

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 125

BY SENATOR CATHEY

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of Walter Bertram "Bert" Hatten.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the Legislature and the citizens of Louisiana have learned of the death of Walter Bertram "Bert" Hatten on May 22, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Walter Bertram Hatten, affectionately known as "Bert", was born in Sikes, Louisiana, near Winnfield, Winn Parish, on March 9, 1927, the oldest of four children, born to the union of William Earl Hatten and Pina Pauline Head Hatten; and

WHEREAS, in his pre-teens, Bert and his family moved to West Monroe where he attended Ouachita Parish High School (OPHS) and Northeast Junior College, both in Monroe; and

WHEREAS, a Christian of the Baptist faith, Bert was a member of the West Monroe Masonic Lodge #419, 32-degree Scottish Rite and York Rite, and also qualified as a Shriner; and

WHEREAS, while a high school student, Bert's first job was at Zagone's Grocery at 801 Natchitoches Street as a grocery clerk and delivery boy where he earned \$5.50 a week, and his second job was at the service club on Selman Field, where he managed the soda fountain and grill earning \$18.50 weekly; and

WHEREAS, Bert was accepted into the Merchant Marines where he served aboard five ships during WWII, mostly in the Pacific, and when General Douglas MacArthur accepted the formal surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay, Bert was aboard a ship nearby loaded with tanks, bombs, and artillery consigned to a land invasion of Japan, had the president decided not to use the atom bomb attack; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Bert worked for Western Electric for a short time before enrolling in college and accepting a job as a news reporter at the *News Star World*, where he resigned as managing editor sixteen years later, and bought *The Ouachita Citizen*, which he sold to the Hanna family and retired twenty years later; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, Bert was elected Mayor of West Monroe, served a total of twelve years, elected handily to three four-year terms and did not seek a fourth term; and

WHEREAS, during his years of mayorship, the city rebuilt every city street to a high code standard, installed the city's first sewage treatment system, built a new government and convention complex on N 7th Street, stabilized the city's fiscal base, and revised the city-owned Hasley Cemetery to initiate perpetual maintenance and trust funding; and

WHEREAS, before taking office after his first election, Bert sought advice from several experienced area mayors, including Clyde Fant, a highly respected veteran mayor of Shreveport, saying, "I found that a big help from the beginning and a great source for future questions during my 12 years as mayor"; and

WHEREAS, while Bert was mayor of West Monroe (1966-1978) the city successfully pushed the development of two industrial parks and many new jobs to the area, including Downing Pines Industrial which was developed on an eighty-three acre tract bought from Illinois Central Railroad, and the West Ouachita Industrial District which was developed on 296 acres contingent with I-20, Hwy 80, and I. C. Railroad; and

WHEREAS, long before he was mayor, Bert was an aggressive supporter of education requiring that all members of the Ouachita Parish School Board reside in the Ouachita Parish taxing district; and

WHEREAS, "Repeated efforts to achieve equity in representation had failed in state and federal courts and state legislature where Monroe always controlled the political power to win", Bert said. We finally got justice in a Louisiana Constitutional Convention, and Bert took great pride in having written the original draft on that part of the new constitution which now prevents such inequity for any school district in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, "We now have three of the finest public high schools in Louisiana: West Monroe High School, West Ouachita High School, and Sterlington High School", Bert added; West Monroe was probably the largest city in America without a public high school until West Monroe High School was founded in the mid 1950s; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the mayor's office, Bert said he was pleased with the city's accomplishments during his twelve years in office but added, "It could not have been done without three good city councils, the department heads, city employees and especially, the

overwhelming support of the citizens of West Monroe"; and

WHEREAS, as Bert approached his ninety-fourth birthday, he recalled having interviewed Bob Hope, and having shared a Heineken beer with Arthur Feilder, conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, when both were quests of Al Hirt, the famed trumpeter, at his place on Bourbon Street; Bert also had met every Louisiana governor since Sam Jones, except John Bel Edwards; and

WHEREAS, Bert said he felt very fortunate to have lived to an advanced age during so many important events in his community, nation, and the world: "To all of which I have tried to be a positive contributor; I hope I have been successful"; and

WHEREAS, Bert is survived by his daughters, Sarah Jill Maxwell (Todd), Beth Hinton (widow of Jacky), Cathy O. Rawls (Wade); grandchildren, Olivia Greer, Maddi Maxwell, Ian Maxwell; brother, Bob G. Hatten; sister, Nova Dee Hatten Carbo; and many other cherished family and friends.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the passing of Walter Bertram "Bert" Hatten.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Sarah Jill Maxwell, Beth Hinton, and Cathy O. Rawls.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE