H.R. No. 133

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, A full and inspiring life drew to a close with the death of beloved Austin supercentenarian Richard A. Overton on December 27, 2018, at the age of 112; and

WHEREAS, The grandson of slaves, Richard Overton was born to Gentry Overton Sr. and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Franklin in St. Mary's Colony in Bastrop County on May 11, 1906; he grew up with three brothers, Hilliard, Irwin, and Gentry, and six sisters, Annie, Lola, Dora, Lillie Mae, Tenola, and Geneva; a hard worker, he held numerous jobs in his youth, from landscaper and homebuilder to furniture store employee; after enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1942, he was deployed to the Pacific theater; his all-African American battalion, the 1887th Engineer Aviation Battalion, helped free the island of Angaur from Japanese forces; he was recognized for his expert marksmanship and attained the rank of corporal; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Overton returned to Austin in 1945 and built a house on Hamilton Avenue, where he resided for the rest of his life; he went back to work in the furniture business, and for many years he was employed by the Texas Treasury Department; while Ann Richards led the agency, the gregarious veteran formed a friendship with the future governor, and he liked driving huge deposits to the bank in a golf cart; he kept busy selling fruit and mowing lawns as well; and

WHEREAS, Following his retirement, Mr. Overton became a local legend, watching over his neighbors and greeting them from his front porch; his circle of admirers continued to widen, and in 2013, he was lauded by President Barack Obama at a Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery; that same year, the Austin City Council proclaimed his birthday Richard A. Overton Day, and in 2017 the city conferred the honorary name Richard Overton Avenue on his block; when Governor Greg Abbott presented the Overton family with a Texas flag in Mr. Overton's honor, he shared stories of how the centenarian had challenged him to a wheelchair race; in his later years, Mr. Overton continued to enjoy attending Shoreline Church, caring for his cats, and indulging in whiskey, coffee, ice cream, and cigars, and he happily welcomed visitors from near and far to his front-yard birthday parties; and

WHEREAS, Richard Overton gained international fame as the oldest living U.S. veteran, but it was his charm, wit, kindness, and optimism that won the hearts of his fellow Texans, and he will be remembered with great admiration and affection by all who were fortunate enough to know him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Richard A. Overton and extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Richard A. Overton.

Cole

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Speaker of the House

I certify that H.R. No. 133 was unanimously adopted by a rising vote of the House on March 6, 2019.

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Chief Clerk of the House