

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 790

Celebrating the life of Jhoon Goo Rhee.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 11, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2019

WHEREAS, Jhoon Goo Rhee, a pioneering Tae Kwon Do instructor who helped countless students throughout the United States and the world develop self-discipline and enhance physical and mental fitness through martial arts, died on April 30, 2018; and

WHEREAS, a native of Korea, Jhoon Rhee began to study the newly developed martial arts style of Tae Kwon Do while he attended high school in Seoul in the 1940s; at the outset of the Korean War, he worked as an interpreter for the United States Air Force, then was drafted by the Republic of Korea Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, Jhoon Rhee became the first person to offer Tae Kwon Do instruction in the United States when he began teaching informal classes at Edward Gary Air Force Base in Texas; six years later, he accepted a position with a karate school in Washington, D.C., and subsequently opened his own studio; and

WHEREAS, Jhoon Rhee revolutionized Tae Kwon Do instruction by devising a martial arts ballet, in which forms and movements are performed to music, and by using safety equipment such as foam padding for the head, hands, and feet; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Jhoon Rhee formed the Congressional Tae Kwon Do Club, offering free lessons in the basement of the United States Capitol, where he instructed more than 250 lawmakers, including former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and former Vice President Joe Biden; and

WHEREAS, in the 1970s, Jhoon Rhee became a household name when he started running television commercials for his studios with a catchy jingle written by his former student, Nils Lofgren of the E Street Band; and

WHEREAS, a 10th degree black belt who could perform incredible feats of strength and control, Jhoon Rhee worked with Bruce Lee, Muhammad Ali, and Chuck Norris, and by the 1980s, he operated a network of 11 studios serving more than 10,000 students throughout the Washington, D.C., region, including in the 48th District of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Jhoon Rhee introduced Tae Kwon Do to the countries of the former Soviet Union, with Jhoon Rhee affiliate schools operating in Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan; and

WHEREAS, Jhoon Rhee firmly believed that martial arts are not just a system of self-defense, but a way of life that gives each student the opportunity to unite mind and body in the pursuit of peace, understanding, and self-respect; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by his first wife, Han, Jhoon Rhee will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 20 years, Theresa; his children, Chun, James, Joanne, and Meme, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and former students; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Jhoon Goo Rhee; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Jhoon Goo Rhee as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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