

By: Straus

H.R. No. 402

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Proud Americans celebrated the bicentennial of this  
2 nation in 1976, and this historic event was commemorated in  
3 countless gatherings across the Lone Star State, where citizens  
4 paid tribute to their shared heritage and gave thanks for the  
5 freedoms we continue to enjoy today as Texans; and

6 WHEREAS, Residents of the community of Terrell Hills observed  
7 this momentous occasion with the delivery of a memorable speech by  
8 local citizen R. R. Witt, and his words continue to resonate for  
9 those who still call this small South Texas community home:

10 "Ladies and Gentlemen, Little People and Pets,  
11 All citizens of Terrell Hills assembled here to  
12 express our gratitude for the blessings of 200 years of  
13 prosperity as free and independent people. I am not  
14 competent to adequately express the debt we owe, and  
15 the obligation we have to protect and preserve the  
16 freedoms we now enjoy. Being clumsy with words, I  
17 shall not try. Besides, all 4th of July speeches  
18 through the years, have been nothing more than  
19 oratorical elaboration on what I've already said, and  
20 when they were well done we liked it, and when they  
21 weren't we applauded anyway as a patriotic duty.

22 This being Bicentennial year everyone feels we  
23 should do more. There seem to be no guidelines as to  
24 what to do; just so you do something, and the variety

1 is endless--bumper stickers, ribbon cutting on Mexican  
2 restaurants to Bicentennial sales at the supermarket.  
3 States and cities, however, seem to have somewhat of a  
4 pattern. They recite their rugged beginnings, their  
5 achievements, and what they now have to offer. I shall  
6 follow that format.

7 It's appropriate that we do so because Terrell  
8 Hills' beginning was unique--It was not launched by a  
9 subdivision developer but rather was settled by an  
10 indentured colony, much like those that settled Texas  
11 and our nation. In 1919, Albert Steves, Jr., acting in  
12 the capacity of Moses Austin, organized a group of six  
13 families and three bachelors who wanted to 'emigrate'  
14 from the city and settle in a remote rural area.

15 They selected a 24 acre tract bounded on the  
16 south by Terrell Road, on the North by Garrity Road,  
17 and westward from Eldon Road. At that time from where  
18 we now stand there was nothing northward but open  
19 country with scattered mesquite and huisache trees.  
20 Dr. Terrell agreed to lay a water main and gas line  
21 from New Braunfels Avenue up to the property, and a 50  
22 foot gravel road was arranged. It being an extension  
23 of Elizabeth Road.

24 Each member of this colony signed a contract  
25 dated January 5, 1920, and duly recorded in the County  
26 records, that he would, within 5 years, settle and  
27 build his home within the 24 acre tract. There were

1 some interesting stipulations in the contract, and  
2 some are reminded of how archaic were those  
3 times--just a half century ago. I quote: 'The male  
4 members of this agreement shall be the governing body,  
5 each to have one vote.' Today they would be called male  
6 chauvinists--or something worse. Even their male  
7 control was a tenuous thing. One of the bachelors  
8 dropped out saying he'd given the matter much thought  
9 and decided she didn't want to live there.

10 Then came the building boom of the twenties and  
11 within a decade Terrell Hills was so heavily populated  
12 that the city, by passing an ordinance extended their  
13 boundaries to include us. That was about 1930 when  
14 Chambers was mayor. I don't know how long we were in  
15 the city, but we weren't happy, and when a close city  
16 election came up and the incumbents foresaw a heavy  
17 vote against them from this area, they rescinded the  
18 ordinance. We lost our franchise but regained our  
19 freedom.

20 In 1939 when Maverick was seeking election he  
21 made it known that he would 'take those silk stocking  
22 areas into the city and tax hell out of 'em.' With that  
23 advance notice, and the leadership of Pat Swearingen,  
24 we held a hasty election on March 25th, voted to  
25 incorporate as a separate community and received our  
26 charter as 'Town of Terrell Hills' dated March 31,  
27 1939. Maverick took office June 1st but was powerless

1 to override our charter.

2 In 1945 the city again attempted to take in both  
3 Terrell Hills and Alamo Heights but the courts upheld  
4 the law and would not allow the city to take in an  
5 incorporated township.

6 Then in 1957 when Terrell Hills population  
7 exceeded 5,000 we were eligible for 'Home Rule.' Bill  
8 Matthews took charge and we were chartered as City of  
9 Terrell Hills with all the powers and privileges other  
10 cities enjoy. Bill was elected the first mayor of the  
11 City.

12 Following the format, I have told the early  
13 beginnings of Terrell Hills; its 'struggle for  
14 independence,' and third in the format is 'what we now  
15 have to offer.' I'd say, we have the best managed, the  
16 best governed--and the best neighbors of any community  
17 in this area. What more could we ask!"; and

18 WHEREAS, In observing July 4, 2005, the men, women, and  
19 children of Terrell Hills could once again reflect with justifiable  
20 pride on the rich history of their community and look with  
21 anticipation and optimism to the years that lie ahead; now,  
22 therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas  
24 Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby commend R. R. Witt for his  
25 1976 July 4th address to the citizens of Terrell Hills and extend to  
26 this patriotic community sincere best wishes for the future.