

2017-K678

Assembly Resolution No. 678

BY: M. of A. Schimminger

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of A. R. Gurney, renowned playwright, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, A. R. Gurney, affectionately known as Pete, was a Buffalo-born playwright who spun stories about the city's upper class into a literacy career that spanned five decades and entertained millions; he died on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, at the age of 86; and

WHEREAS, Born on November 1, 1930, to Albert Ramsdell Gurney and Marion Spaulding, Pete Gurney grew up in his family's estate on Lincoln Parkway; he attended Nichols School before graduating from St. Paul's, a boarding school in Concord, New Hampshire; and

WHEREAS, Pete Gurney went on to earn degrees from both Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and the esteemed Yale School of Drama; and

WHEREAS, Pete Gurney, whose dozens of plays make up a sprawling

mythology built on his experience growing up in Buffalo's fading White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, is best known for his plays, "Love Letters," "The Dining Room," and "The Cocktail Hour"; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his active and lucrative career as a playwright, Pete Gurney taught literature at Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1962 until the mid-1980s; and

WHEREAS, Pete Gurney's Broadway debut came in 1987, with a production of "Sweet Sue"; he clinched further fame with "The Cocktail Hour" in 1988, and in that same year, the immensely popular play "Love Letters," which remains a favorite of community and regional theaters and can be seen somewhere in Buffalo at least once a year; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his illustrious career, Pete Gurney maintained a close connection to Buffalo and its theater community; recent productions of his work include the Kavinoky Theatre's "Family Furniture" in 2015, Road Less Traveled Productions' "Ancestral Voices" in 2012, and the Kavinoky's take on "The Grand Manner," in 2011; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, a production of "Love Letters" starring Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal played in the 710 Main Theatre in 2016; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to his community, Pete Gurney gave tirelessly of his time and energies as a mentor to young theater artists; he also served as chairman of the Theatre District Association's Curtain Up celebration in 2013; and

WHEREAS, In the last half-century, no Buffalo-born literary figure has loomed as large or remained as long on the national stage as Pete Gurney; and

WHEREAS, Pete Gurney is survived by his wife, Molly; four children, George, Amy, Evelyn and Benjamin; a brother, Steven; a sister, Evelyn; and eight grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Pete Gurney 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 celebrate the life and accomplishments of A. R. Gurney, renowned playwright, 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 A. R. Gurney.