

1 Introduced by Council Member Freeman:  
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4 **RESOLUTION 2021-895**

5 A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MOURNING THE  
6 PASSING OF GOLF LEGEND, LEE ELDER; PROVIDING AN  
7 EFFECTIVE DATE.  
8

9 **WHEREAS**, Robert Lee Elder was born July 14, 1934 in Dallas,  
10 Texas, the youngest of 10 children. When Lee was nine, his father was  
11 killed in action during World War II, and then tragically his mother  
12 died three months later. Lee was taken in by his Aunt Sarah when he  
13 was 11, but was living independently by the age of 16; and

14 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder entered into the world of golf as a caddie,  
15 the only pathway for a Black man to be allowed on the course at that  
16 time. In the early years, Lee played with scavenged golf balls and  
17 wooden-shafted clubs bought at a second-hand store. As a teenager,  
18 Lee survived by betting on his golf games around Dallas, and later  
19 traveled the South with renowned hustler Titanic Thompson, posing as  
20 his caddie before displaying his unexpected skills to his opponents;  
21 and

22 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder turned professional in 1959, two years before  
23 the Caucasian-only racial prohibition clause was removed from the PGA  
24 by-laws. After his discharge from the Army, he joined the United Golf  
25 Association (UGA) Tour for Black players in the early 1960's. Lee  
26 Elder was one of the UGA's best players, but the prize money was  
27 barely enough to earn a living. Finally at 33, Elder had saved \$6,500  
28 in the bank, the minimum requirement to enter the PGA qualifying  
29 school where he earned his first tour card for the 1968 season; and

30 **WHEREAS**, at the age of 40, Lee Elder was the first Black golfer  
31 to play in the Masters, paving the way for future generations. In his

1 career, Elder played in 448 PGA TOUR events, won four times, and  
2 claimed another eight victories on PGA TOUR Champions. To play at the  
3 Masters in Augusta, a victory at a PGA Tour event was required. Lee  
4 Elder earned that at the 1974 Monsanto Open, the same Florida event  
5 where he had been forced to change clothes in a parking lot years  
6 earlier because Black people were not allowed to use the country club  
7 locker room; and

8 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder was the first African American on the cover  
9 of Golf Digest, the first Black golfer to play the 1979 U.S. Ryder  
10 Cup team, played in a South African PGA during apartheid and was the  
11 2019 recipient of the Bob Jones Award for distinguished sportsmanship,  
12 the highest honor given by the United States Golf Association. Forty-  
13 five years after his trailblazing appearance at the Masters in  
14 Augusta, Lee Elder was recognized by the club, which established  
15 scholarships in his name at Paine College, a historically Black  
16 college in Augusta, and also invited him to be an honorary starter  
17 at the 2021 Masters; and

18 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder challenged the entrenched racial barriers in  
19 the sport of golf, he forged a hard road onto the PGA TOUR, overcame  
20 a difficult childhood and faced discrimination to build a successful  
21 career in a sport historically unfair to Black players. Lee Elder was  
22 strongly aware of the impact that his life would have on future  
23 generations, and he was proudly in attendance at Augusta National for  
24 Tiger Woods' historic win there in 1997. Lee Elder passed away on  
25 November 28, 2021, in Escondido, California at the age of 87; now  
26 therefore

27 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

28 **Section 1.** The City of Jacksonville hereby honors the  
29 remarkable life and accomplishments of Lee Elder. Jacksonville City  
30 Council mourns the passing of Mr. Elder, the trailblazer and golf  
31 legend, and extends condolences to his friends and family.

1           **Section 2.           Effective Date.**   This Resolution shall become  
2 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective  
3 without the Mayor's signature.

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5 Form Approved:

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7                     /s/ Paige H. Johnston          

8 Office of General Counsel

9 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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