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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 367

Offered January 13, 2011

Celebrating the life of Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr.

Patrons—Edwards and Smith; Delegates: Cleaveland and Ware, O.

WHEREAS, Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., a prominent Roanoke businessman and dedicated community leader, died on December 17, 2010; and

WHEREAS, a native of Roanoke, Gordon Willis was born on April 5, 1920, to Bess and Holman Willis and graduated from Jefferson High School; and

WHEREAS, an excellent student and patriotic young man, Gordon Willis graduated from the United States Naval Academy and began serving his country during World War II in the Pacific Theater aboard the USS *Idaho*; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Gordon Willis became a carrier-based fighter pilot, flying F4U Corsairs from the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* before returning to Roanoke to help his father run the family business, Rockydale Quarries Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis became president of Rockydale Quarries Corporation in 1968 and successfully led the company until his retirement in 1994, continuing the family business's strong tradition of outstanding customer service and commitment to the community; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis' contributions to the Roanoke Valley and Commonwealth are many and reflect his compassion, intelligence, and vision; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis believed strongly in the power of education to change lives; he was one of the early organizers of the North Cross School and a strong proponent of what became the Virginia Community College System; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis also generously gave of his time and talents as a board member of the Virginia Tech Foundation and as chair of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia; and

WHEREAS, a respected civic leader, Gordon Willis served on a biracial committee that worked for peaceful desegregation in the Roanoke Valley; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis' strong support for Virginia Tech's Smart Road led to the creation of the state-of-the-art research facility, which has allowed transportation researchers to conduct thousands of hours of research; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis received numerous awards and accolades for his community service, including the Noel C. Taylor Humanitarian Award from Total Action Against Poverty and a Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis received the distinct honor of being named the Commonwealth's Cultural Laureate by Governor L. Douglas Wilder in 1992; and

WHEREAS, a man of high principles and a generous heart, Gordon Willis leaves behind a sterling legacy of service to his family and community and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his beloved wife of 43 years, Jean; children, Judy, Cynthia, and Gordon, and their wonderful families; and his numerous other family members, friends, and admirers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of a beloved community leader and outstanding Virginian, Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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