

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 17

BY SENATOR POPE

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of Cecil Earle Benton, a man fulfilled by his service to his God, to his family, and to his community.

WHEREAS, it is with deep remorse that the members of the Senate have learned about the passing of a great man and family patriarch, Cecil Earle Benton on March 9, 2021; and

WHEREAS, C. Earle Benton, a native of Denham Springs, was born on July 23, 1923, the fourth of six children born to Leslie Newell and Sammie Brecheen Benton; and

WHEREAS, he graduated from Denham Springs High School as valedictorian of the Class of 1940 and pursued a degree from Southeastern Louisiana College in 1946 with a major in mathematics and a minor in social sciences; and

WHEREAS, his college studies were interrupted by World War II when he enlisted and served in the Army Air Corps, which would later become the United States Air Force, following in his three older brothers' footsteps; and

WHEREAS, after completing aviation training, C. Earle Benton was promoted to Second Lieutenant and was scheduled to serve as a navigator on a B-29; however, three days before he was set to enter the war, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima; and

WHEREAS, his orders were delayed and he ultimately avoided having to go overseas leading to one of his favorite sayings, "They heard I was coming, so they stopped the war."; and

WHEREAS, C. Earle Benton married his college sweetheart, Henrietta "Nook" Bencaz, in the summer of 1946, and their union was blessed with two children, John Leslie Benton Sr. and Emily Jane "Cissy" Benton Grantham; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, C. Earle joined his father and brother in the family business,

Benton Bros. Furniture, which would later be named Benton Bros. Antiques, where he would become the manager, then later the owner, and where he would continue to enjoy working daily greeting customers until the Great Flood of 2016; and

WHEREAS, his love for and his commitment to the business community of Denham Springs led him to become a member of the Denham Springs Chamber of Commerce, serving as President in 1955; and

WHEREAS, his steadfast devotion to his hometown also led him to take an active role in public life when he ran to be on the first Board of Aldermen when Denham Springs officially became a city in 1957, and he would go on to serve two four-year terms from 1958 until 1966; and

WHEREAS, his love of service and his hometown led him to organize and become a charter member of the Denham Springs Kiwanis Club in 1954, serving as president in 1958, and remaining an active and faithful member until well into his 90s; and

WHEREAS, Earle, along with many longtime business leaders, pastors, and other friends met every morning at 9 a.m. for fellowship and "To solve the world's problems one day at a time."; and

WHEREAS, he had a deep and abiding love for his faith which he shared freely with all who knew him; he was a profound Christian and member of First Baptist Church in Denham Springs where he began singing in the choir at the age of twelve and regularly taught Sunday school for the senior men until close to the time of his passing; and

WHEREAS, he worked tirelessly for the benefit of others and devoted his life to unselfish service to God, to his family, and to his community; and

WHEREAS, an avid lover of the arts, Earle grew up singing with his family in the Benton Brothers Quartet beginning at the age of nine, and the group would regularly perform at "The Hub Café" and at various churches, schools, and at community activities; and

WHEREAS, the roles he cherished most were father, grandfather, and great-grandfather; he delighted in sharing his love of learning with his two children, and later his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, reading with them the complete works of William Shakespeare, helping with math homework, and passing on his knowledge of navigation by showing them the constellations at night; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his two children, John Leslie Benton Sr. and Emily Jane "Cissy" Benton Grantham, as well as seven grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Cecil Earle Benton will be remembered for his devotion to his family, his love of his beloved hometown, his warmth, and his kindness; and

WHEREAS, upon his death, the world lost a unique individual who left an indelible mark upon the lives of all who knew him; and

WHEREAS, because of his numerous accomplishments in public and private life, the death of Cecil Earle Benton has left a void in his community and in our state, and has created a genuine sense of profound sorrow in his friends and family; and

WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of our communities, and the overall vitality of American society depend, in great measure, upon men like Cecil Earle Benton.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Cecil Earle Benton upon his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Cecil Earle Benton.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE