

By: McCall

H.C.R. No. 123

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The passing of Martin Donald on February 10, 2007,
2 at the age of 86, drew to a close the life of a truly remarkable man
3 who narrowly escaped the Holocaust and went on to become a respected
4 businessman in America and to help establish the Dallas Holocaust
5 Museum; and

6 WHEREAS, Born Martin Dorffmann on May 2, 1920, in Berlin,
7 Germany, he was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family, the eldest
8 child of Robert and Freida Dorffmann; as a youth, he had to quit
9 school to help support his family after Adolf Hitler's rise to
10 power; although governmental policies became increasingly severe,
11 Martin's father, a decorated World War I veteran, was reluctant to
12 leave his homeland, believing the Nazi regime would soon come to an
13 end; Martin Dorffmann spent several years working under a mentor in
14 the fur trade before his family applied for immigration documents;
15 in January 1939, he and his cousin, Leo, the only ones to obtain
16 papers, were forced to leave their family behind and escape to
17 England, correctly fearing they would never see them again; at the
18 age of 19, he had to begin a new life in a strange land; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Dorffmann endured more prejudice in his adopted
20 home when he and other refugees were shipped to Canada as part of
21 Britain's anti-German scare; two months later, he was returned to
22 England with an apology and went on to enlist in the British Army,
23 becoming a warrant officer in intelligence due to his fluency in
24 both German and English; it was during this time that, acting on

1 advice from the army, he changed his last name from Dorffmann to
2 Donald to avoid further persecution if he were to be captured by the
3 Germans; and

4 WHEREAS, Sent to Germany with his military unit, Mr. Donald
5 was devastated by the atrocities he witnessed, including two
6 concentration camps; after the war, he traveled to Berlin in search
7 of his family, only to find that his parents and sister, as well as
8 many other relatives, had perished in the camps; all told, he lost
9 more than 40 family members to the Holocaust; and

10 WHEREAS, During the Allied occupation, Mr. Donald was
11 assigned to Hamburg, where he was instrumental in locating and
12 detaining many former Nazi officers, including Foreign Minister
13 Joachim von Ribbentrop; he was asked to reenlist when his term ended
14 but instead followed the advice of his good friend, Ann Spiesman, a
15 fellow German refugee whom he had met in England, and he
16 subsequently returned to civilian life; drawing on the training he
17 received as a youth, he started a fur company in London, and on June
18 15, 1947, he and Ms. Spiesman were married; and

19 WHEREAS, Later that same year, Mr. and Mrs. Donald immigrated
20 with her parents to the United States aboard the *Queen Mary*; in
21 Brooklyn, he worked for his uncle's fur business before cofounding
22 his own company; after many years of driving throughout the country
23 selling furs, he followed the demand to Dallas, where he and his
24 family relocated in 1960; there, he owned and operated the Elegant
25 Furs Company and cofounded a costume jewelry business; he later
26 went on to develop Dallas Woodcraft, a picture frame manufacturing
27 company that grew to employ some 500 people, and he sold it to Home

1 Interiors & Gifts before retiring in the early 1980s; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1984, Mr. Donald cofounded the Dallas Holocaust
3 Museum, Center for Education and Tolerance, which held great
4 meaning for him; in retirement, he also shared his time as a
5 volunteer with SCORE, giving business advice to young entrepreneurs
6 in the community; and

7 WHEREAS, Mr. Donald and his wife enjoyed nearly 60 years
8 together, and they were blessed with a close-knit family, including
9 two children, Senator Florence Shapiro and Mark Donald, six
10 grandchildren, Lisa, Todd, Staci, Adam, Max, and Lillie, and six
11 great-grandchildren, Joshua, Noa, Ari, Ella, Sam, and Zachary, as
12 well as Howard, Brian, Paul, Esther, and Jori; and

13 WHEREAS, Affectionately known as "Pappa" by his loved ones,
14 he was sought after by his children and grandchildren alike for his
15 keen insights and advice; when his grandchildren were young, he
16 delighted them with his stories, jokes, and playful nature, and he
17 remained a steady and supportive presence in their lives as they
18 grew to adulthood; his bear hugs were famous as was his oft-heard
19 declaration that one looked "sharp as a matzoh ball"; he went out of
20 his way to keep in touch with distant relatives all over the world
21 and did not hesitate to assist those that relocated to the U.S.; and

22 WHEREAS, Martin Donald lived with passion and zest;
23 distinctly proud of his heritage, he took great pleasure in hosting
24 family and friends for celebrations of the Jewish holidays, and he
25 also enjoyed numerous other pastimes, including tennis, gambling,
26 horse racing, and swimming; he and his wife took several memorable
27 trips to places such as Israel, China, and Russia, and not long

1 before his passing, he treated his family to a vacation in the
2 Bahamas, where he thrilled a crowd with his success at the gaming
3 table; and

4 WHEREAS, Martin Donald persevered through unimaginable
5 circumstances to carry on his family's legacy and nurture his own
6 family with courage, joy, and wisdom; although he will be deeply
7 missed, he leaves behind a legacy of accomplishment that will
8 continue to resonate not only in the lives of his loved ones, but
9 also in the lives of countless visitors to the Dallas Holocaust
10 Museum, who will emerge from the experience both moved and
11 determined never to forget the lessons learned from the past; now,
12 therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
14 hereby pay tribute to the life of Martin Donald and extend sincere
15 sympathy to the members of his family: to his wife, Ann Donald; to
16 his daughter, Senator Florence Shapiro and her husband, Howard; to
17 his son, Mark Donald, and his wife, Esther; to his grandchildren,
18 Lisa Strauss and her husband, Brian, Todd Shapiro and his wife,
19 Jori, Staci Rubin and her husband, Paul, and Adam, Max, and Lillie
20 Donald; to his great-grandchildren, Joshua, Noa, and Ari Strauss,
21 Ella and Zachary Shapiro, and Sam Rubin; and to his other relatives
22 and many friends; and, be it further

23 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
24 prepared for the members of his family and that when the Texas House
25 of Representatives and Senate adjourn this day, they do so in memory
26 of Martin Donald.