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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 234

Offered March 2, 2020

*Celebrating the life of Mary Sigillo Barraco.*

Patrons—DeSteph; Delegate: Knight

WHEREAS, Mary Sigillo Barraco, a courageous member of the Belgian Resistance during World War II and a highly admired resident of Virginia Beach, died on December 6, 2019; and

WHEREAS, a native of Lawrence, Massachusetts, Mary Barraco moved to Renaix, Belgium, with her mother at a young age and was attending high school there at the outset of World War II; as American citizens, they were kept under observation and forced to report to Nazi officials three times each day; and

WHEREAS, horrified by the policies of the occupying Nazi forces, Mary Barraco joined the Belgian Resistance at great personal risk and ultimately attained the rank of captain, serving as a liaison between Canadian and Belgian forces; and

WHEREAS, during her time with the resistance, Mary Barraco helped Jewish children escape Nazi authorities, worked on underground newspapers, passed critical information between resistance members, assisted Allied paratroopers and downed airmen, and posed as a Red Cross worker to rescue prisoners from enemy detention; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, Mary Barraco was captured by the Nazis and brutally tortured during 16 months of imprisonment; her indomitable spirit was never broken and she bravely returned to the Belgian Resistance upon her release; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Mary Barraco settled in Virginia Beach and dedicated her life to promoting the importance of liberty, patriotism, and service as a community organizer and an inspirational speaker who touched countless lives through her work with students, veterans, church groups, and civic organizations; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her heroic contributions to the Belgian people, Mary Barraco was named as a Knight of the Crown by order of His Majesty, King Albert II of Belgium in 2004, and she received many other awards and accolades for her civic leadership throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, a devout Catholic, Mary Barraco lived her faith through her actions and enjoyed fellowship and worship with the Virginia Beach community as a member of Star of the Sea Catholic Church; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband, Joseph, Mary Barraco will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by her grandson, Leon, 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 Mary Sigillo Barraco, a respected member of the Virginia Beach community who made great personal sacrifices as a freedom fighter during World War II; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Mary Sigillo Barraco as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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