

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY SENATOR CATHEY

A RESOLUTION

To commend John Benjamin "JB" Humphrey on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday on October 7, 2020.

WHEREAS, John Benjamin Humphrey, known as "JB", while born on October 7, 1920, in Beekman, Louisiana, he lived most of his life in Delhi, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, "JB" Humphrey enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in October 1942, and was assigned to Selman Field, a short distance east of Monroe, Louisiana, which served as a training base during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Airman Humphrey was trained as a flight engineer and after training, his unit was attached to the Ninth Air Force, European Theater of Operations, and stationed in England and France; and

WHEREAS, "JB" Humphrey was assigned to the crew of a B-29 Superfortress, a four-engine propeller-driven heavy bomber, designed and built by Boeing Corporation, one of the largest aircraft used in World War II, and it excelled in low-altitude night incendiary bombing; and

WHEREAS, "JB's" B-29 was sent to bomb enemy train tracks in Europe, but was shot down and crashed in March 1944, in enemy territory; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Humphrey assisted the entire flight crew out of the downed plane and into the cover of nearby bushes in hopes of avoiding enemy detection; and

WHEREAS, the French Resistance located the downed airmen and took them to the nearest hospital in Allied hands, where it was discovered that Sgt. Humphrey had assisted the others in his crew despite having suffered a broken back in the crash; and

WHEREAS, eventually, Sgt. Humphrey arrived in Ireland and boarded a hospital ship returning to the United States; and

WHEREAS, because of significant German U-boat activity in the Northern Atlantic Ocean, the hospital ship sailed southwest out of Ireland and crossed the equator before heading north to safely deliver its precious cargo home for additional medical treatment; and

WHEREAS, Sgt. Humphrey returned to Louisiana where, once his injuries were healed, he continued to serve his country as a flight engineer instructor at Selman Field, Barksdale Air Force Base and at a third facility in Missouri until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, and in the Pacific in September 1945; and

WHEREAS, because of his heroism in evacuating the members of his flight crew to safety, Sgt. Humphrey was awarded two silver stars for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States while engaged in military operations, two bronze stars awarded for exemplary conduct in ground combat against an armed enemy, an air medal for those who served in the air corps, and a purple heart for being wounded in combat; and

WHEREAS, before being discharged, Sgt. Humphrey and his crew were requested by five-star General "Hap" Arnold, the commander in chief of the Army and commander in chief of the Army Air Force, to fly him to Ireland; and

WHEREAS, General Arnold announced that if he was going to fly, it would have to be the best pilot and crew; Humphrey's crew qualified for this exceptional honor and a plaque in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum commemorates this flight and the crew members involved; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to civilian life, "JB" Humphrey and his adored wife, Bonnie, owned a gasoline service station in Delhi for a period of time; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Humphrey sold the station and became a rural route mail carrier for the United States Postal Service, still serving his fellow Americans and he is believed to be the oldest former rural route mail carrier alive; and

WHEREAS, "JB" and Bonnie Humphrey settled into life in Delhi, raising their two sons, Johnny and Phillip, attending the First Baptist Church of Delhi, and living the life that their sacrifices, in the armed forces and on the homefront, secured for their generation and those to come; and

WHEREAS, "JB" was a third degree Mason and a member of the Barak Shriners, where he participated as a member of the "clown troop" known as "Beeker the Clown"; and

WHEREAS, "JB" and Bonnie delighted in a marriage that lasted for fifty years and particularly enjoyed dancing together, and reveled in spending time with their children, grandchildren, and extended family who were always a top priority; and

WHEREAS, after the World War II memorial was completed in Washington, D.C., in 2004, flights were begun to take World War II veterans to see the memorial and in order that they would know how grateful their country remains for the sacrifices made by them and their comrades in arms; and

WHEREAS, as the country cherishes its ever dwindling remaining World War II veterans, it is important to celebrate the invaluable contributions of men such as John Benjamin Humphrey, who saw what needed to be done, put their lives on hold, and at great personal peril, fought to retain the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights for all Americans and for that effort, "JB" Humphrey is honored on his one hundredth birthday for being a true American hero in every sense of the word and deserving of all honor.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend John Benjamin Humphrey on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday on October 7, 2020.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to John Benjamin "JB" Humphrey.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE