

By: Geren

H.R. No. 427

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A large community of veterans join the family and
2 friends of Dewitt Dodson Harris in mourning the loss of this brave
3 and decent man on June 27, 2005, at the age of 87; and

4 WHEREAS, A native of Wills Point, Mr. Harris joined the Texas
5 National Guard while still in high school; mobilized with his
6 division in November 1940, he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion,
7 131st Field Artillery, 36th Division, which is renowned today as
8 one of the most decorated of all Texas units; and

9 WHEREAS, In November 1941, the 2nd Battalion was shipped to
10 the Philippines, in support of General Douglas MacArthur, and the
11 men passed through Pearl Harbor seven days before it was attacked;
12 diverted to Australia, they spent Christmas 1941 in Brisbane and
13 then embarked for Java, in the Dutch East Indies; on March 8, 1942,
14 the Dutch surrendered Java to invading Japanese forces, and Mr.
15 Harris and his fellow soldiers spent the next 42 months as prisoners
16 of war; and

17 WHEREAS, Subsisting on a cup of rice a day, the men were put
18 to work building the notorious Death Railway through Thailand and
19 Burma, now Myanmar; a fictional account of their ordeal was
20 published as *The Bridge over the River Kwai* in 1954 and made into a
21 film in 1957; during the final year of his captivity, Mr. Harris
22 labored in coal mines in Japan; and

23 WHEREAS, While held a prisoner, Corporal Harris contracted
24 malaria, and by the time of his liberation in August 1945, his

1 weight had dropped to 78 pounds; in spite of the hardships he had
2 endured, his attitude toward his former captors was one of sympathy
3 and forgiveness; and

4 WHEREAS, Following the war, Mr. Harris held a variety of jobs
5 before joining E-Systems; he remained with that company for 16
6 years, working in the parts department and servicing airplanes,
7 until his retirement in 1970; and

8 WHEREAS, A recipient of the Purple Heart, Mr. Harris served
9 as commander of the Disabled American Veterans in Van Zandt County
10 and held lifetime membership in both the Veterans of Foreign Wars
11 and the Sam Russell Post of the American Legion in Wills Point; he
12 also faithfully attended the annual reunions of the Lost Battalion
13 and the U.S.S. *Houston* Association until three years ago, when poor
14 health prevented him from continuing; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Harris was married to Alta Vae Harris, who
16 passed away in 1978; he later married Helen Harris, who survives
17 him; and

18 WHEREAS, Through his love of country, courageous fortitude,
19 and generosity of spirit, Mr. Harris earned the deep respect and
20 lasting gratitude of every American, and it is a privilege to honor
21 the memory of this admirable son of the Lone Star State; now,
22 therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
24 Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby pay special tribute to the
25 life of Dewitt Dodson Harris and extend sincere sympathy to the
26 members of his family: to his wife, Helen Harris; to his children,
27 Danny Harris and Stefani Curtis; to his stepchildren, Dave Lewis

1 and Anna Green; to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren; to
2 his brothers, Burnard Harris and James Harris; and to his other
3 relatives and friends; and, be it further

4 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
5 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
6 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Dewitt
7 Dodson Harris.