

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 542

In Memory
of
Elmer Kelton

WHEREAS, The Lone Star State lost an accomplished native son with the passing of novelist and journalist Elmer Kelton of San Angelo on August 22, 2009, at the age of 83; and

WHEREAS, Born on April 29, 1926, at Horse Camp in Andrews County, Elmer Stephen Kelton was descended from cowboys and ranchers; his great-grandfather came to West Texas in the 1870s with a covered wagon and a string of horses, and his father, Robert William "Buck" Kelton, was the foreman and eventual manager of the McElroy Ranch in Crane and Upton Counties; and

WHEREAS, Elmer Kelton was the oldest of four sons and, by his own admission, the worst cowboy of the bunch; he decided at an early age that if he couldn't be a cowboy, he would at least write about them, and he was encouraged in this endeavor by his mother, Neta Beatrice "Bea" Kelton, a former schoolteacher; he entered The University of Texas at Austin at the age of 16 and enrolled in journalism classes; and

WHEREAS, In the mid-1940s, Mr. Kelton served in Europe as an infantryman during the final months of World War II; while stationed in Austria, he met his future wife, Anni Lipp, whom he married in 1947; he went on to earn his bachelor's degree in journalism from The University of Texas the following year; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kelton was the farm-and-ranch editor for the *San Angelo Standard-Times* from 1948 to 1963; he later spent five years as associate editor of *Sheep and Goat Raisers' Magazine* and more than two decades as editor of *Livestock Weekly* before retiring in 1990; and

WHEREAS, His career as a Western writer began in 1948, when he sold a story to *Ranch Romances* magazine for \$50; he published his first novel, *Hot Iron*, in 1955, and writing mainly in his spare time, he went on to author or contribute to more than 60 books, including several volumes of Western art, a memoir, *Sandhills Boy*, and many works of fiction; and

WHEREAS, Insightful portrayals of West Texans, Mr. Kelton's novels were admired by readers and critics alike for their keen attention to detail, moral complexity, and psychological realism; he wasn't interested in writing simplistic Western characters who were "seven feet tall and invincible," he once said, adding, "my characters are five-eight and nervous"; and

WHEREAS, In *The Time It Never Rained*, he vividly evoked the struggles of a rancher during a devastating drought in the 1950s; in *The Good Old Boys*, which was made into a television movie directed by and starring Tommy Lee Jones, he told the story of an aging cowboy grappling with changing times at the turn of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, Often bestsellers, his books also won numerous accolades; seven of his titles earned the Spur Award from the Western Writers of America, and three received Western Heritage Awards from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum;

Mr. Kelton himself was honored with both the Owen Wister Award for lifetime achievement and the Lone Star Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Larry McMurtry Center for Arts and Humanities at Midwestern State University; in 1995, he was voted the best Western writer of all time by members of the Western Writers of America; and

WHEREAS, Throughout a long and prolific career, Mr. Kelton enjoyed the love and support of his wife of 62 years as well as their three children, Gary, Stephen, and Kathy; moreover, his family included four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and a great-great-granddaughter; and

WHEREAS, Elmer Kelton wrote with deep reverence and compassion about the people and landscape he loved; whether he was evoking the stark beauty of the high plains or the pride and dignity of hardworking people, he celebrated a rich culture and left a lasting legacy that will endure as long as the wind blows over West Texas; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 82nd Legislature, hereby pay tribute to the life and accomplishments of Elmer Kelton; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this Resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Elmer Kelton.

Duncan

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on March 17, 2011, by a rising vote.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate