

By: Springer

H.R. No. 1824

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Family and friends continue to treasure their
2 memories of Willie V Jordan of Newport, who endured enormous
3 hardship in the service of this nation during World War II; and

4 WHEREAS, Bill Jordan was born into a family of sharecroppers
5 near Newport on February 10, 1922; at age 16, he went to work with
6 the Civilian Conservation Corps, and in 1940, when his parents
7 refused him permission to join the U.S. Navy, he enlisted in the
8 Texas National Guard instead; his unit was mobilized in the months
9 before Pearl Harbor, and Mr. Jordan shipped out in November 1941
10 with the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, 36th Division, of
11 the U.S. Army; and

12 WHEREAS, Originally destined for the Philippines, the unit
13 was rerouted to Australia and then to Java, where its mission was to
14 help defend the island against invasion; soon after, however, the
15 Japanese launched an overwhelming assault, and the Allied troops on
16 Java were forced to surrender on March 8, 1942; Mr. Jordan and his
17 comrades then began a 42-month ordeal, during which they were
18 forced by their captors to build what came to be known as the Death
19 Railway in the jungles of Burma; and

20 WHEREAS, Enduring the ravages of starvation, torture, and
21 disease, Mr. Jordan and the other prisoners cleared jungle and
22 carried baskets of rocks weighing as much as 100 pounds in
23 torrential rain and withering heat; despite receiving injuries and
24 suffering from malaria, beriberi, and dysentery, this tough young

1 Texan continued to work, helping his fellow prisoners when he
2 could; because he himself was able to work barefoot, he gave his
3 shoes to another prisoner, who credited them with saving his life;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, No word of the men's plight reached the outside
6 world until September 1944, so that the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field
7 Artillery, came to be known as the "Lost Battalion," and it was only
8 after the end of the war in the Pacific, in August 1945, that loved
9 ones learned the fate of individual members of the unit; according
10 to one account, of the 668 men from the battalion who went into the
11 jungle, 163 died in POW camps, 133 of them while working on the
12 railroad; when Mr. Jordan returned to the States, he carried less
13 than 90 pounds on his six-foot frame; and

14 WHEREAS, Bill Jordan continued to serve in the military, at
15 bases from Maine to Alaska, for the next 15 years; he retired from
16 the U.S. Air Force in 1960 and subsequently worked as a construction
17 engineer for the City of Fort Worth until his retirement from that
18 post in 1985; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was joined in matrimony to Florence
20 Kistler, also of Newport, following his return from the war, and the
21 couple raised three children; he died on October 16, 1992, and was
22 laid to rest in Newport Cemetery; and

23 WHEREAS, Rarely speaking of his ordeal and harboring no ill
24 will toward his captors, Bill Jordan credited his survival to his
25 faith in God, in his country, and in his comrades; he remained proud
26 of his service throughout his life, as he devoted himself to making
27 a better life for his family and to instilling in his children a

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1 deep respect for the same values that made him a true American hero;
2 now, therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
4 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Willie V Jordan and
5 extend gratitude to the members of his family for preserving the
6 memory of his courage, patriotism, and sacrifice.