

By: Davis of Harris

H.R. No. 1691

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A life defined by extraordinary strength and  
2 resilience drew to a close with the death of Walter Kase of Houston  
3 on March 4, 2015, at the age of 85; and

4 WHEREAS, Walter Kase was born Wladyslaw Kasrylewicz on August  
5 17, 1929, in Lodz, Poland, where his parents, Chaim and Evalina,  
6 owned a dyeing factory and a commercial laundry; he grew up in a  
7 happy and loving household enriched by music, shared meals, and the  
8 celebration of the family's Jewish faith; and

9 WHEREAS, This idyllic boyhood was shattered in 1939, when  
10 Germany invaded Poland; Mr. Kase's family lost their home and all  
11 their possessions and were forced to live in the ghettos of Lodz and  
12 Kielce; as the Nazis began their program of extermination, Mr. Kase  
13 witnessed the murder of his little sister, Rysia, and he and his  
14 parents were shipped in a packed freight car to the concentration  
15 camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau; and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Kase's mother was sent to another camp, and he  
17 and his father kept each other alive throughout the war, first at  
18 Auschwitz, then in the camps at Pionki, Sosnowiec, Dachau,  
19 Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, and Gunskirchen, where they were  
20 finally liberated by the United States Army on May 5, 1945;  
21 Mr. Kase's father died of malnutrition shortly after the war, and,  
22 all told, 70 members of his family were lost in the Holocaust; only  
23 Mr. Kase, his mother, and a cousin in Sweden survived; and

24 WHEREAS, In 1947, Mr. Kase was one of 400 young Holocaust

1 survivors selected by the U.S. Children's Committee to begin a new  
2 life in America, and he settled in Kansas City, Missouri; equipped  
3 with a Polish-English dictionary, he taught himself the language  
4 and worked through high school and junior college together in just  
5 two years, ultimately landing a sales job with a wholesale costume  
6 jewelry company; he also met an American girl at the Jewish  
7 Community Center, and at the age of 20, he married Lila Greenstein;  
8 around the same time, he was able to bring his mother to the United  
9 States; and

10       WHEREAS, After serving proudly in the U.S. Army in Germany,  
11 Mr. Kase moved to Houston with his wife, where they were blessed  
12 with two children, Risha, who was named for his late sister, and  
13 Kenneth; Mr. Kase resumed his career, expanding the company's  
14 territory into Texas and Louisiana and becoming one of its most  
15 successful sales representatives; he also became a silent partner  
16 in an import company and eventually left his sales job to help run  
17 the business full-time; he shared the last four decades of his life  
18 with his second wife, Sylvia Christine Oshman; and

19       WHEREAS, After Mr. Kase retired in 1990, he devoted much of  
20 the next 25 years to speaking to high school audiences about his  
21 experiences during the Holocaust, and he shared with thousands of  
22 students his hard-won wisdom about the effects of bigotry and  
23 prejudice; his efforts earned him the St. Augustine Award from  
24 St. Thomas University, the Houston Civil Rights Hero Award from the  
25 Anti-Defamation League, a lifelong honorary membership from the  
26 national commission of the ADL, and the State of Texas Governor's  
27 Award for Volunteers, among many others; the ADL's annual Walter

1 Kase Teacher Excellence Award and the Walter Kase Commons at  
2 Hamilton Middle School were named in his honor, and in 2011, he  
3 received an honorary doctorate from the University of Houston for  
4 his support of its graduate college of social work; he also served  
5 on the board of the Houston Holocaust Museum; and

6 WHEREAS, Over the course of a remarkable life, Walter Kase  
7 endured some of the worst cruelties that people can inflict on one  
8 another, and yet he survived to become a loving father and husband,  
9 a successful businessman, and a champion for freedom, tolerance,  
10 and human dignity; now, therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas  
12 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Walter Kase and  
13 extend sincere condolences to the members of his family: to his  
14 wife, Sylvia Christine Kase; to his daughter, Risha Dozark, and her  
15 husband, Patrick; to his son, Kenneth Kase, and his wife, Linda; to  
16 his grandson, Daniel Dozark; to his stepdaughter, Heidi Massin, and  
17 her husband, David; to his granddaughter, Kaitlyn Massin; to his  
18 stepson, Randy Oshman; to his cousins, Sara Mankowitz and her  
19 husband, Lennart, and Jonny Belchatowski; and to his many friends;  
20 and, be it further

21 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
22 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of  
23 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Walter  
24 Kase.