; and

WHEREAS, during his thirty-seven illustrious years as an educator, Mr. Fincher taught math, 7th grade science, and from 1971, until his retirement, he taught physical education to 7th, 8th, and 9th grade boys at Cookeville Junior High School; he was known as being fair, but firm, and many of the boys he taught remember him fondly by saying, "Coach Fincher used to bust my tail, but I love that man"; and

WHEREAS, renowned for having a great sense of humor and loving a good laugh, Mr. Fincher has always been fond of telling jokes and poking fun; some of his favorite punch lines are: "Wanna buy a chicken?" "That's nacho cheese!" and "You don't sweat much for a fat girl!"; and

WHEREAS, Coach Fincher was one of the first joggers in the Upper Cumberland, as he began running laps in his back yard in 1961, at the age of thirty-seven; and

WHEREAS, over the years as running became more of a mainstream activity, Mr. Fincher ran every single day, regardless of the weather, running three to six miles, or more, until he was eighty-three years old; no matter if the weather brought 100-degree heat or snow and ice, he would run, saying: "I keep running 'cause I'm afraid I can't get started again if I stop!"; and

WHEREAS, his many personal and professional achievements aside, Mr. Fincher is most appreciative of the love, companionship, and support he receives from his beautiful bride of nearly sixty years, Bette Flo (Morgan) Fincher; their three treasured children, daughters, Kaul Morgan (Fincher) Bluestone (born December 2, 1952) and Margaret Alice (Fincher) Kilgrow (February 8, 1954), and son, Representative Henry Dawson Fincher (April 3, 1969); and two generations of grandchildren, Britt Allen Kilgrow (born June 30, 1980) and Katherine Morgan Fincher (born June 16, 2000); and

WHEREAS, we wish to grasp this golden opportunity to specially recognize one of Tennessee's most outstanding citizens on this very special occasion; 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 congratulate Kaul Esmer Fincher, a talented football player, a courageous soldier, an excellent teacher, and a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, on the celebration of his eighty-fifth birthday and extend to him our best wishes for much continued success and happiness in the years to come.

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