

2023 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 130

BY REPRESENTATIVE COUSSAN AND SENATORS BOUDREAUX AND CORTEZ

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend Dr. Walter Benoit Comeaux, Jr., on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday.

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux was born in Houma, Louisiana, on April 10, 1923; as a boy, he spent his summers south of Houma drying shrimp and later worked in a lumberyard that specialized in drilling mud and heavy timber; although his early work experience consisted of blue collar jobs, he inherited his dentist father's scientific curiosity and possessed a natural inclination to study medicine; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux attended Louisiana State University on a band scholarship and joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC); upon completing his undergraduate studies and four years of ROTC, he was made a private in the Army infantry and assigned to the LSU Medical School in New Orleans; he graduated from medical school on March 13, 1946, received surgical training through an internship program, and completed a three-month course required for all medical officers; and

WHEREAS, after completing his medical education and training, Dr. Comeaux was assigned to the South-East Asian Theater of World War II at the 49th General Hospital in Tokyo, the only general hospital in Japan; he served the entirety of his overseas duty at this hospital, which handled all serious cases from Japan, China, Korea, and Guam, while having only three general surgeons and fifteen fellow medical officers to assist him; the relatively small team of dedicated doctors took on unimaginable challenges with honor and accomplished incredible feats, such as completing nine thousand six hundred thirty-one operative procedures in a single year; and

WHEREAS, while serving in Japan, Dr. Comeaux met Dorinne Kennedy, a Canadian-born civilian-worker for the United States Air Force Intelligence Department, and the two were married in the chapel of the 49th General Hospital in February 1949; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux was honorably discharged in 1949 and returned to the United States to live in New Orleans, where he worked as an admitting physician at Charity Hospital for thirteen months before taking a residency in general and thoracic surgery; and

WHEREAS, after completing his residency and passing the American Board of Surgery exams, Dr. Comeaux and his wife moved to Lafayette, Louisiana, where he established himself as a renowned general surgeon and pillar of the community who touched the lives of thousands of patients during his nearly sixty years of practice; he served on numerous philanthropic and foundation boards, including the Louisiana State University and University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation boards, and he remains an avid supporter of the Southwest Louisiana Mardi Gras Association and the Krewe of Gabriel over which he reigned as King Gabriel XXXV in 1974; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux is an avid outdoorsman and nature conservationist who cherished fishing and duck hunting throughout his life; he even had the opportunity to hunt big game on multiple continents; and

WHEREAS, despite dedicating himself to the study and practice of medicine, Dr. Comeaux has been fascinated by aviation since his youth visiting the Houma hangar to listen to the conversations of traveling barnstormers; he rediscovered his passion for aviation in the early 1960s, and by 1968, he completed his first solo flight to earn a pilot's license; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux worked as the senior Aviation Medical Examiner and flight surgeon for Petroleum Helicopters, Inc. (PHI), he became involved with Helicopter Association International (HAI), then-named the Helicopter Association of America, through his work with PHI; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Comeaux continued his service with HAI as a critically important member and chair of the safety committee from 1978 until 1985; he was an instrumental force in the development of the first edition of the HAI Safety Manual; he also served as a special advisor to the HAI board of directors from 1985 until 1998; and

WHEREAS, while serving HAI, Dr. Comeaux received numerous awards including the Joe Mashman Safety Award, the Lawrence D. Bell Memorial Award, and the Igor I. Sikorsky Award for Humanitarian Service; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walter Benoit Comeaux, Jr., is a truly incredible individual who dedicated his professional life to the protection of others; he honorably served his country overseas and saw to the treatment of countless individuals while working in Tokyo, and he continued saving lives not only by serving as a surgeon in hospitals and on flights, but also by improving safety practices throughout the rotorcraft industry; he is most deserving of the highest recognition on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Dr. Walter Benoit Comeaux, Jr., on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday; does hereby further recognize Dr. Comeaux for his valiant military service, dedication to the practice of medicine, and efforts to improve rotorcraft safety; and does hereby extend sincerest wishes that he continue to prosper and enjoy good health, for he is one of Louisiana's most cherished sons.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE