

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 368

Celebrating the life of Donald Robert McCaig.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2019
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2019

WHEREAS, Donald Robert McCaig, a prolific and award-winning writer, author, sheep farmer, and dog breeder, died on November 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig was born in Butte, Montana, graduated from the University of Montana, and served two years in the United State Marine Corps where he was a weapons instructor; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig's early employment included teaching philosophy at Wayne State University in Detroit and working as a producer for Murray the K, the influential rock radio DJ; after settling into a lucrative copywriting position at a Madison Avenue advertising agency, Donald McCaig grew restless and decided to reinvent himself as a farmer and a writer; and

WHEREAS, affectionately known as Snee to his friends and family, Donald McCaig was drawn to his Highland County property during the 1970s back-to-the-land movement with his girlfriend, later his wife, Anne Ashley; and

WHEREAS, with no agricultural or construction experience, Donald McCaig experienced numerous fits and starts in his agrarian pursuits; he learned to master the techniques on his property, which he called Yucatec Farm, through trial and error and with help from his rural neighbors in Bath and Highland Counties who, over the years, related to him as an adopted son; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig and his wife raised Rambouillet sheep and sheepdogs, in particular Border Collies, becoming experts in shepherding and in breeding and raising sheepdogs; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig was drawn to writing because of the influence of an uncle who was a writer; his writing career began to take off on his Williamsville farm, and he produced articles and early books such as *Nop's Trial* about a Border Collie and its sequel, *Nop's Hope*; other titles included *An American Homeplace*, *The Bamboo Cannon*, and *The Man Who Made the Devil Glad*; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig continued to explore the lives of Border Collies in *Mr. and Mrs. Dog* in 2013, about training two pups, Luke and June, for the World Sheepdog Trials in Wales, and the subject of Virginia history in *Jacob's Ladder: A Story of Virginia During the War*, which covers, in rich detail, the fractious years between Lee's surrender at Appomattox and Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig received approval from the Margaret Mitchell estate to further imagine her works with the 2014 book *Ruth's Journey*, a prequel telling the story of the character Mammy from Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, and *Rhett Butler's People* in 2017, an authorized sequel to *Gone with the Wind*; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig's books received numerous awards and accolades; *Jacob's Ladder: A Story of Virginia During the War* won the Library of Virginia Literary Award for fiction in 1999 and also garnered the American Library Association's top honor for military fiction and the Michael Shaara Award for Excellence in Civil War Fiction; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig established himself as one of America's leading chroniclers of rural life, a master stylist whose understated prose was often featured in the National Public Radio program *All Things Considered*; and

WHEREAS, Donald McCaig will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Anne; his son, Jon; and numerous other family members and friends; 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 Donald Robert McCaig, a prolific and award-winning writer, author, sheep farmer, and dog breeder; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Donald Robert McCaig as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his literary and community contributions and respect for his memory.