HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 675

Commending Herman Lester.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 27, 1995
Agreed to by the Senate, February 2, 1995

WHEREAS, on November 6, 1994, Herman Lester, the last surviving eyewitness to the legendary Wreck of the Old 97, celebrated his 100th birthday; and

WHEREAS, on September 27, 1903, a Sunday afternoon, eight-year-old Herman Lester had traveled from his home in Keeling to Danville to visit his cousin, with whom he was walking near the railroad tracks at about the time the Old 97 was due in Danville; and

WHEREAS, the train, running late, approached the curve just before the trestle over the Old Stillhouse Branch at about 50 miles per hour, failed to negotiate the curve, and ran off the trestle into the mud below; and

WHEREAS, Herman Lester and his cousin, James, ran down the embankment to help the survivors, where they witnessed the mortally injured engineer, Steve Broady, being pulled from the train; and

WHEREAS, Herman Lester also remembers a flock of canaries escaping from the wreck, undoubtedly destined for the coal mines of Southwest Virginia or West Virginia and visible in the skies above Danville for several days after the wreck; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong resident of Pittsylvania County, Herman Lester is a veteran of World War I, a former tobacco farmer in Keeling, and a retired U. S. Mail carrier who delivered the mail by horseback, by horse and buggy, and by Model A Ford during his 39 years of service; and

WHEREAS, a living historical treasure and a fine Virginia gentleman, Herman Lester was honored on his 100th birthday with a reception sponsored by the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly congratulate Herman Lester on the occasion of his 100th birthday; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Herman Lester as an expression of the best wishes of the General Assembly.