

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 42

BY SENATOR CARTER

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Blaine S. Kern, "Mr. Mardi Gras".

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the passing of Blaine S. Kern on June 25, 2020, at the age of ninety-three; and

WHEREAS, Blaine Kern was born in Algiers on May 17, 1927, and at twelve years of age, began helping his father, Roy, a sign painter; and

WHEREAS, Blaine Kern spent his teenage years working on tugboats and shrimping on troll boats; and

WHEREAS, he and his father painted their first Mardi Gras float together in 1932; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, when Mr. Kern was eighteen years old, he was drafted into World War II as it was ending, and after spending one year in Korea, he returned home to find his mother ill and in need of an operation; and

WHEREAS, to cover his mother's medical expenses, in 1947, Mr. Kern painted a mural in a hospital that caught the eye of Dr. Henry LaRocca of Algiers; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaRocca, who was the captain of the Krewe of Alla, invited Mr. Kern to design, build, and paint floats for his krewe; and

WHEREAS, he was paid three thousand dollars to paint ten floats for his very first parade, and the parade was a huge success; and

WHEREAS, in that same year, Blaine Kern Artists was founded; and

WHEREAS, after such great fortune with the Krewe of Alla, the captain of Rex hired Mr. Kern to build its parade floats; and

WHEREAS, he traveled extensively to France, Spain, and Italy to study under the world's leading float and costume makers and found tremendous inspiration in the European style of float making; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to New Orleans, Mr. Kern's success as a legendary float maker was cemented in history when he invented the double deck float, multiple unit floats, and animated floats; and

WHEREAS, because of great public interest in float making, in 1984, Mr. Kern created and opened Mardi Gras World as a "behind the scenes" tourist attraction that annually draws more than one hundred fifty thousand visitors from around the world; and

WHEREAS, through his founding of Blaine Kern Artists and Mardi Gras World, Mr. Kern single-handedly created thousands of jobs in the city of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, he left an indelible mark on the 1984 World's Fair in having created widely recognized pieces including its entrance, the Wonderwall, and the gondola; and

WHEREAS, from 1957 to 2007, Mr. Kern served as the captain of the Krewe of Alla; and

WHEREAS, while Blaine Kern was instrumental in the evolution of the New Orleans Mardi Gras and the development of over eighty krewes worldwide, opening Mardi Gras to everyone was what Mr. Kern cherished as his proudest achievement; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kern was recognized for his achievements by the city of New Orleans, the state of Louisiana, hundreds of charitable organizations, and Holy Cross University, which has named its library in his honor; and

WHEREAS, he was one of the most significant individuals in the entire history of the celebration of Mardi Gras and was deservedly known far and wide as "Mr. Mardi Gras"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kern was one of Louisiana's finest sons, a man who loved his community and whose accomplishments have left an indelible mark upon his community, state, and nation, as well as the world; and

WHEREAS, while his death has left a tremendous void in the New Orleans community and a sense of loss in the citizens whose lives he touched, his memory shall live forever in the minds and hearts of all who knew and loved this remarkable gentleman.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the death of Blaine S. Kern, does hereby record for posterity the extraordinary life he lived, and does hereby posthumously express enduring gratitude for his outstanding accomplishments and singular contributions to the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his wife, Holly Kern.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE