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Georgia Humanities Remembers Board Member Abit Massey

Atlanta—Georgia Humanities mourns the loss of Abit Massey, our dear friend, celebrated board member, and devoted advocate for our state and its people. Abit passed away on June 14, 2024, at the age of 96.

A giant of Georgia politics and the state's agricultural industry, Abit began his career in public service and advocacy not long after he graduated from the University of Georgia and the Emory University College of Law. In 1959, he was named head of the Georgia Department of Commerce (now Economic Development), where he oversaw the creation of the tourist division and the building of the state's first welcome center. He went on to serve as president of the Georgia Poultry Federation for more than four decades, driving growth and working to expand research in the field. Well-known and respected in the halls of Georgia's capitol, Abit was once described by former Governor Nathan Deal as "the best governor the State of Georgia never had."

Following his retirement from the federation in 2009, Abit embarked on a long and distinguished second career as a community servant, volunteering on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Gainesville Board of Education, Brenau University, and Georgia Women of Achievement, where he was the first man to sit on the board of trustees and the first person to be named a trustee for life.

Abit's numerous other honors include the University of Georgia President's Medal, a Presidential Citation for Service from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and induction into the Poultry Industry Hall of Fame. The Georgia Poultry Lab sits on Abit Massey Way off of GA 365 in his hometown of Gainesville.

Appointed by Governor Brian Kemp to serve on the Georgia Humanities board in 2020, Abit guided the organization with the wit, wisdom, and unwavering support that were his hallmarks. Fellow board member Phil Smith noted: "I've never met anyone quite like Mr. Abit Massey. They broke the mold after he was made! In the dog-eat-dog world of Georgia politics and public policy, he blazed new paths throughout his life by being kind, considerate, respectful, strategically positive, and mentoring countless younger people."

Cameron Bean, board chair, echoed these sentiments: "Abit was a great champion of many important causes and organizations in the State of Georgia. He loved our work and served our organization for many years with great honor and enthusiasm! Abit was a very special friend, and I miss him very much."

Abit Massey is survived by his wife of over 60 years, Kayanne, two children, and four grandchildren. A private family service will be held at Alta Vista Cemetery, with a celebration of his life to be scheduled at a later date.

About Georgia Humanities

Through inclusive grants and programs, Georgia Humanities connects people and communities to spark curiosity, share ideas, amplify stories, and inspire action. Funding for Georgia Humanities is provided by the Georgia General Assembly, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and various foundations, donors, and partners. To learn more, please visit GeorgiaHumanities.org.

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