



Dr. Jerry Gay Nye

November 4, 1932 - February 24, 2015

Dr. Jerry Gay Nye was born on November 4, 1932. He died on February 24, 2015. He was eighty-two years, three months, and twenty days old at the time of his death.

Jerry was born four days before Franklin Roosevelt was elected President of the United States for the first time in a rural farmhouse in Grady County, Oklahoma. He was the eighth and final child of Arthur Wilson Nye, a sharecropping farmer, and his wife, Etta Hunn Nye. Except for a brief time living in Arizona with his parents while his father worked in a factory supporting the war effort during World War II, Jerry spent his childhood watching and working with his father and brothers farming in Grady County. Those times provided Jerry with many wonderful stories of rural life in America in the mid-twentieth century. On hot summer days, these stories included recollections of enduring unbearable heat while cutting broomcorn in some low-lying field in Grady County or sitting with friends listening to radio broadcasts of Major League Baseball including those of his favorite team, the Brooklyn Dodgers.

When he was in high school in the late 1940's, his father "retired" from farming and moved the family to a small house on a few lots in Bradley, Oklahoma. It was the only land his father ever owned. On it stood a small house his father and brothers built out of used lumber. He graduated from Bradley High School in 1951 where he served as the President of his senior class.

In 1952, Jerry was inducted into the United States Army following his brothers,

Sam, Jim and Dub, in serving his country. After basic training, he was assigned to the Army Corp of Engineers as a bulldozer operator. He served a full tour of duty in Korea during the Korean War. While hot days would later remind him of days spent cutting broomcorn in Grady County, cold days always reminded him of the winter he served in Korea. Throughout the rest of his life, cold temperatures in Oklahoma were always measured against the bitter cold he experienced while on the Korean peninsula when the wind would sweep down from Siberia. One of the accomplishments that he was most proud of during his time in Korea was being part of "Operation Big Switch" and helping to build the prisoner exchange facility at Panmunjom. There thousands of American soldiers returned to freedom after captivity in North Korean prisoner of war camps. After his discharge from active duty, he continued to serve in the Army Reserves where he ultimately reached the rank of Sergeant First Class.

While waiting to leave to operate a bulldozer in the oilfields of Venezuela, Jerry decided to take advantage of the G.I. Bill for a single semester in the spring of 1955. He enrolled at East Central State College (now East Central University) in Ada, Oklahoma. He would never make it to Venezuela. Instead, he would spend the next three years at East Central. While there, he worked on campus as well as at KTEN television station in Ada as a cameraman to help supplement his funds for school. He would ultimately become the first member of his family to earn a college degree graduating in 1957 with his bachelor's degree in English Education.

While at East Central, Jerry met Juanita Walker. He and Juanita married on April 19, 1957, at the Boswell Memorial Chapel on the campus of East Central. Their service was officiated by Juanita's father, Rev. S. S. Walker. They would spend the next fifty-seven plus years together.

After Jerry and Juanita completed their bachelor's degrees, they taught public school in Cox City, Oklahoma, and Burbank, Oklahoma. In addition to teaching, Jerry also coached girls' basketball. In 1962, Juanita accepted a teaching job at Morrison, Oklahoma. This enabled Jerry to attend Oklahoma

State University where he earned his master's degree in 1963.

Jerry began his college teaching career in 1963 at Northern Oklahoma Junior College (now Northern Oklahoma College) in Tonkawa, Oklahoma. While at Northern, Jerry taught English and literature classes as well as serving as the baseball coach. He was extremely proud of his one and only win against extremely tough baseball teams from Bacone Junior College that were fielded by Enos Semore who would later coach baseball at the University of Oklahoma. Jerry also started the women's basketball program at Northern after being approached by students he had coached and coached against in high school. Northern continues, to this day, to offer athletic opportunities to women in the form of basketball at both its Tonkawa and Enid campuses. In 1965, Jerry and Juanita left the state of Oklahoma for the only time during their marriage for employment and educational opportunities at Colorado State College of Education (now the University of Northern Colorado) in Greeley, Colorado. At this time, Juanita accepted a teaching position in the Home Economics department at the college. This enabled Jerry to complete his doctoral work in English Education. Upon obtaining his doctoral degree, he accepted the newly created position of Director of Freshman English at Southwestern State College (now Southwestern Oklahoma State University) in Weatherford, Oklahoma. He chose this position over other offers because Southwestern was a small regional college. It was also located in a town that he believed was ideal for starting a family as well as being in close proximity to his hometown and family. His first major accomplishment was writing and implementing the first unified Freshman English Program at Southwestern. This program would serve as a model for several other colleges in the state of Oklahoma.

Jerry taught his first class at Southwestern in the fall of 1967. Over the next thirty-two years, he would teach English composition, American literature, Greek drama and mythology, and Shakespeare to thousands of students. Those would include his son, Vance, and his granddaughter, LaurieBeth.

Many of those students would go on to teach those same lessons to thousands of other high school and college students throughout the country. In 1977, he was named the Chairman of the Language Arts Department at Southwestern. Until his retirement in 1999, Jerry would serve in this capacity overseeing not only the English and literature department but also the speech and theater, foreign language, and journalism departments.

During his career at Southwestern, Jerry also served in other capacities including Eligibility Chairman for the NAIA athletes of District 9 for five years and chairing, with the help of his wife, Juanita, the Miss Southwestern Pageant for ten years. When rain would force the May commencement ceremonies to be held indoors at multiple locations, he served as one of the backup speakers.

Some of his best memories from this period of his life were of the times he spent with his three closest friends at Southwestern: John McCoy, Eugene Hughes, and Ted Pyle. The “Fabulous Four,” as many students referred to them, enjoyed many mornings drinking coffee between classes and many weekends camping and fishing in lakes throughout Oklahoma.

Jerry valued a good education and the opportunities a good education afforded to those who worked hard to obtain their college degrees. He was extremely proud to have had the opportunity to present his son, Vance, with his diploma from Southwestern when he graduated in May of 1990. Vance would go on to receive his Juris Doctorate from the University of Tulsa, College of Law in 1993. Vance is currently an attorney, Director, and Shareholder with the firm of Gungoll, Jackson, Box & Devoll, P.C., in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Jerry’s son, Chad, followed his father into college teaching after twelve years as a television news anchor, reporter, cameraman, and producer in Amarillo, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Chad received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Missouri, his master’s degree from Oklahoma State University, and his doctoral degree from the University of Oklahoma. Chad is currently an Assistant Professor at Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire. Jerry’s grandson, Christopher, will complete his

associate's degree at Oklahoma City Community College this year while his granddaughter, LaurieBeth, continues to work toward her bachelor's degree at Southwestern. Jerry's grandson, Walker, is a junior at Weatherford High School.

After his retirement in May of 1999, Jerry contacted The Lindsay News in Lindsay, Oklahoma, to see if the paper would be interested in publishing a single article about the matchbook covers he had collected as a child and saved for over sixty years. That article, entitled "Matchbook Memories," was published. However, it would not be the only article he would publish. For the next sixteen years, Jerry would write and publish a regular weekly article in The Lindsay News. His memories about his family, as well as events he participated in and witnessed during his life, provided the residents of Lindsay, Grady County, and his own family with unique historical perspectives and fond memories of times and events of yesteryear. Those memories were always discussed in even more detail during his regular visits to Lindsay to see the friends of his youth: Alvin Beene, Johnny Ben, E. J. Branch, Bill Branch, Bryan Branch, L. B. Hoyle, Jay Mann, George McCann, Sonny Mitchusson, Cack Roller, and Paul Osborn. The "Bradley Boys" held an especially dear place in his heart.

In October of 1999, Jerry was asked by the then President of Southwestern, Dr. Joe Anna Hibler, to assist the university with its upcoming centennial celebration in 2001. Jerry spent the next year working in the library at Southwestern to research, write, and publish the official centennial book celebrating the first one hundred years of Southwestern.

Although formally retired, Jerry could not stay away from teaching and serving his fellow citizens of Oklahoma. He continued to present book reviews at libraries throughout western Oklahoma as part of the "Let's Talk About It" series presented by the Oklahoma Humanities Council. He also served on the Board of Directors for OETA and was a member of the Southwestern Oklahoma State University Museum Committee. His work on the Museum Committee included preparation for a Smithsonian exhibit on "Hometown

Teams” that will go on display in September of 2015. For six weeks, the museum will present programs, displays, and historical exhibits about sports figures, coaches, and outstanding teams from all of southwestern Oklahoma. The museum and its displays will play a major role in the Homecoming celebrations at Southwestern this coming fall. For the final eight years of his life, culminating with the fall semester of 2014, Jerry also returned to teaching. As a Professor Emeritus, he taught the same English Composition classes that originally brought him to the Southwestern campus forty-seven years before.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents, Arthur Wilson Nye and Etta Hunn Nye, as well as his seven siblings, Adrian Lee “Bob” Nye, Joel Newton “Jack” Nye, Marjorie Bell “Margie” (Nye) Abbie, Audrey Ella (Nye) Rodgers, Sam Joe Nye, James Carl “Jim” Nye, and Arthur Wilson “Dub” Nye, Jr. He is survived by his wife, Juanita Walker Nye, of Weatherford, Oklahoma; his two sons Vance Todd Nye (and wife Lena Jean (Stucky) Nye), of Edmond, Oklahoma, and Dr. Chad Flynn Nye (and wife Erica D. (Ellyson) Nye) of Keene, New Hampshire; his three grandchildren, Christopher Robin Nye of Edmond, Oklahoma, LaurieBeth Marie Nye of Weatherford, Oklahoma, and Walker Wilson Grant Nye of Weatherford, Oklahoma; and his one great-grandson, Dreyden Neiman Nelson of Weatherford, Oklahoma. He is also survived by two sisters-in-law, Jessie Marie (McCully) Nye (wife of Sam) and Mary Ella (Bomhak) Nye (wife of Dub) as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and other extended family members.

A memorial service will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 7, 2015, at the First Baptist Church in Weatherford, Oklahoma, under the direction of Lockstone Funeral Home of Weatherford, Oklahoma. A graveside interment service will also be held at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 8, 2015, at the Bradley Cemetery in Bradley, Oklahoma, under the direction of Boydston Funeral Home of Lindsay, Oklahoma.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the “Dr. Jerry G. Nye Memorial Scholarship Fund” at BancFirst in Weatherford, Oklahoma. These funds will be used by the family to establish a scholarship for students in the Language and Literature Department at Southwestern.

Tribute Wall

FJ

“ I was so fortunate to meet Dr Jerry Nye who was always so polite and a gentleman.. I enjoyed reading his Matchbook Memories and what a collection he had.. Such a great writer. Will always remember him..Jean

Flowers by Jim N Jean - March 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

VN

“ Thank you to all who have commented so nicely about my father. He will definitely be missed.

Vance T. Nye - March 06, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LH

“ ALWAYS A GENTLEMAN AND A CLASS ACT.NEVER OUT OF CHARACTURE.WILL MISS OUR PHONE CONVERSATIONS OF TIME LONG AGO.RIP BUDDY.

L.B. & INA HOYLE - March 04, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RN

“ Dr. Nye's Matchbook Memories began about the time I first moved to this area. I am grateful that his stories have given me a deeper appreciation for this land.

Raakel Newby - March 04, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SR

“ RIP UNCLE JERRY. I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE REUNION YOU ARE HAVING WITH ALL YOUR BROTHERS, SISTERS AND GRANDMA AND GRANDPA NYE. LOVE YOU.

SHARON NYE RUSSELL - March 02, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ *RIP Dr. Nye, I didn't know you, but wished I had.*

Jim Beckham - March 02, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LC

“ *Sorry to hear of YOUR LOSS. MY PRAYERS GO OUT FOR THE FAMILY WILL MISS HIS MATCH BOX MEMORIES. .REMINDS ME OF MY CHILD HOOD. SAME AGE.*

LEORA COOPER - March 02, 2015 at 12:00 AM