

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 408

By Turner M

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Duren Cheek, longtime Capitol Hill journalist.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Duren Cheek, an excellent journalist who possessed an institutional knowledge of Nashville and Capitol Hill; and

WHEREAS, as a new graduate of the University of Tennessee's journalism school, from which he had received Student of the Year honors, Duren Cheek joined United Press International (UPI) in 1959, and spent the next thirty years serving the organization with loyalty and ability; he would ultimately serve UPI as Tennessee bureau chief and regional director for twenty-seven states; and

WHEREAS, as noted by former *Tennessean* editor, Frank Sutherland, Mr. Cheek's "fierce loyalty and keen competitive nature perfectly complemented his fine editing and reporting skills"; and

WHEREAS, Duren Cheek truly reveled in "beating" UPI's arch-rival, Associated Press, to stories, no matter how big or small, during a career that spanned dozens of major stories, including the death of World War I hero, Sergeant Alvin C. York; the trial of Teamster boss, Jimmy Hoffa; the death of Elvis Presley; and the ouster and trial of former Tennessee governor, Ray Blanton; and

WHEREAS, a truly gifted journalist, Mr. Cheek was equally adept at dictating a story perfectly, word for word, over the telephone, and at taking dictation over the telephone and transforming a young reporter's disjointed account into fluid prose; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Duren Cheek joined *The Tennessean* as a political reporter and was active in the Capitol Hill Press corps until his retirement in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Tom Humphrey, Dean of the Capitol Hill Press Corps, has said of his good friend: "Duren was a mentor to dozens of young newsmen and newswomen and friend to

countless others of many different political and personal persuasions; he was blessed with a rich sense of humor and a knack for sharing it.”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cheek, often known by his initials “D.C.” and often referring to friends as “sport model,” was an avid golfer and fisherman who maintained a cheerful disposition even under sometimes trying circumstances; and

WHEREAS, he was devoted to his profession and worked to promote journalism in many different capacities: he helped found and participated in the Society of Professional Journalists’ (SPJ) annual Gridiron Show, in which the media spoofed national, state, and local political and business personalities, and he helped found the Duffer’s Open, an annual golf tournament to benefit the SPJ Middle Tennessee Chapter’s scholarship fund for aspiring journalists; and

WHEREAS, a native of Mountain City, Tennessee, Mr. Cheek is survived by his loving wife of fifty-one years, Beverly; their daughter, Michelle; their son, Jeff; and their grandchildren, Jonathan and Lauren Cheek; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, Clayton Duren Cheek and Clara Brookshire Cheek; and his son, Anthony (Tony) Cheek; and

WHEREAS, Duren Cheek leaves behind an indelible legacy of journalistic excellence; consummate professionalism; and unwavering loyalty to his employers and colleagues; and

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

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory and celebrate the life of Duren Cheek, reflecting fondly upon his singular career in journalism with United Press International and *The Tennessean*.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and many friends of Duren Cheek.

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