

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1592

By Pody

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Melvin Sloan of Wilson County.

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the members of this General Assembly to recognize those stalwarts of country music culture who are essential to the perpetuation and appreciation of the music and the traditions attendant thereto; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Melvin Sloan, a singer, musician, dancer, square-dance caller, and overall entertainer whose more than seventy years in music have left an indelible mark on the arts throughout Middle Tennessee and beyond; and

WHEREAS, born on March 27, 1940, in a two-room log house on property that is now part of Cedars of Lebanon State Park, Mr. Sloan was brought up in a musical household along with his siblings, Ralph, Nelda, Joyce, and Robbie; his mother, Leona Adams Sloan, taught music in local schools for many years and played piano for Hurricane Baptist Church and Rocky Valley Baptist Church, and his father and maternal aunts were singers; and

WHEREAS, it was no wonder, then, that Melvin Sloan would go on to be a lifelong entertainer; his first radio appearance came in the late 1940s, when he sang a solo on WCOR, and he started leading singing at church when he was thirteen years old; and

WHEREAS, also during his thirteenth year, Mr. Sloan became ill and was put on bed rest for several weeks; this unfortunate circumstance proved auspicious, however, as it was then that his brother, Ralph, brought him a guitar and encouraged him to play; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Sloan did learn to play that guitar, and a year later, he formed a band with three of his classmates at Lebanon High School; he was also a member of the high school band, where he played trombone, and Beverly Padgett, whom he would marry in 1957, played tenor saxophone; and

WHEREAS, the high school band he formed with friends took on a new configuration after graduation, and he and his bandmates performed country and rock 'n' roll music across Middle Tennessee; in the 1960s, he and his mother teamed to sing gospel music across the country, and he later joined the gospel quartet Kingdom Heirs; and

WHEREAS, meanwhile, Ralph Sloan had been establishing himself as a square dance caller and dancer; he and his Tennessee Travelers dance troupe tapped their feet on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry for the first time on July 5, 1952; the elder Sloan brother continued in this role until his last performance, a taping for the television show *Hee Haw*, twenty-eight years later; and

WHEREAS, when Ralph Sloan passed away on March 12, 1980, Melvin Sloan stepped up to fill his shoes; though he had never square danced professionally, he took on the challenge and led the Tennessee Travelers, also known as the Melvin Sloan Dancers, from 1980 until 2002; all told, the Sloan brothers guided square dancers through more than 2,500 appearances on the Grand Ole Opry, never missing a show; and

WHEREAS, during his time at the Opry, Melvin Sloan was taken under the wing of Roy Acuff, who asked him and his fellow dancers to travel to Washington, D.C., and perform for President Ronald Reagan's "Salute to Roy Acuff" at the Kennedy Center in 1983; Mr. Sloan and the Tennessee Travelers shared the bill with Minnie Pearl, the Charlie Daniels Band, Loretta Lynn, Charley Pride, and Tammy Wynette; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sloan also danced in front of the nation on *Hee Haw*, *The Today Show*, and *Nashville Now*, always looking sharp in his performance outfit and maintaining professionalism; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, three years after retiring from the Opry, Melvin Sloan started a country music show at the Wilson County Fair; in the show's second year, sponsors helped build the Fiddlers Grove Opry building, and the Fiddlers Grove Opry, as it is now known,

brought the likes of Jim Ed Brown, Little Jimmy Dickens, Jeannie Seeley, Billy Walker, and others to a Wilson County audience; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sloan coordinated the show for five years before handing over the reins; in a nod to the musical lineage of its founder, the Fiddlers Grove Opry stage was named the Leona A. Sloan Family Stage, in honor of Melvin Sloan's mother; and

WHEREAS, for more than seven decades, Mr. Sloan has been wholly devoted to music and entertainment in Middle Tennessee, and it is most fitting that he be honored for his indelible contributions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we recognize and commend Melvin Sloan of Wilson County for his many contributions to country music culture and arts and entertainment in Tennessee and beyond, extending our best wishes for his continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.