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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 19 of the Second Extraordinary Session
By Womack

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Retired United States
Marine Corps Brigadier General Austin Conner
Shofner, of Shelbyville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of a Tennessean who served this nation with the utmost courage, dedication, integrity, and ability: Brigadier General Austin Conner Shofner, U.S.M.C., Retired; and

WHEREAS, born March 3, 1916, the son of Austin Williams Shofner and Rachel Conner Shofner, Austin Conner Shofner was raised in his father's ancestral home of Bedford County and grew up to be the man who single-handedly changed the fate of World War II and saved thousands of American and Allied lives; and

WHEREAS, Austin Conner Shofner distinguished himself as a gentleman, scholar, and athlete at the University of Tennessee, where he lettered in football and wrestling; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Shofner served as President of UT's chapter of the Kappa Alpha Order Fraternity until his graduation in 1937; and

WHEREAS, at the onset of the United States' involvement in World War II, Captain Shofner was serving as a company commander in the 4th Marine Regiment in defense of the Philippines, and upon the surrender of Corregidor, Shofner endured eleven months as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese; and

WHEREAS, on April 4, 1943, Mr. Shofner led the first, and only, successful escape party from a Japanese prison camp; his escape party consisted of eleven other soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines; and

WHEREAS, although Mr. Shofner remained in the Philippines for another six months, leading Filipino guerrillas against the Japanese, members of his escape party returned to the United States and revealed the atrocities being committed against American POWs and the citizens of the American Commonwealth of the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, through Mr. Shofner and his escape party, the government and people of the United States learned for the first time of the Bataan Death March, where ten thousand American and Filipino soldiers died at the hands of the Japanese, and of the brutal suffering, torture, and death of men in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps. By the end of the war, 40% of the prisoners of war held by the Japanese had succumbed to torture, starvation, and disease; and

WHEREAS, because of the information brought home by Mr. Shofner and his compatriots, the United States and her Allies were compelled to alter their strategy in World War II. Operations were developed to take the war directly to the Japanese homeland. The war in the Pacific was now fought with the same priority as the war in Europe. This expedient strategy, brought about by the urgency to resolve the war against Japan, shortened the war, and saved countless thousands of lives; and

WHEREAS, the very epitome of the dedicated and judicious officer, General Shofner returned to the Pacific Theater in 1944 to command Marine battalions in the battles for Peleliu and Okinawa. During the campaign to liberate the Philippines, Shofner was assigned to assist the forces of General Douglas MacArthur; and

WHEREAS, through his personal reconnaissance behind the lines and his liaison with guerrilla leaders, A.C. Shofner rescued 500 American and Allied prisoners slated for death at the Japanese prison camp at Cabanatuan; and

WHEREAS, for his service in World War II, Brig. Gen. Shofner was awarded the Army's Distinguished Service Cross, the Legion of Merit with V for valor, two Silver Stars, the Bronze Star with V, two Purple Hearts, the Chinese Cloud and Banner, and numerous campaign and service medals; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, Mr. Shofner retired from the United States Marine Corps as a Brigadier General and returned home to Bedford County, where he remained a highly respected and cherished member of the Shelbyville community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Shofner was the Founder and President of Midstate Finance Co., Inc. and Peoples Finance Co, Inc., and the Founder and member of the Board of Directors of the Plateau Insurance Company and Citizens State Bank of Marion County; and

WHEREAS, General Shofner also contributed his time and immeasurable talents as a member of the Rotary Club, River Bend Country Club, Sons of the American Revolution, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and 1st Marine Division Association (Shofner Unit); and

WHEREAS, A.C. Shofner was an active and devout member of the Shofner's Lutheran Church, where he faithfully served his Lord and Savior for many years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Shofner was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, he enjoyed the loving companionship of his devoted wife, the late Kathleen King Shofner, and was the proud father of five sons, four of whom survive today: William E., Martin K., R. Stewart, and Michael M. Shofner; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Shofner was the doting grandfather of seven grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Austin Conner Shofner 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 this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and fine Tennessean who truly represented the best and brightest this state and nation have to offer; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Retired United States Marine Corps Brigadier

General Austin Conner Shofner, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of General Shofner.

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