

By: Hunter

H.R. No. 86

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, The certain knowledge of a life well lived may  
2 temper the profound sadness brought by the passing of Walter Fred  
3 Johnson, Sr., of Abilene on December 21, 2004, at the age of 88; and

4           WHEREAS, Mr. Johnson was born on November 15, 1916, in the Rio  
5 Grande Valley, and throughout his rich life, the Lone Star spirit of  
6 hard work and independence guided him to leave a lasting mark on the  
7 Texas banking industry and the Abilene area; and

8           WHEREAS, After graduating from Lyford High School, Mr.  
9 Johnson began his career in banking as a bookkeeper with the First  
10 National Bank of Raymondville; his career was temporarily  
11 interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, and this Army Air Corps  
12 bombardier flew 44 combat missions in the European Theater, earning  
13 the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism; and

14           WHEREAS, In 1954, Mr. Johnson arrived in his adopted home of  
15 Abilene, where he became the youngest president of Farmers and  
16 Merchants National Bank, later renamed First National Bank of  
17 Abilene; over the next two decades, he led that venerable  
18 institution with great wisdom and vision, and many credit his  
19 steady guidance for keeping the Texas banking industry on solid  
20 footing during the postwar boom of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; and

21           WHEREAS, This respected civic leader kept abreast of local  
22 business affairs and encouraged prosperity in the community as  
23 president of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce; he also served as vice  
24 president and director of the Texas Research League, campaign chair

1 for the Abilene Intercollegiate School of Nursing, and chair of an  
2 important Taylor County citizen's committee that championed the  
3 building of Abilene's city hall, civic center, airport, and zoo;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. Johnson shared his vast knowledge and expertise  
6 with his colleagues as president of the Texas Bankers Association  
7 and as a member of the National Advisory Committee of Comptroller of  
8 the Currency, and he committed time to helping the less fortunate as  
9 campaign chair of the Abilene United Way and as a member of the  
10 board of the Hendrick Home for Children; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1973, Mr. Johnson helped to establish First  
12 Abilene Bankshares, now known as First Financial Bankshares, a  
13 multibank holding company; he served as board chairman until his  
14 retirement in 1986 and remained on the board until 1992; and

15 WHEREAS, The keen business acumen and dedication  
16 demonstrated by this notable Texan earned him a host of accolades,  
17 including recognition as the 1958 Abilene Citizen of the Year and as  
18 the most-influential Abilenian, as well as honors from the United  
19 Way and the local chamber of commerce; and

20 WHEREAS, Above all else, Mr. Johnson was devoted to his large  
21 and close-knit family, and his time on this earth was greatly  
22 enriched by his inspirational partnership with his wife of 60  
23 years, Virginia; and

24 WHEREAS, Those fortunate enough to have known Walter Johnson  
25 will long remember him not only as one of Abilene's most influential  
26 businessmen and civic leaders but also as a true Texas gentleman;  
27 although he is greatly missed, his legacy lives on in the

1 immeasurable impact of his many contributions to the city of  
2 Abilene; now, therefore, be it

3         RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas  
4 Legislature hereby pay special tribute to the life of Walter Fred  
5 Johnson, Sr., and extend deepest sympathy to the members of his  
6 family: to his wife, Virginia Pearce Johnson; to his sons, Walter  
7 Fred Johnson, Jr., and his wife, Susan, and Larry Chris Johnson and  
8 his wife, Anne; to his grandchildren, Brian Johnson and his wife,  
9 Gail, and Eric, Kevin, Lila, and Elizabeth Johnson; to his  
10 great-grandson, Alan Johnson; to his brother, Calvin Johnson and  
11 his wife, Irene; to his sisters-in-law, Marion and Gwen Johnson;  
12 and to his other relatives and many friends; and, be it further

13         RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
14 prepared for the members of his family and that when the Texas House  
15 of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Walter  
16 Fred Johnson, Sr.