**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPON THE PASSING OF THOMAS RHETT EVATT OF SENECA AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Thomas Rhett Evatt of Seneca on February 26, 2018, at the venerable age of ninety; and

Whereas, born in Pendleton on July 12, 1927, Rhett Evatt was the son of Daniel and Grace Moore Evatt. In 1939, the young Rhett moved with his family to Seneca, where he later served as senior class president at Seneca High School (1944) and became a proud graduate of that institution. Following high school, he joined the United States Navy and served during World War II. Upon discharge, he attended Clemson University; and

Whereas, his community involvement began in 1960 with his employment at Oconee Savings and Loan, where he was initially hired as a loan officer. There, Rhett demonstrated dedication to helping others achieve the goal of home ownership that led to what became his lifelong career and passion. Under his leadership as president and CEO and chairman of the board of directors, the thrift grew into a thriving publically traded company serving communities in upstate South Carolina and northeast Georgia. It was through this commitment to his work that he strove to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of those he met while improving the community around him; and

Whereas, giving back to the community was important to Rhett. He was a founding member of Saint Mark United Methodist Church. He actively served as a member of the Rotary Club, where he was honored as a Paul Harris Fellow and was instrumental in the establishment of the Seneca Rotary Scholar Program. Rhett, who enjoyed Friday and Saturday games with his family for decades, was a loyal supporter of Seneca High’s and Clemson University’s athletic programs. Further, his service went beyond the Seneca community. He served on the South Carolina Savings and Loan League Board of Directors, South Carolina State Development Board, and South Carolina Job and Economic Development Authority. He was a member of American Legion Post 120 and committed his time and advisement as a member of the Tri‑County Tech Foundation Board of Directors; and

Whereas, a lifelong Methodist, Rhett enjoyed singing and served as a member of the Saint Mark Chancel Choir and Golden Corner Barbershop Chorus. His mild demeanor was not to be overshadowed by his quick wit. Known for his integrity and fairness, he was a gentleman; and

Whereas, this devoted husband, father, and beloved “Poppy” treasured spending time with his family. He most enjoyed travel with his family, annual family beach trips, family reunions, and holiday traditions; and

Whereas, in Seneca and beyond, Rhett Evatt was known as a man who took Oconee Federal Savings and Loan to greater heights. Todd Latiff, executive vice president of the company, offers this tribute: “He was a giant in the financial services business in South Carolina, and he was loved and respected by his employees. Mr. Evatt believed in the power of people and the fact that everyone should own a home. He looked more at character and background than financial condition. Mr. Evatt believed that people needed to save for a down payment before purchasing a home. These simple yet resonating rules have allowed Oconee Federal to have an extremely low loan default rate. He also believed in giving back to the communities that we serve. … We give over one hundred thousand dollars per year to various civic groups in our communities. We as employees owe a great deal of thanks to Mr. Evatt for his leadership and vision”; and

Whereas, Rhett Evatt leaves to cherish his memory his dear wife of sixty‑seven years, Gaynell Turner Evatt; his children, Rhetta Dalton (Claude) of Easley, Lee Ann Parker (Mike) of Seneca, and Curt Evatt (Alice) of Seneca; his grandchildren, Whitney Feaster, Will Parker, Jordan Stephens, Amelia Evatt, and Thomas Evatt; his great‑granddaughters, Stella and Elizabeth Feaster and Tessa and Lydia Stephens; and a host of other family members and loving friends. He will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him; and

Whereas, Rhett Evatt’s generosity of spirit, energetic nature, and general enthusiasm for life, work, family, and friends were unmatched, and he will be remembered as a humble benefactor and beloved friend to his community. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the passing of Thomas Rhett Evatt of Seneca and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Mrs. Gaynell Turner Evatt for the family.

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