

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 337

Designating July 10, in 2023 and in each succeeding year, as Earl Hamner, Jr., Day in Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 17, 2023
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 2023

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner, Jr., a luminary author and television producer, inspired generations of Americans with his depictions of a wholesome mountain lifestyle in Virginia's Blue Ridge region through the long-running television program *The Waltons*; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner was born on July 10, 1923, in Schuyler, a small mining community in Nelson County; he was the eldest of eight children and learned the value of hard work and responsibility at a young age while growing up during the Great Depression; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner learned to read by the age of four and developed a passion for the written word; his first work, a poem titled "My Dog," was published on the children's page of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, when he was just six years of age; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner attended the University of Richmond on a scholarship, then during his sophomore year was drafted and joined many of the other young men of his generation in service to the nation during World War II as a member of the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, after his honorable military service, Earl Hamner completed his education and graduated from the University of Cincinnati, where he interned at a local radio station, then went to work as a radio writer for NBC in New York City; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner published his first book *Fifty Roads to Town* in 1953 and wrote scripts for *The Twilight Zone* in the 1960s; his semi-autobiographical novel *Spencer's Mountain* was adapted into a feature film in 1963, and his book *The Homecoming* became a Christmas television special, both of which served as precursors to his hit television show, *The Waltons*; and

WHEREAS, set in the fictional Jefferson County, Virginia, *The Waltons* was based on many of Earl Hamner's real-life experiences and followed the daily life of John Walton, Jr., better known as John-Boy, as well as his parents, grandparents, and siblings on Walton's Mountain over a 37-year period, which included the Great Depression, World War II, the Kennedy assassination, and the moon landing; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner voiced the wise, reassuring narrator of *The Waltons*, providing an introduction and postscript to each episode; in what became an iconic ending to each episode, the Walton family members bid each other good night, and the phrase "Good night, John-Boy" is now remembered as a beloved expression of the strong family values evoked by *The Waltons*; and

WHEREAS, through the hopeful and heartwarming stories of *The Waltons*, Earl Hamner crafted a work of timeless Americana that captivated audiences around the country and the world with its optimism and sentimentality for life's simple pleasures; and

WHEREAS, *The Waltons* built a loyal following and ultimately produced 221 episodes over nine seasons and six movie specials; the show was as acclaimed by critics as it was beloved by audiences, receiving 37 Emmy nominations and 13 Emmy awards, and 14 Golden Globe nominations and three Golden Globe awards; and

WHEREAS, possessing a wide range as a writer, Earl Hamner wrote and produced *Falcon Crest*, a show inspired by the story of a family ancestor, Anthony Giannini, an indentured servant from Fiebia, Italy, who came to Virginia in 1773 to grow a New World wine industry, and became Thomas Jefferson's gardener and friend at Monticello; and

WHEREAS, never losing his affection for folkways, old stories, and a sense of community and tradition, Earl Hamner produced adaptations of *Heidi* and *Charlotte's Web*, in addition to several other movies and television series after *The Waltons* and *Falcon Crest*; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner earned many awards and accolades for his work, including five Christopher Awards, the 1972 George Foster Peabody Award, a Primetime Emmy Award for *The Waltons*, and the Frederic Ziv Award for outstanding achievement in telecommunication from the University of Cincinnati in 2004; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Earl Hamner held true to his personal vision for media as an affirmation of the innate goodness of the human spirit, the importance of learning from the past, and the power of childhood imagination and hopefulness; and

WHEREAS, Earl Hamner died on March 24, 2016, and he is fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 61 years, Jane; their children, Scott and Caroline, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and fans of *The Waltons*; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate

July 10, in 2023 and in each succeeding year, as Earl Hamner, Jr., Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the family of Earl Hamner, Jr., so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.