

By: Price

H.R. No. 261

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Texas legal community lost one of its giants
2 with the passing of Starling Thomas Morris of Amarillo on October 4,
3 2021, at the age of 101; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in Penelope on November 12, 1919, Tom Morris
5 was the second son of James L. Morris and Alice B. Morris; he grew up
6 in Maypearl and attended North Texas Agricultural College and The
7 University of Texas Law School before World War II interrupted his
8 education; called up by the U.S. Navy Air Corps, he served with Air
9 Group 80 and flew the SB2C Helldiver and F6F Hellcat fighter from
10 the USS *Ticonderoga* and the USS *Hancock*; he also piloted an F4U-4
11 Corsair fighter-bomber in preparation for the attack on Japan;
12 along the way, he survived a midair collision that led to six months
13 in a hospital; he attained the rank of lieutenant senior grade
14 before his discharge; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Morris returned to UT Law, where he was an
16 editor of the *Texas Law Review* and a member of Chancellors and Order
17 of the Coif; upon graduation in 1946, he was elected to the faculty,
18 and he taught the school's first course on legal argument and
19 writing; in addition, he taught the torts class in a separate law
20 school that the university established for Black scholars; he began
21 practicing in Harlingen in 1948, and the following year, he moved to
22 Amarillo, where he joined the firm of Gibson, Ochsner, and Adkins,
23 as it was eventually known; upon its dissolution in 2003, he became
24 a shareholder in the Underwood Law Firm, and he continued to

1 practice there for the rest of his life; he was a generous mentor to
2 younger attorneys over the years; and

3 WHEREAS, Among numerous accomplishments, Mr. Morris won a
4 landmark Supreme Court case, *Graham v. Deere*, which established the
5 law of non-obvious subject matter in patent cases; the decision has
6 been cited in more than 30,000 cases and legal articles and was
7 reaffirmed by the highest court three times in recent years; he
8 successfully argued a long list of cases before the Texas Supreme
9 Court, the Texas Courts of Appeals, and the United States Court of
10 Appeals for the Fifth Circuit; admired for his ethics and
11 collegiality, as well as for his brilliance, he was named a Fellow
12 of the Texas Bar Foundation and the American College of Trial
13 Lawyers; his myriad accolades included the Texas Legal Legend Award
14 from the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas, the Chief
15 Justice Charles L. Reynolds Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Tom
16 Arnold Lifetime Achievement Award from the Intellectual Property
17 Section of the State Bar; and

18 WHEREAS, While the law was a source of endless fascination to
19 Mr. Morris, he was devoted above all to his treasured family; he
20 shared a fulfilling marriage of 68 years with his wife, Estella
21 Garnett Morris, until her passing in 2011, and he took great pride
22 in their two daughters, Linda and Vicki, and three granddaughters,
23 Skye, Autumn, and Aureóle; in his free time, he was an avid golfer,
24 and he achieved a single-digit handicap and scored five holes in
25 one; he served as president of the Texas Tri-State Senior Golf
26 Association and played in its tournament for many years, and he was
27 twice the recipient of the Colonel Bogey Award; the Amarillo

1 Country Club recognized him for six decades of work to improve its
2 golf course, and a plaque was placed at the Starter's Shack honoring
3 his contributions; and

4 WHEREAS, Although Tom Morris is deeply missed, he leaves
5 behind a remarkable professional legacy, as well as numerous
6 friends and loved ones whose lives are far richer for having known
7 him; now, therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas
9 Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby pay tribute to the memory
10 of Starling Thomas Morris and extend sincere condolences to the
11 members of his family: to his daughters, Linda Lee Willard and Vicki
12 Rey Fineran; to his granddaughters, Skye, Autumn, and Aureóle
13 Fineran; to his sister, Alice Beth Willis; and to his other
14 relatives and friends; and, be it further

15 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
16 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
17 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Starling
18 Thomas Morris.