

By: Isaac

H.R. No. 2807

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Texas music community suffered a profound loss
2 with the death of mentor, singer-songwriter, and club owner Kent
3 Finlay of Martindale on March 2, 2015, at the age of 77; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in Brady, Mr. Finlay grew up playing music with
5 his family and began performing publicly in high school; he
6 completed his bachelor's degree in English at Texas State
7 University in 1961 and went on to earn his master's degree in
8 education; after teaching in San Antonio, he joined the Gary Job
9 Corps in San Marcos; and

10 WHEREAS, During the early 1970s, Mr. Finlay often drove to
11 Luckenbach to play songs with folk hero Hondo Crouch, alongside
12 Gary P. Nunn, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Willie Nelson; the experience
13 inspired him to open a honky-tonk, and in 1974, he renovated an old
14 building next to the railroad tracks in San Marcos and named it
15 Cheatham Street Warehouse; like its more famous but shorter-lived
16 Austin counterpart, the Armadillo World Headquarters, the venue
17 helped incubate the progressive country movement, hosting concerts
18 by Doug Sahm, Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark, Willie Nelson, Billy Joe
19 Shaver, and many others; and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Finlay helped launch the career of an aspiring
21 young country artist, George Strait, taking him under his wing
22 after he made his debut at Cheatham Street with the Ace in the Hole
23 Band in October 1975; he gave the group a Wednesday-night residency
24 that proved wildly popular, and he drove with the singer to

1 Nashville to help him cut demos and look for a record deal; after
2 achieving superstardom, Mr. Strait continued to acknowledge the
3 importance of Mr. Finlay's steadfast support; the club later
4 granted Stevie Ray Vaughan a regular Tuesday-night gig, which often
5 featured precocious preteens Charlie and Will Sexton; and

6 WHEREAS, In the 1970s, Mr. Finlay started one of the first
7 songwriters' circles, and the weekly event became a launchpad for
8 generations of Texas singer-songwriters, among them James
9 McMurtry, Terri Hendrix, Hal Ketchum, Tish Hinojosa, and Bruce
10 Robison; a gifted writer himself, Mr. Finlay helped countless
11 musicians improve their craft, and he cowrote songs with such
12 artists as Todd Snider, Slaid Cleaves, and Walt Wilkins, and his own
13 well-loved compositions included "They Call It the Hill Country,"
14 "Plastic Girl," and "I'll Sing You a Story, I'll Tell You a Song";
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Finlay sold Cheatham Street in 1983 to
17 concentrate on his family and his own band, High Cotton Express, but
18 when the new owner faltered, he stepped back in to rescue the venue;
19 eventually, he turned the operation over to his children, but he
20 remained involved and stayed at the helm of the songwriters'
21 circle; he continued swapping songs and stories until the very end;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, Through his gift for spotting genuine talent and his
24 tremendous generosity in nurturing it, Kent Finlay played a key
25 role in shaping contemporary Texas music, and those who were
26 privileged to share in the richness of his life will forever
27 treasure their memories of his warmth, kindness, and wisdom; now,

1 therefore, be it

2 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
3 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Kent Finlay and extend
4 sincere condolences to the members of his family: to his children,
5 Jenni Finlay and her husband, Clay McNeill, Sterling Finlay, and
6 HalleyAnna Finlay; to his granddaughter, Annie Finlay; to his
7 former wife, Diana Finlay Hendricks; and to his other relatives and
8 host of friends; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
10 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
11 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Kent
12 Finlay.