

2017-K1070

Assembly Resolution No. 1070

BY: M. of A. Zebrowski

MOURNING the death of Gerald T. Donnellan, United States Army Veteran, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Gerald T. Donnellan, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Gerald T. "Jerry" Donnellan, a lifelong resident of Rockland County, died on Friday, March 23, 2018, at the age of 71; and

WHEREAS, Born on December 28, 1946, in Nyack, New York, to Michael and Anna Donnellan, Gerald T. Donnellan was the youngest of 5 siblings; he attended St. Anne's School and was a member of Albertus Magnus High School's first graduating class; and

WHEREAS, Gerald T. Donnellan went on to attend Rockland Community College, where he studied theater and stage management; he continued his studies at Texas A&M University until he was drafted into the United States Army in 1968; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of extensive and grueling training, Gerald T. Donnellan became a Sergeant with the United States Army Rangers; while valiantly serving in Vietnam, this brave soldier was

severely injured by an enemy grenade after his patrol was ambushed; and

WHEREAS, After many surgeries and endless physical therapy at Valley Forge Hospital, Gerald T. Donnellan was finally able to move home to be with his wife and young son, Sean; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, just one day after he returned home, Gerald T. Donnellan began working for Rockland Community College as their stage manager; he went on to become stage manager at the Theater Go Round in Nanuet in 1973, which ultimately led him to becoming a stage manager at the Westchester Premier Theater; and

WHEREAS, During this time, Gerald T. Donnellan met Frank Sinatra, and so began an 11-year career as his stage manager, traveling around the world and meeting many wonderful actors and entertainers; and

WHEREAS, In 1986, after learning that more soldiers had committed suicide than had died in the Vietnam War, Gerald T. Donnellan made a career change; he was hired by then County Executive John Grant as an entry level Veterans Counselor and began to work in the county's Veterans Agency Office; and

WHEREAS, In 1992, Gerald T. Donnellan was appointed Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, the esteemed position he held until January of 2018, when he retired after 30 years of dedicated service to Veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, During his illustrious tenure, Gerald T. Donnellan created the local chapter 333 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, opened the first Rockland County Veterans Homeless Shelter, created the Camp Shanks Museum, and opened the first VA clinic in the United States; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary man was also the creator of the Annual "Watch Fires," a Memorial Day event in which three separate fires are lit around the county, fashioned after those lit by General George Washington's army during the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, Gerald T. Donnellan served on numerous boards throughout Rockland including the Salvation Army, Rockland Community College Foundation, United Way and Dominican College, to name just a few; he was also the recipient of countless awards and medals of honor for his many years of faithful service; and

WHEREAS, Gerald T. Donnellan will best be remembered by his strong yet eloquent voice and speeches, his poignant and thought provoking writing, and his unending love, loyalty and devotion for his friends, family and fellow Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his sister Ellie, sister-in-law Madge and his son's mother Deborah, Gerald T. Donnellan is survived by his best friend and beloved wife, MariEllyn; two adoring sons, Sean (Candice) and James (Angela); three beautiful grandchildren, Isla, Alec and Bella; his 150 pound dog, "Ducks"; two brothers, Donald and Jim (Sue); and a sister, Kathleen; as well as many nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Gerald T. Donnellan leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Gerald T. Donnellan, United States Army Veteran, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Gerald T. Donnellan.