**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO COMMEMORATE THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINAL MISSION OF PROJECT MANHIGH.

Whereas, Project Manhigh was a pre‑space age military project that took men in balloons to the upper layers of the Earth’s atmosphere. The project started in December 1955 to study the effects of cosmic rays on humans; and

Whereas, as a first step in sending man into space, the United States Air Force executed a series of manned high altitude balloon missions from 1957‑1958, known as Project Manhigh. These missions tested equipment such as space capsules, space suits, and telemetry and communication systems. Most of all, Project Manhigh first tested the ability of human beings to function in the harsh extremes of high altitude where the blue sky ends and space begins; and

Whereas, three balloon flights to the edge of space were made during the program. October 8, 2008 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the third and final mission solo piloted by Lieutenant Clifton McClure of Anderson, S.C.; and

Whereas, for the third and final mission, new pilot requirements were expanded and refined, including psychological and stress testing and physical challenges such as the centrifuge. Having been the first to pass this rigorous gauntlet that would later be used to select the Mercury Seven, Lt. Clifton McClure was launched aboard Manhigh III on October 8, 1958. In a sealed capsule filled with oxygen, nitrogen, and helium, Lt. McClure soared to an altitude of 99,700 feet above the Tularosa Basin of New Mexico. He persevered through equipment failures that could have proven disastrous. His parachute came loose and somehow he repacked it by hand while in the confined space capsule. Most significantly, the capsule’s cooling system failed and the temperature climbed, as it was beyond the radiation shielding of the atmosphere. Incredibly, Lt. McClure’s body temperature reached as high as 108.5°F, yet he remained conscious and recovered completely; and

Whereas, a graduate of Anderson High and Clemson, Lt. McClure also later became a member of the South Carolina Air National Guard. He flew the F‑104 with the 157th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (now the 157th Fighter Squadron at McEntire JNGS, Eastover, S.C.) and was deployed to Spain during the response to the 1962 crisis in Berlin; and

Whereas, after a lifetime of accomplishments and achievements, Lt. McClure passed away in January 2000. In recognition of his many contributions to the exploration of space, he was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 2001; and

Whereas, balloon missions continued briefly after Manhigh, including Excelsior and Stargazer, but all were soon overshadowed by NASA, and now they are all but forgotten. A few books have documented their feats, including *The Pre‑Astronauts: Manned Ballooning on the Edge of Space*, by Craig Ryan, and *Touching Space*, by Gregory P. Kennedy; and

Whereas, the Discovery Channel has aired a documentary on the pre‑astronauts and a much anticipated movie is also in progress to recount their amazing adventures; and

Whereas, let us remember the remarkable, awe‑inspiring achievements of Lt. McClure and the pre‑astronauts. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

That the members of the General Assembly, by this resolution, commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the final mission of Project Manhigh.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the family of Lt. Clifton McClure.

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