

HOUSE RESOLUTION 190

By Hill M

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Juanita Ruetz of Jonesborough.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Juanita Ruetz, a gifted singer and musician, inspirational music and choral teacher, and dedicated public servant whose fingerprints are prominent on numerous community projects and events in Northeast Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz learned to play piano from her Aunt Mae when she was only five; she excelled at the instrument and, despite her youth, was soon in demand as an accompanist in churches and at the Washington County Singing Convention; and

WHEREAS, for nearly fifty years, Mrs. Ruetz taught piano and choral music, both privately and in the public school systems of Norfolk, Virginia, Johnson City, and Washington County; as a private teacher, she led the Hayworth Music Club, which was comprised of some of the area's finest young piano students; and

WHEREAS, an honors graduate of Jonesborough High School and East Tennessee State College, she studied voice under several outstanding teachers; she often jokingly reminded her students that they must try a little harder, as "God has perfect pitch"; and

WHEREAS, a former member of the Johnson City Symphony Orchestra board of directors, Mrs. Ruetz was also a former member of, and always affectionate toward, Jonesborough's Schubert Club; and

WHEREAS, after her retirement, she greatly enjoyed membership in the Johnson City Monday Club/GFWC, for which she helped organize music and visiting performers; and

WHEREAS, encouraged by her aunt and then-Johnson City Mayor May Ross McDowell, Mrs. Ruetz formed a Washington County group in 1967 that eventually became the Tennessee Singing Republicans; with the support of Mayor McDowell, then-Congressman James H.

“Jimmy” Quillen, and then-U.S. Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr., the forty-member ensemble earned distinction as the first non-professional group to perform at a national political convention; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, she organized the Johnson City Centennial Singers, and the year that she spent performing around the region in honor of the city’s 100th birthday with her beloved singing friends was among her most cherished memories; and

WHEREAS, musical groups under Mrs. Ruetz’s direction performed at many diverse events, from the Watauga Academy reunion in Butler to the World’s Fair in Knoxville; she was selected as a Friendship Ambassador by the *Reader’s Digest*/DeWitt Wallace Foundation and led a group of students on a fifteen-day performance tour through Spain; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz directed the music for several productions at the Johnson City Community Theater and was a charter member of the Jonesborough Repertory Theater (JRT); and

WHEREAS, she organized a large choral group that traveled to Nashville to perform *This Then is Tennessee*, the JRT’s first production, for Statehood Days in 1970; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz directed the music for the ninety-member cast of *Toward The Setting Sun*, a local production that helped revive the JRT in 2001; and

WHEREAS, after her retirement, Mrs. Ruetz became a mother once more, this time to the vast family of friends who gathered each summer at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area to produce *Liberty!*, Tennessee’s Official Outdoor Drama; for thirteen years, she worked tirelessly as the one-woman team of researcher; musical, blocking, and script consultant; promoter; and most dedicated supporter; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz was twice selected for *Outstanding Young Women of the Year* and *Who’s Who Among American College Students*; a longtime member of *Who’s Who in American High Schools and Universities*, she was within two classes of finishing her master’s degree in library science; and

WHEREAS, a devout member of King Springs Church of Christ, Mrs. Ruetz was baptized into the Lord’s church at age eleven and remained faithful throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, although she was of modest means, Mrs. Ruetz endeavored to help others as much as she could throughout her life; she supported abused and endangered women by

donating to and raising funds for the Shepherd's Inn; she assisted our veterans through her donations to the Lend Lease (US) Community Fund; she ministered to the needy through her support of Good Samaritan Ministries; and she donated to The Elephant Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz was also deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, this remarkable lady is survived by her daughter, Damaris Ruetz; her son, Jon Ruetz; several cousins, including Margaret Anne Berry, Dr. Joyce Potter, Gary Potter, Ronnie Potter, Gina Delaney, Susan Potter, Sharon Bowers, Mickey Deason, Janet G. McKee, Alpha Bridger, Lowell Greene, Steve Greene, Rick Storey, Elijah Berry, and Marlee Berry; and her lifelong friends she considered to be sisters, Elizabeth Maden and Joyce Dean Garrison; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ruetz was preceded in death by her parents, Spencer and Minnie Greene Potter; her husband of forty-three years, Gerhard G. Ruetz; her beloved uncle and aunt, Roscoe and Ina Mae Potter; and an infant sister, Dorthey Ann; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly remember the life of this exceptional woman who molded several generations of young people through music; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we celebrate the bountiful life and honor the memory of Juanita Ruetz, reflecting fondly upon her enduring legacy as a musician, teacher, and public servant who will be greatly missed by her community.

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

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