

By: Hughes

H.R. No. 956

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, Memories of a life filled with joyful times and  
2 meaningful accomplishments remain to comfort those who knew Karen  
3 Wheeler Pendergast of Winnsboro, who passed away on February 4,  
4 2009, at the age of 70; and

5           WHEREAS, Mrs. Pendergast was born on March 4, 1938, in her  
6 beloved Winnsboro; she graduated from the local high school in 1956  
7 and went on to earn a journalism degree from The University of Texas  
8 in 1960; and

9           WHEREAS, A pioneer in her field, she was hired as the first  
10 woman broadcast journalist by KRLD in Dallas and worked on the radio  
11 and television news staffs; in 1963, she married her husband Tom, an  
12 executive and newsman for the Associated Press; and

13           WHEREAS, The couple lived in many different locations and  
14 traveled widely throughout the United States before settling in  
15 Winnsboro in 1985; they purchased the local newspaper, *The*  
16 *Winnsboro News*, and Mrs. Pendergast immersed herself in its many  
17 roles; in addition to directing the paper's day-to-day operations,  
18 she authored a lighthearted column called *PenWheels* that became one  
19 of the most popular features and personally wrote each obituary  
20 published, reporting the passing of her friends and neighbors with  
21 accuracy and compassion; and

22           WHEREAS, Mrs. Pendergast's talent as a writer was matched by  
23 her photography skills, which she showcased each year during the  
24 monthlong Autumn Trails festival; and

1           WHEREAS, This valued civic leader shared her time with a  
2 number of worthwhile community affairs; a member of the Winnsboro  
3 Preservation League and a dedicated supporter of the Gilbreath  
4 Memorial Library, she served as treasurer of the Winnsboro Heritage  
5 Society and on the board of the Winnsboro Area Chamber of Commerce,  
6 which honored her as Woman of the Year; and

7           WHEREAS, Mrs. Pendergast also championed and supported the  
8 Winnsboro Independent School District and its three local schools;  
9 for more than two decades, she generously awarded scholarships to  
10 graduates of Winnsboro High School with journalistic potential and  
11 donated funds for students in middle school and high school to  
12 attend band camps; when the school board created the WISD  
13 Foundation, she was named its president, a post she held until her  
14 death; and

15           WHEREAS, The generous efforts of Karen Pendergast enriched  
16 her community and those she encountered; described as the "soul of  
17 the newspaper," she provided a rich and rewarding legacy for all  
18 Texans to remember through her words, pictures, and volunteerism;  
19 now, therefore, be it

20           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st  
21 Texas Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Karen Wheeler  
22 Pendergast and extend deepest sympathy to the members of her  
23 family: to her husband, Tom Pendergast; to her daughter, Meredith  
24 Ann Simpson, and her husband, David; to her sister, Becky Pickett;  
25 to her four grandchildren, Mary Karen Simpson, William Drake  
26 Simpson, John McGlamery Chavez, and Aiden Gun Chavez; and to her  
27 other relatives and many friends; and, be it further

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1           RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
2 prepared for her family and that when the Texas House of  
3 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Karen  
4 Wheeler Pendergast.