

HOUSE RESOLUTION 73

By Thompson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of George Klein of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this legislative body were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Memphis music legend George Klein; and

WHEREAS, George Klein was an instrumental figure in the history of the City of Memphis music; born in Memphis on October 8, 1935, he enjoyed a media career that spanned sixty years and a multitude of roles and influences; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Humes High School, where he served as senior class president, he received his degree in marketing from the University of Memphis and played an integral role in the cultivation of Memphis's reputation as a music industry powerhouse; and

WHEREAS, George Klein began his career as a protégé of pioneering disc jockey Dewey Phillips, working first in Arkansas before accepting a position at WMC in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, he was credited as being a pioneer, finding new music and sounds during the early years of rock 'n' roll and bringing those artists to the forefront of music culture; he gave early exposure to Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jackie Wilson, Willie John, Rufus Thomas, and, famously, Elvis Presley, among many others; and

WHEREAS, George Klein was a close friend of Elvis Presley for thirty years, having met him at Humes High School in 1948; he traveled with the singer and appeared in *Jailhouse Rock* and several other Elvis films, and Mr. Presley was the best man at Mr. Klein's wedding in 1970; and

WHEREAS, George Klein spent sixteen years as a disc jockey, television host, program director, and public relations head at WHBQ Radio and TV in Memphis; he hosted the popular teen music program "Talent Party," which aired from 1964 to 1973; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Klein was inducted into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame in November 2018; his fingerprints can be found throughout the history of rock 'n' roll: he hosted Johnny Cash's radio debut; booked the first African-American artists to play live on Memphis television, including Fats Domino, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, and Sam Cooke; introduced the Beatles at their 1966 show at the Coliseum; and, through his connections, hosted the annual George Klein Christmas Charity Show for more than four decades; and

WHEREAS, he became an executive with the Horseshoe Casino in Tunica, Mississippi, while continuing his broadcasting career, hosting both the internationally broadcast "George Klein Show" on Sirius/XM Satellite Radio and the talk show "Memphis Sounds with George Klein" on WYPL-TV; in 2010, he published a memoir about his friendship with Elvis Presley, *Elvis: My Best Man*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Klein is survived by his loving wife of thirty-one years, Dara Patterson Klein; and

WHEREAS, George Klein 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 the members of this legislative body should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the life and achievements of George Klein, reflecting on his pioneering influence on Memphis music culture and his commitment to excellence in all his chosen endeavors.

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

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