

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 779

By Hensley

A RESOLUTION honoring the life of Rodney Leon Brasfield.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is pleased to honor those individuals who distinguish themselves in the arts, bringing great pride to the State of Tennessee and establishing themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy individual was Rodney Leon Brasfield, a successful actor, comedian, and ventriloquist who established himself as one of the Grand Ole Opry's most beloved members and would have marked his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this year; and

WHEREAS, born in Smithville, Mississippi, in 1910, Mr. Brasfield began his career traveling with Bisbee's Dramatic Shows, serving as straight man for his older brother, Lawrence; and

WHEREAS, he nobly served for a year in the Army Air Corps during World War II before returning to the Bisbee Shows and was recruited soon after by George D. Hay for the Grand Ole Opry in 1944; and

WHEREAS, with his trademark baggy suit, battered hat, and rubbery face, Mr. Brasfield soon became the primary comic on the Opry's NBC radio network broadcasts, playing off the show's host, Red Foley; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, Mr. Brasfield teamed with legendary Opry star Minnie Pearl in a "double comedy" act, in which both of them delivered alternating punch lines and neither played the straight man; many of these routines were broadcast on the Opry's ABC television network show in 1955 and 1956; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasfield also often demonstrated his talents as a ventriloquist with his doll, Bocephus, whose name served as the inspiration for Hank Williams's then-infant son, Hank Williams, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasfield had potential for movie stardom as well, having played Andy Griffith's sidekick in *A Face in the Crowd* and contributing to a role in *Country Music Holiday* before his untimely death in 1958; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasfield's remarkable career was honored in 1987, when he was posthumously inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasfield brought his adopted hometown of Hohenwald into the spotlight, often mentioning local restaurant the Snip, Snap, and Bite Café in his act and naming his harmonica the "Hohenwald Flash"; and

WHEREAS, his momentous achievements in the entertainment field aside, Rodney Leon Brasfield was most proud of the love and support of his wife, Eleanor Humphreys, whom he married in 1933; the couple made their home in Hohenwald and their union produced a son, Jimmy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasfield epitomized the spirit and dedication that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly acknowledges and applauds the late Mr. Brasfield's incomparable service in providing entertainment for countless adoring fans; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the life and entertainment legacy of Rodney Leon Brasfield and recognize the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

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