RESOLUTION

OF

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MARIN COUNTY

COMMENDING

NELS JOHNSON

WHEREAS, Nelson Edward Johnson grew up in Hawaii and Virginia, became an Eagle Scout, then studied journalism, protested the Vietnam War and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Rutgers University in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Nels came to California on vacation and decided to stay for good, taking his first newspaper job at the Tiburon weekly paper, the Ebb Tide, in November 1971; and

WHEREAS, he joined the Marin Independent Journal in May 1972 at the age of 22 and soon was assigned to the County government beat, on which he stayed for 10 years; and

WHEREAS, Nels wrote countless stories about Supervisors’ expense accounts, or “winning and dining tabs” as he called them, and, in the words of one former Supervisor, haunted the Board with constant coverage; and

WHEREAS, Nels spent six months on loan to the Gannett Corporation’s flagship paper, USA Today, in the 1980s and covered the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker PTL scandal for six months. He turned down an offer to stay there and returned to the J, and

WHEREAS, one of Nels’ proudest moments as a journalist was helping to solve the mysterious disappearance of a West Marin couple in 1994. A week after the husband and wife vanished after a shopping trip to San Anselmo, Nels heard a fisherman talk about seeing groceries floating in the Nicasio Reservoir. They both had a hunch that it was connected to the disappearance. Nels got investigators involved and the two missing people were found dead in their sunken pickup truck five hours later, providing closure for the family; and

WHEREAS, Nels served in editing roles for many years following his stint as a reporter and challenged his cohorts to be aggressive, thorough and accurate; and

WHEREAS, Nels returned to the County government reporting beat in 2008 and resumed his scrutiny of how tax dollars were being spent from his Civic Center office, fondly called the Board of Scoops; and

WHEREAS, County employees and elected officials might not have always liked what was published in the J, but they respected Nels’ dedication to journalism and the public’s right to know; and

WHEREAS, his institutional knowledge of the County government amassed through the decades ("He knows where all the skeletons are buried," one official said) is irreplaceable; and

WHEREAS, April 28, 2016 was Nels’ last day at the paper, and on May 7, coworkers, colleagues, friends and foes alike will gather to roast Nels in a celebration that will be, at Nels’ request, a benefit for the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children’s Center.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Marin County Board of Supervisors salutes Nels Johnson and commends him for his 45 years of service to the residents of Marin County, on the event of his well-deserved retirement.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin held this 3rd day of May 2016.

STEVIE KINSEY - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 4 - PRESIDENT

DAVID CONNOLLY - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 1

KATIE RICE - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 2

KATHRYN SEARS - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 3

JUDY ARNOLD - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 5