

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 399

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Tom Hill of Oak Ridge.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Tom Hill, longtime publisher of *The Oak Ridger* and a leader in Tennessee media and the Oak Ridge community for more than half a century; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hill was a man of many talents who played many roles; he was an old-school newspaperman of passion, wit, and wisdom who willingly served as a mentor to his younger colleagues and an unabashed supporter of the Oak Ridge community and its growth and development; and

WHEREAS, a devoted family man, Mr. Hill was also an active volunteer in his community and a natural teacher who strongly supported higher education, especially in the realm of science; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hill's self-proclaimed "love affair" with Oak Ridge began in 1949, when the Atomic Energy Commission contracted with his parents to start a newspaper at the federal project in an effort to normalize the Secret City; and

WHEREAS, Tom Hill first worked at *The Oak Ridger* in the early 1950s before serving four years in the U.S. Army, in which he rose to the rank of second lieutenant; he then spent nearly eight years with newspapers in Florida but returned to *The Oak Ridger* in 1961 as business manager; he was named publisher of the paper in August 1967 and served in that capacity until the newspaper changed ownership on January 1, 1987; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hill was proud of his heritage as the son of a newspaper family and took seriously his role of strengthening Tennessee and this nation through courageous news coverage and open government; during his illustrious tenure as publisher of *The Oak Ridger*, many of its reporters were or later became nationally recognized journalists; he also served the fourth estate as president of the Tennessee Press Association, an incorporator of the

Tennessee Press Foundation, trustee emeritus of the Tennessee Press Foundation, and a board member for the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association; and

WHEREAS, a dynamic civic leader, Mr. Hill served as the president of the Chamber of Commerce and was a founder and the first president of the East Tennessee Economic Council; he was a longtime volunteer with the United Way, chairing many campaigns over the years, headed the Oak Ridge Community Foundation, and served on the board of the East Tennessee Community Foundation; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1970s, he helped arrange a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly in Oak Ridge at the new American Museum of Science and Energy; he successfully advocated for the location of the Clinch River breeder reactor project in Oak Ridge, which generated jobs and created economic opportunities for the community, and he was instrumental in the development of the Martin Marietta Industrial Park; and

WHEREAS, an avid athlete who enjoyed swimming, biking, walking, and tennis, Mr. Hill persuaded the Tennessee Valley Authority to invest in the Melton Hill Lake racing course, which decision ultimately brought Olympic rowing to Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, he was a zealous supporter of postsecondary education for all, and his advocacy resulted in a permanent campus of Roane State Community College being located in Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, Tom Hill and his sister generously endowed a professorship in science writing at the University of Tennessee; for three decades, the Science Communication Program has trained science writers, many of whom now occupy prominent positions at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, throughout the country, and abroad; an annual free public lecture series is also part of the program; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hill taught hundreds, if not thousands, of Oak Ridgers to swim and become lifeguards as a volunteer American Red Cross swim instructor for twenty-five years; he also served as chairman of water safety for the Red Cross and with his wife, Joan O'Steen, was active in dog obedience training; with his wife serving as head coach, he was assistant coach for the First United Methodist Church softball team for which their daughters played shortstop and second base and their son served as bat boy; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of The College of William and Mary, Mr. Hill had been honored by the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Oak Ridge Rotary Club, and Oak Ridge Sertoma Club with their highest awards; and

WHEREAS, Tom Hill is survived by his wife of nearly sixty-three years, Joan O'Steen; three children, all of whom are attorneys, Kathryn Hill (Jeff Sherman), Jennifer Hill (Paul Baldauf), and Jeffrey Hill (Michele Johnson); and grandchildren, Lauren and Emma Glaser, Max Sherman, Billie Joan Hill Baldauf, and Thomas, James, and Henry Hill; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, Alfred and Julia Gontrum Hill, and sister, Mary Frances Hill Holton; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional journalist, public servant, and human being who was beloved by his fellow citizens of Oak Ridge; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Tom Hill, reflecting fondly upon his indelible legacy as the publisher of *The Oak Ridger* and his many valuable contributions to the growth and prosperity of Oak Ridge as a civic leader, volunteer, and family man.

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

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