

By: Representatives Porter, Mims, Cockerham, To: Rules
Pigott

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 17

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE, SERVICE AND LEGACY OF MRS.
2 MATTIE RIALS AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HER FAMILY,
3 FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY UPON HER PASSING.

4 WHEREAS, it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1 that "To
5 everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under
6 the Heaven," and as such, on January 13, 2025, the immaculate
7 author and finisher of our soul's destiny summoned the mortal
8 presence of dearly beloved, Mattie Jane Gardner Rials, to eternal
9 rest, rendering great sorrow and loss to her family, friends and
10 tricounty community; and

11 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi and particularly, Pike,
12 Amite and Walthall Counties, lost a loving mother, grandmother and
13 renowned storyteller with the passing of longtime children's
14 librarian, Miss Mattie, as she was affectionately known to all,
15 who was born on May 28, 1933, in McComb, Mississippi, to James E.
16 Gardner and Gladys McElveen Gardner and later married to Roger B.
17 Rials; and



18 WHEREAS, Miss Mattie, always having had a gentle and loving
19 spirit that naturally drew people to her, began her lifelong
20 service to others when she started teaching Bible School classes
21 at the young age of 15, and in 1965, Miss Mattie opened a
22 kindergarten in the garage of her home where her infectious wit
23 and charm cultivated a thirst for knowledge in the minds of her
24 impressionable young students as day after day, she honed her
25 storytelling talent; and

26 WHEREAS, after closing her kindergarten in 1974, Miss Mattie
27 began a 45-year career as the children's librarian with the
28 Pike-Walthall-Amite Library System in McComb, creating a magical
29 world for children of all ages through storytelling and music with
30 the help of her indispensable but never seen little companion,
31 Scooter Mouse, who supplied voices for her captivating stories
32 while living in the walls of the library and riding a motorcycle
33 through the endless stacks of books during the night; and

34 WHEREAS, Scooter Mouse garnered attention far beyond
35 southwest Mississippi, having won The John Cotton Dana Award for
36 outstanding library public relations from the American Library
37 Association in 1976, in addition to helping Miss Mattie gain
38 further recognition as the first recipient of the Kaigler-Lamont
39 Award presented by the Children's Book Festival in 1998; and

40 WHEREAS, while Miss Mattie's famed weekly Story Hour and
41 Monday "Lap Chats" for toddlers were the doorway for countless
42 children into the world of reading and learning, her Wednesday



43 Friends group, a weekly gathering of special friends for arts and
44 crafts which won national recognition as the longest-running
45 program for the developmentally and intellectually disabled,
46 welcomed countless participants over the decades to a place
47 offering belonging, creativity and joy; and

48 WHEREAS, Miss Mattie officially retired from the library
49 system in 2018, but her positive influence on kids and the entire
50 community continued up until her death as she regularly
51 volunteered at the library and around town; and

52 WHEREAS, today, the immeasurable impact Miss Mattie had over
53 generations of children in the McComb area for nearly half a
54 century lives on with the Miss Mattie Foundation, a nonprofit
55 organization formed to honor Miss Mattie and her passionate
56 educational and community service contributions through its
57 mission of raising funds and awarding scholarships to deserving
58 high school students from Pike, Amite and Walthall Counties; and

59 WHEREAS, Miss Mattie's loving spirit, sunny demeanor and
60 steadfast commitment to education and inclusion earned her the
61 admiration, love and respect of all who had the privilege of
62 knowing her, leaving a legacy of kindness and inspiration that
63 will endure for generations to come; and

64 WHEREAS, it is most appropriate to recognize and honor the
65 lives of selfless Mississippians, especially those such as Miss
66 Mattie, whose tireless contributions to the community in which she



67 lived profoundly enriched the cultural and educational fabric of
68 southwest Mississippi and the entire State of Mississippi:

69 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
70 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
71 mourn the loss and commemorate the life and legacy of Mattie Jane
72 Gardner Rials and express deepest sympathy to her family, friends
73 and the entire Pike, Amite and Walthall County community upon her
74 passing.

75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
76 furnished to the family of Mattie Jane Gardner Rials, the
77 Pike-Amite-Walthall Library System and to the members of the
78 Capitol Press Corps.

