

Senate of Alabama



MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Resolution

MOURNING THE DEATH OF CONSUELA LEE

By Senator Sanders

WHEREAS, we note with great sadness the death of Consuela Lee of Snow Hill, Alabama, the renowned jazz pianist and educator, on Saturday, December 26, 2009, at the age of 83 years; and

WHEREAS, she was born on November 1, 1926, to the late Mr. and Mrs. Arnold W. and Alberta G. Lee, in Tallahassee, Florida, but she spent most of her life in Snow Hill, graduating from the Snow Hill Institute, which was founded by her grandfather, the late William J. Edwards, in 1893, and remained open until 1973; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee began playing the piano at the age of 3 and not long after was playing Chopin etudes and once played with her brothers and sisters in the Newport Jazz Festival; and

WHEREAS, her mother was a classical pianist and teacher and her father was a cornet player and the band director at Florida A&M University, so naturally she followed in their footsteps and studied music at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, as a classically trained jazz pianist who recorded distinctive arrangements of compositions by Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, and many others, she played a style of music that was influenced by the likes of Mary Lou Williams and Art Tatum; she had a long career teaching theory and composition at historically Black colleges, including Alabama State University, Hampton University, formerly known as Hampton Institute, Miles College, Talladega College, and Norfolk State University; and

WHEREAS, by the late 1970s, Ms. Lee had returned to her hometown of Snow Hill and was determined to awaken the legacy of her grandfather by creating a performing arts school for local African American children; she worked tirelessly negotiating with the Wilcox County Board of Education to form the Springtree/Snow Hill Institute for the Performing Arts, which opened in June of 1980 and ran daily after-school music programs and summer programs for nearly a quarter of a century; the school also started a jazz xylophone choir called Bright Glory, which made frequent tours of the state; and

WHEREAS, she was instrumental in keeping the school open until 2003, when her health began to decline, but the school was visited by many prominent musicians, including drummer Max Roach, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, actor Delroy Lindo, singer Odetta, and her own nephew, filmmaker Spike Lee, who hired Ms. Lee as a music supervisor for his film "School Daze"; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee was inducted into the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame in 1992; being recognized and respected by many accomplished jazz musicians, her dedication to the craft of music composition, performance, improvisation, and most of all, practice, is a reflection of the best of the community in which she was reared; and

WHEREAS, left to cherish her memory are her daughter, Monica Moorehead of Jersey City, New Jersey; her son, Dr. Cameron Lee Moorehead of Atlanta, Georgia; four brothers, Bill and Clifton Lee both of Brooklyn, New York; Arnold Lee, Jr., of Camden, Alabama; and Leonard Lee of Kalamazoo, Michigan; and a sister, A. Grace Lee Mims of Cleveland, Ohio; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That we deeply mourn the death of Consuela Lee, and by copy of this resolution, extend our heartfelt sympathies to her family.

I hereby certify that the above is a true, correct and accurate copy of Resolution No. 10-020, filed with the Senate of Alabama on January 20, 2010.

McDowell Lee
Secretary of Senate

