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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Robert George "Bob" Zagone of the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago, who passed away on January 7, 2023 at the age of 78; and

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WHEREAS, Bob Zagone was raised around Halsted and North Avenue, attending Lane Tech High School when he was older; and

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WHEREAS, Bob Zagone first entered the entertainment business as the son of two factory workers who worked in and around magic and novelty shops; and

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WHEREAS, Bob Zagone met his idol, famous magician and Chicago native Harry Blackstone, whom he impressed with his budding sleight-of-hand ability; and

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WHEREAS, Bob Zagone made a strong impression on Harry Blackstone, who asked if he could take him under his care and train him, but Bob's mother responded with a resounding "No!" and threatened to punch Harry Blackstone in the face; and

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WHEREAS, Bob Zagone swore off prop magic as a teenager after someone in a small audience continued to yell out the secrets behind the tricks he was performing; and

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1 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone chose to focus on close-up magic, and
2 through reading books coupled with relentless practice, he
3 became a master prestidigitator; and

4 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone would walk into Near North Side bars
5 along Lincoln Avenue and Rush and Clark streets, performing
6 magic for the patrons; and

7 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone accepted a few dollars or a drink as a
8 tip, but he was not compelled by money to perform but by a love
9 of his craft; and

10 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone provided for his family during the
11 1960s and 1970s by selling costumes, magic tricks, and
12 numerous gag gifts at his store, Zagone's Magic and Novelty
13 Shop, which opened in the Lake View neighborhood; and

14 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone's life changed one day when a
15 gentleman entered the store and inquired about purchasing a
16 comfortable gorilla mask; and

17 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone was able to revolutionize the mask
18 industry, working with sculptors and artists to change masks
19 from being rough, scratchy, and restrictive to breathing, to
20 something better; and

1 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone closed his novelty shop and, with the
2 help of his brother Phil, opened Be Something Studios, which
3 produced several iconic masks with the help of resident
4 artist, Billy Ystrom; and

5 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone added another feather to his company's
6 cap after one of its masks was used in the trick-or-treating
7 scene of the 1982 film "E.T. the Extraterrestrial"; and

8 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone gave the masks as hallmark Halloween
9 gifts to his children's basketball coaches, family dentists,
10 and teachers, as well as a yearly donation to the Misericordia
11 Home; and

12 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone retired in the early 1990s, by which
13 point the company had become a fully-fledged family business;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone fashioned a life doing activities that
16 "just tickled him", said his daughter, Dena; these activities
17 included dressing up as Santa Claus for Christmas morning and
18 placing a mask of his face in his bed to give the impression
19 that Mr. Claus was really there; and

20 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone's lifelong pocket companions were a

1 cigarette, a deck of cards, and a couple of coins that
2 disappeared before the eyes of anyone who answered the query
3 of "Wanna see something?"; and

4 WHEREAS, Bob Zagone is survived by his wife, Eleanor; his
5 children, Dean Zagone and Dena (Joe) Bronowich; his
6 grandchildren, Terra, Tyler, Leia, Noah, and Dylan; and his
7 great-grandchild, Atlantis; therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
9 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
10 Robert George "Bob" Zagone and extend our sincere condolences
11 to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be
12 it further

13 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
14 presented to the family of Bob Zagone as an expression of our
15 deepest sympathy.