

GENE HARRIS

Eugene L. "Gene" Harris was born in Burleson, Texas on October 20, 1923 to Emmett E. and Irene V. Overton Harris. He was the oldest of their four children. Gene married Lois Julia Jones in June 1947 and together they had four children. Gene passed away in Grandview, Texas on August 15, 2014 and he will long be remembered for his contributions to the Burleson community.

His formal schooling began at the Centerville School in Burleson. At first, he rode the inter-urban train which ran behind his home; and later he walked with his siblings to the small two room school house. At the Centerville School his teacher for grades one through seven was Miss Nola Dunn. Miss Dunn later taught Gene's own daughter, Paula in the first grade at Burleson ISD.

Later, when Gene was in high school, he approached his father and told him that he wanted to quit school and get a job. Emmett refused to let his son quit school and according to Gene's younger sister, Jeanette McCrory, their father said "You may be an old man when you graduate but you will stay in school until you earn your diploma". Gene took his father's words to heart. He studied hard and was the 1941 Burleson High School Valedictorian. Gene did not want to make the traditional Valedictorian speech and had a fellow classmate Karlene Austin do so for him.

After graduation Gene started a small dairy. He had already learned about hard work from his father who earned his living as a carpenter. Emmett had helped to build the original old gymnasium in what is now Nola Dunn Academy. Gene, however, realized that the dairy business was not for him and he began driving a gasoline truck. This eventually led to his operating a small Mobil Service Station on what is now Interstate 35W. With lots of hard work, Gene and his wife, Lois, started the company, Gene Harris Petroleum Inc, a gasoline distributorship and propane delivery service. This business blossomed into the ownership and management of eight convenience stores.

Gene was always a forward thinker and was never afraid to take risks in business. He worked with other Burleson leaders to bring a much needed doctor to town. Dr. James Heberle served the town of Burleson until his retirement. He was instrumental in acquiring land for what is now Warren Park. He invested with

local leaders in bringing Huguley Hospital to Burleson. His love of swimming motivated him to help establish the Mountain Valley Country Club with golf and swimming.

Gene and Lois had purchased a small ranch in Grandview and that eventually became their retirement home. He was a member of Grandview First Baptist Church for over 40 years. He was a member of six chambers of commerce, the Texas Propane Gas Association, the Texas Food and Fuel Association, Board of directors of Everman National Bank and the Bethesda Water Co-Op, where a new board room was named in his honor. He has been honored by the Grandview Masonic Lodge with the Community Builder's Award; the Burleson Ex-Students' Association with the 1998 J. W. Norwood Distinguished Alumni Award and along with his wife, the Hall of Fame Award by the Grandview Chamber of Commerce.