

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 400

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of James Edward "Ed" Westcott of Oak Ridge.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of James Edward "Ed" Westcott, the only photographer allowed to document the Manhattan Project; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott passed away on the very day an exhibition of his photographs titled *HerStory: A Photography Exhibition of Women in the Secret City* opened at the new Oak Ridge History Museum and less than a week after he appeared at the grand opening of that museum and took photos of the ribbon-cutting himself; and

WHEREAS, as a teenager during the Great Depression, Ed Westcott acquired a camera and mastered the art of photography with the encouragement of his parents; he received his training from the Photo Craft Studio, Shadow Art Studio, and an internship with the National Youth Administration and worked for a time as a wedding photographer; and

WHEREAS, at the age of fourteen, he photographed his first President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, as his motorcade passed through the streets of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, in 1942, Mr. Westcott joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a photographer in the Nashville District; and

WHEREAS, just shy of his twenty-first birthday, the Corps transferred him to Oak Ridge to photograph the construction-site process at the Secret City as the twenty-ninth employee and chief photographer of the Manhattan Project team; by the age of twenty-three, he had amassed more than 15,000 photographs of the project; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott thus created the main visual record of the construction and operation of the Oak Ridge production facilities and of civilian life in the enclosed community in

its early days; he also provided photos for the residential community's weekly newspaper, the *Oak Ridge Journal*, from 1943-1948; and

WHEREAS, his work chronicled the life and times of the tens of thousands of men and women who worked on the Manhattan Project with accuracy and compassion and captured the essence of this pioneering city with his artist's eye; and

WHEREAS, some of his best-known photographs feature people engaged in their normal day-to-day lives, providing context for modern viewers of 1940s American culture; in 1945, Mr. Westcott captured a crowd of Oak Ridgers gathered to celebrate news of the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott possessed an inherent artistic skill with a camera, and many of his photographs go well beyond merely documenting a place and time to tell a comprehensive story; and

WHEREAS, nearly every book and magazine and newspaper article about the Manhattan Project includes the photography of Ed Westcott; his work, which captured vivid moments in American history, has literally been viewed all over the world; and

WHEREAS, according to local historians, the story of the Manhattan Project would have been lost without the work of Mr. Westcott, as his photographs helped secure the Secret City's rightful place in history and science; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott's photographs documented not only the development of the atomic bomb but ongoing research that continued after the war; as an employee of the post-war Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), he served as chief of the Still Picture Section, Division of Public Information, at AEC headquarters, where he established the world's largest library of more than 10,000 energy-related still pictures, color slides, audio broadcasts of tapes, and other visual aids and added captions to this vast collection; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott photographed the White House signing ceremonies of the creation of the Department of Energy and the swearing in ceremony of Dr. James Schlesinger as Secretary of Energy in 1977; and

WHEREAS, after retiring in that same year, he returned to Oak Ridge but from time to time served as a special project consultant and photographer for the Department of Energy's various missions in the city; and

WHEREAS, in addition to FDR, Mr. Westcott photographed seven other U.S. presidents, including John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, the National Archives in Washington, D.C., holds more than 15,000 of Westcott's film negatives, and, in Oak Ridge, exhibitions of his iconic photographs are in place at the American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge History Museum, and Y-12 History Center and appear in many local offices and businesses; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, with the help of his children, Ed Westcott fulfilled his dream by publishing, through the Images of America series, a book of his favorite photographs, titled *Oak Ridge*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Westcott's important work and indelible legacy were once again recognized in 2017 when he was nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom; the nomination credited him with creating "a timeless record of this unique period in our country's history" by using "his gift of photography to chronicle daily life and work in the Secret City"; and

WHEREAS, an amateur radio enthusiast, he was a charter member of several Oak Ridge organizations, including the Elks Club, '43 Club, Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, and Oak Ridge Council for Retarded Children, which he served as treasurer; he was also a member of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, Ed Westcott is survived by his children, James "Jim" Westcott, Jr., and wife, Vickilynne, David Westcott and wife, Anita, William Westcott, John Westcott and wife, Danielle, and Emily Hunnicutt and husband, Don Hunnicutt; grandchildren, Michael Westcott, Lori Westcott, Andrew Westcott, Philip Westcott, Mary Westcott, Kathy Jennings, Paul Hunnicutt, Daniel Westcott, and Clara Mount; and great-grandchildren, Vaughn Westcott, Bonam Westcott, Kaitlyn Tau, Mary Jennings, Natalie Jennings, Audrey Jennings, Laura Jennings, Scotty Hunnicutt, Madison Hunnicutt, Orian Mount, Maverick Mount, and Nicolai Westcott; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his loving wife of fifty-five years, Esther Seigenthaler Westcott; parents, Jamie Rupert Westcott and Lucille Green Westcott; and brother, Hugh "Buddy" Westcott; and

WHEREAS, Ed Westcott was truly a lion in his field, and his life and iconic work as a photographer should be appropriately commemorated; 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 James Edward "Ed" Westcott, reflecting fondly upon his groundbreaking work in photographing the construction of the Secret City in Oak Ridge and the early days of the Manhattan Project, thus capturing an important period in American history as it happened.

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

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