

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 96

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY OF RETIRED MISSISSIPPI SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE ROY NOBLE LEE.

WHEREAS, it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1 that "To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under the Heaven," and as such, the immaculate author and finisher of our soul's destiny summoned the mortal presence of retired Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Noble Lee on January 21, 2015, to rest eternally; and

WHEREAS, Judge Lee spent his wonderful and fulfilled life in Forest, Mississippi, where he excelled in academia throughout high school at the Forest Public Schools, and during his tenure at Mississippi College in Jackson, Mississippi, he was accomplished in sports and academics, was elected president of the Student Government and graduated with distinction in 1938; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating with distinction from Cumberland University School of Law, Judge Lee was admitted to The Mississippi Bar in 1939, and he dedicated his life to upholding

justice and serving the citizens of Mississippi as an attorney and judge; and

WHEREAS, Roy's love, chivalry and affection pierced the heart of the energetic and joyful Sue Epting Lee, who thought he was the "greatest man on earth," and the duo exchanged the nuptials of holy matrimony on May 18, 1941, in Forest, Mississippi, and the two completed their family unit with the addition of five happy children, who considered their parents to be the best any children could have; and

WHEREAS, friends were infinite and new memories were constant for the Lees, as the doors to their home were always open, and love, respect and laughter radiated from inside, beckoning family, friends, and other guests, who considered the Lee home a favorite destination, to join in their celebration of life; and

WHEREAS, as a lawyer, District Attorney, Circuit Court Judge and later Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court from 1950 to 1965, serving as Chief Justice from 1964 to 1965, the late Percy Mercer Lee set examples of keen intellect, high integrity and public service for his son, and while he was a strong influence on Roy's decisions and exposed Roy to the law, Justice Percy Lee never pressured his son to become a lawyer, but overflowing with an unwavering desire to learn and practice the law from the age of nine, a young Roy Noble Lee actually tried his first criminal case when he was just fifteen despite having no law degree, no legal training, and no license; and

WHEREAS, when the young judge was sitting in a Brandon courtroom and a man was to plead his case without the help of a trained legal professional, Roy's inability to tolerate such an injustice caused him to jump up off the bench, begging to strengthen the man's odds, and because his fervent desire for truth and justice obviously emanated from the depths of his soul, the judge allowed the representation and a brief fifteen minute conference; and

WHEREAS, despite his lack of a formal legal education, young Justice Lee returned to a full courtroom and began the trial, and after a brilliant performance, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and on the ride back to Forest, Justice Percy Lee proudly predicted his young son's future when he turned to him and stated, "Son, you're going to make a lawyer"; and

WHEREAS, from 1942 to 1944, Roy Noble protected and defended the United States of America, with fidelity, bravery and integrity, as a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent working for Director J. Edgar Hoover on various matters throughout the nation, but as relations between the United States and the hostile Axis powers diminished and tensions ran high, causing Lady Liberty to engage the fanatical regime in World War II, Roy Noble chose to hang up his badge and tie and join the ranks of an elect fraternity of soldiers who patriotically risked their lives to protect the freedoms all Americans enjoy; and

WHEREAS, after his service in the South Pacific aboard the Destroyer U.S.S. Burrows, Roy Noble was honorably discharged on May 4, 1946, and he returned to his beloved Forest, his loving family, his busy law practice, and his favorite hunting and fishing places, electing to savor the flavors of fried blue gill brim, rather than the best steak seared in a New York restaurant; and

WHEREAS, with his father's honorable career and strong family background keeping him on the straight and narrow path and inspiring him to achieve greatness, in 1951, Justice Lee was elected as the District Attorney for the 8th Judicial District, where he served from 1951 to 1964, and he was elected Circuit Judge for the 8th Judicial District in 1975 and served on that bench until 1976; and

WHEREAS, when Justice Lee was elected to the Mississippi Supreme Court in 1976, he justly ruled the citizens of Mississippi until January 1, 1993, serving as the High Court's Chief Justice from 1987 until his retirement on January 4, 1993, which made Roy Noble Lee and Percy Mercer Lee the only father and son to serve as Chief Justices of the Mississippi Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, Justice Lee left a legacy of honor, character, and integrity on the judicial branch of the Magnolia State, and during his term on the Mississippi Supreme Court, his visionary leadership led to the creation of the Mississippi Court of Appeals and the Administrative Office of the Courts; and

WHEREAS, after his retirement, Chief Justice Lee was "of Counsel" for Lee & Lee Attorneys, enjoying conversation with former clients and friends, and he remained Chairman of the Board of Ott & Lee Funeral Home; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, the State of Mississippi experienced the competent and unparalleled trial skills of 79 year old Justice Lee for the last time, as he tried his final lawsuit in federal court and successfully obtained a substantial jury verdict, the culmination of an overwhelmingly victorious and prestigious legal career; and

WHEREAS, he received many honors and recognitions throughout his life for his extraordinary career and vast legal repertoire, including Cumberland Law School Alumnus of the Year in 1992, Mississippi College Alumnus of the Year in 1995, an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Mississippi College and the Forest Chamber of Commerce 1996 Citizen of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Justice Lee was active in various professional and social organizations including the Mississippi Bar Association, the American Bar Association, the American Judicature Society, the Trial Lawyers Association, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Forest Lions Club and the Former FBI Agents Society, and he also served on the board of Trustees of Mississippi College; and

WHEREAS, an avid hunter who strongly felt that to truly live and experience the wonders of life, a person must listen to the hushed sounds of a rippling creek and witness the scurry of

animals beneath the tall, mighty Mississippi oaks, Justice Lee loved the great outdoors almost as much as he loved the law, as he could often be found stalking his next prey in the woods while wearing his work shirt and tie; and

WHEREAS, few individuals have lived to match Justice Lee's long and remarkable career, which was spent honoring and upholding the law and his responsibility to his clients because he absolutely believed that the courts belonged to the people and always sought to do his utmost to merit the confidence those people reposed in him; and

WHEREAS, Justice Lee's legacy will survive not only in the cases, courtrooms, and with fellow jurists, but it also will endure in the hearts and lives of his family and all those who experienced his influence and excellence; and

WHEREAS, the tears of those who mourn Justice Lee's passing are replaced with that peace which surpasses all understanding with the blessed assurance that he has traversed the river of life to reunite with those who answered God's summons to life eternal and now beckon his arrival to the celestial shores of Heaven's grandeur, including: his wife, Sue Epting Lee; son, Steve Lee; brothers, Percy Mercer Lee, Jr., James Walter Lee and Dr. David Lee; and sisters, Annie Laurie Lee James and Jane Lee Anderson; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of Justice Lee's memory will continue to refresh the hearts and fond memories of his beloved survivors:

sons, Thomas D. (Gail) Lee and Roy Noble (Paula) Lee, Jr.; daughters, Martha Noble Lee (John) Hassell and Susie Lee (Zach) Hederman; daughter-in-law, Tammy Dennis Lee; grandchildren, Jennifer Cummins (Coleman), Stuart Hederman, J. Hassell (Emily), Lee (Kris) Tiper, Jon Dray Lee, Lindsey Lee, Summers Lee, Robbie Ann Lee, Roy Noble Lee III, Joseph Jones and Jonathan Jones; great-grandchildren, Davis Cummins, Emilee Cummins, Brooks Hassell and Lee Alston Hassell; brothers, Edward Lee and Judge Tom Stewart Lee, Sr.; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and other relatives and friends; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to acknowledge the selflessness and benevolence of such a humanitarian and affectionate individual of esteemed caliber as retired Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Noble Lee:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby mourn the loss and commemorate the life and extraordinary legacy of retired Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Noble Lee, and extend sincere and deepest sympathy to his family and friends upon his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to the family of Chief Justice Roy Noble Lee and to the

members of the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 18, 2015.



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
March 24, 2015.



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE