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## **“COME ON-A ROSIE'S HOUSE”**

*Former Kentucky Lt. Gov. Steve Henry and his wife Heather French Henry, held a press conference today at the historical Augusta, Kentucky home of legendary singer and actress, Rosemary Clooney. Nick Clooney, representing Rosemary's family, joined the Henrys to announce that the home will be made available for public tours and will house memorabilia from her nearly sixty-year career.*

(Augusta, KY) - Former Kentucky Lieutenant Governor, Steve Henry, and his wife Heather French Henry, Miss America 2000, have announced plans to make Rosemary Clooney's historical Augusta, Kentucky home located on the banks of the Ohio River at 106 East Riverside Drive available to the public.

Rather than see the property sold to a private citizen who might not recognize its significance as a historical landmark and home to one of the world's most beloved entertainers, the Henry's have reached an agreement with Rosemary's family to acquire the home and establish an advisory board which will oversee the operation of the home, including the displaying of memorabilia and public tours.

“Once Heather and I have finalized the purchase of the home, we will then allow the board to do whatever is necessary to get it open to the public as soon as possible,” said Dr. Henry. “Although the home will be our residence, we felt it was important to open the home to the public and to preserve and promote Rosemary's legacy, as well as her family's.”

Nick and Nina Clooney, whose support Dr. Henry said was crucial to the development of the project, know better than anyone just how important Augusta and Northern Kentucky were to Rosemary. Roughly two decades ago, during one of her many visits to their Augusta home, Rosemary asked her brother and his wife to find her a river house that she could call her own. The home at 106 East Riverside Drive was considered “unfit for habitation” when purchased, but it soon became Rosemary's retreat from the demands of her career and a haven for much needed rest between performances that saw her traveling all over the world. It was also the realization of a dream that she had inherited from her Grandma Guilfoyle to one day own a home on the river. Located just twenty minutes from her hometown of Maysville where she spent her childhood singing on corners and dreaming big dreams at The Russell Theatre, this Augusta home was the inspiration for Rosemary to comment, “I really feel as if I belong there.”

It was obvious to anyone who knew Rosemary that she loved Augusta and never forgot her roots in Northern Kentucky. In fact, Rosemary's children believe that it would delight her to know that she was the influence that would bring visitors from around the world to experience the charm and hospitality of her Northern Kentucky neighbors. "We were taught by our grandparents to always give back," Nick Clooney said, "and the idea that Rosemary's home which will honor her career could bring tourism dollars into Northern Kentucky is a wonderful way for us to give back to the area that has given us so much."

When asked their reasons for getting involved in this project, Dr. Henry replied, "As a child growing up in Maysville, Heather idolized Rosemary, the 'hometown girl who made it big.' Over the years they developed a close relationship and throughout Heather's year as Miss America they remained close and Rosemary became her mentor. It was Rosemary's mentoring that helped her to navigate the potential pitfalls of being in the public eye and inspired her to keep her feet grounded in their hometown roots. In fact, in December of 1999, Kentucky was so proud when both Heather and Rosemary appeared at the annual lighting of the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center. While Rosemary is singing 'White Christmas,' during that program she says to Heather, 'Say hello to the folks at home for me, won't you? I wish I could be there.'"

Dr. Henry went on to say, "When this opportunity arose to not only give back to Rosemary who has brought so much joy to our families for years, but also to Heather's hometown, we felt we needed to make it a reality as soon as possible. Rosemary's contribution to our culture and the music that she sang deserves to be preserved for future generations."

Research is currently underway to determine the history of the home prior to Rosemary's ownership. It is believed, however, that the home was part of the Underground Railroad. Stories have circulated that slaves were hidden in the dirt-floored cellar where a tunnel once led to the river and their escape to freedom, adding just one more reason why this home needs to be preserved and made available to the public.

Dr. Henry said, "I believe The Rosemary Clooney House will be a welcome addition to this community. It is the first house you will see above the brand new Augusta River Walk. Operators of the riverboats that travel up and down the Ohio River are always looking for interesting and entertaining venues for their passengers. And no one has to look further than the success of The Rosemary Clooney Music Festival to know that Rosemary has thousands of fans from all over the world who continue to support and embrace her."

The group will seek out federal and state grants to achieve its mission, but in the short term will be looking to individual, foundation, and corporate donations to get the doors open. Custom sponsorships, including the naming rights to galleries and exhibits, will be created to fit individual donor requirements.

For more information on how you can assist in making The Rosemary Clooney House a reality, visit <http://www.rosemaryclooneyhouse.com>