



COLLEGE MOUND CEMETERY ASSOCIATION



CMCA PROCLAIMS
131ST DECORATION DAY

"Maxine Tankersley Day"

APRIL 22, 2018



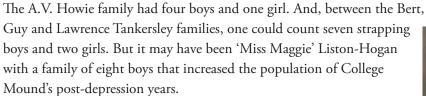


The first honoree in the history of Decoration Day, Maxine Tankersley has been a part of the College Mound narrative for 83 years. Parents George and Lee Earle Winton brought their young family to the rural College Mound community from Dallas in 1935 when Maxine was two years old.

By the 1930s and 1940s at College Mound, two or more generational laps had been made since the settlement of the historic church in 1840. Names such as Howie, Tankersley, Piper, Liston, Hogan, Bozeman, Brittain and Clarida had replaced the older names of Henry, Beck, Fender, Kings, and Patton.

One could make life long friends at College Mound where family farms bordered family

farms and lives were entwined in ways that would last centuries.



With large families as neighbors, fun was easy to find. Local Tankersley Lake on the Tankersley farm was a favorite spot for swimming and fishing. Lawrence Tankersley, youngest son of William Pitt Tankersley, had played for the Chicago White Sox so you could always plan on a pick-up baseball game after church. Vacation Bible School was camp and summer vacation all rolled into one.

Like most children in the area, Maxine (as did her siblings, Orban, Marguerite, Thelma and Homer), attended the College Mound School until (at least) the 5th grade. Her teachers these first school years were Miss Lottie (Howie Bryan) or Evna Scott Howie, both familiar names in the rural community.

The #4 School Bus was the single transportation to the school in town for the College Mound kids and was usually driven by the older Winton, Howie or Tankersley boys. Lifelong friendships were made during this time but perhaps it was on that bus that the romance between Maxine and the young man that lived across the road, took hold.

Maxine recalls the daily hard work required of farm life. After school, the Winton children went straight to the fields to either pick cotton, pick peas, hoe endless rows for planting or thrash. But, she added, it's hard to remember tough times because, "there was so much love in that house".

One special memory was her mother baking a pan of sliced sweet potatoes as their afternoon snack before going to their chores on the farm. To this day, it is her favorite vegetable and its aroma still capable of conjuring up the images of her mother in the kitchen.



The George Winton Family



Front row, (L-R) Curtis, Arthur, Earl Walter Liston Second row, Claude and Grady Liston, James and Robert Hogan.



(L-R) Thelma Winton, Betty Jean Woodring, Maxine, Marguerite Winton, Marion Howie Briggs and Homer Winton

The Winton children: (L-R) Marguerite, Orban holding baby Homer, Thelma and Maxine.



College Mound Decoration Day in the 1930s.



Jack and Maxine Tankersley on their wedding day in 1952

Life was simple.

A community that knew each other well, Church was the center of their lives. It was very common for the preacher and his family to come for Sunday lunch at a church member's home. "Brother Mitchell (the resident Preacher in the late 1940s) would eat with a different family each Sunday. The whole family would come. Felt so comfortable they took a nap," Maxine says with a smile.

Decoration Day, the annual homecoming for everyone with family or loved ones buried in the historic cemetery was a long-anticipated occasion. "Decoration Day was as good as Easter," Maxine says adding, "if not better." To her, everyone came back for Decoration Day. Families and friends that had moved from the rural church over the years had never forgotten the homage that is played out each fourth Sunday in April and returned to tend their family plots and visit with old and dear friends. "One early custom I remember is that the College Mound school would

sometime close during harvest times and again, on the Friday before Decoration Day. All the families, especially the men would take this time to clean up the cemetery. The kids would pick Indian Paintbrush from the pastures and make sure that every grave had a flower on it. It was always important that every person's grave be honored." This became more personal to Maxine when she lost her oldest sister Marguerite to a rare blood disorder in 1947.

Though finishing high school in town and likely meeting potential suitors, Maxine began dating and ultimately marrying her handsome neighbor from across the road, Jack Tankersley, the youngest son of Bert and 'Miss Willie' Tankersley. She likes that she and Jack were the second couple to hold their wedding reception at the newly relocated College Mound school building in 1952, Henri

Liston and Dewey Samuels being the first a year earlier.

In her life, Maxine has lived in six homes. With a single and brief exception, they are all within walking distance of the College Mound church. Her fourth home, the Winton Farm still stands at the end of the S curve about a mile southwest of the church.

Upon Jack's return from the Army, the young couple began making their life together and began building the home where they would raise their family. While under construction they took turns spending a month at a time with each set of parents.

Eventually, Maxine and Jack moved into their new white frame home and completed their family with the arrival of Vivienne in 1955 and Madeleine in 1958. In 1971, and with the death of his mother, the family moved into Jack's parents' home—built with the lumber from the old Tankersley home—and where Maxine lives today with her brother Homer.

In post-war College Mound, a new set of young mothers was in place at the church. Maxine, Audra Admire Hogan, Henri Liston Samuels, Nawasa Hamilton, Florine Hindman Piper, Lillian Hindman, Edna Wheeler, Elizabeth Liston, Ada Tankersley and Viola Peterson among them. It was their turn to serve the Kool-Aid at Vacation Bible School and take over the Sunday school classes.

They, as their mothers before them, began the process of passing down the 100+ year old traditions unique to College Mound.

Along the way, Maxine found time to fulfill her own ambitions and returned to the workforce at Terrell Independent School District working a total of 29 years. First working in Superintendent Grady Hester's office, she was part of the Administration team that implemented the Project Discovery Program and integration of the schools in the mid-sixties. She retired in 1989, working the last many years as the High School Librarian. Not surprisingly, she was named the 1987 Educator of the Year.

Maxine and Jack discovered the joys of being Grandparents when Vivienne and husband Gary Flowers and Madeleine and husband Richard Brown blessed their lives with Joni and Julie Flowers and Brett, Scott and

Jana Brown. That Vivienne and Gary Flowers raised their own daughters in the home built by Jack and Maxine so long ago seems fitting.

From the perspective of neighbor and friend, Cathy Atwood, it was the College Mound Church that has been the mainstay and constant in Maxine's life. A life filled with a multitude of both joys and sorrows. "She has laughed and wept at weddings and funerals and has attended more Decoration Days then anyone she knows. She has patiently sat through untold numbers of church meetings – both the fiery and the mind-numbing."

Cathy has seen Maxine show her servant's heart in so many acts of Christian love. Whether helping Florence Clarida with her summer canning, taking the MYF kids on camping trips, sitting at the bedside of sick friends or taking food and a word of comfort to families experiencing the loss of a loved one, Maxine was a friend you could count on.

When you don't have to walk far to see your life be completed and blessed in unimaginable ways, its hard to consider that anyone would ever honor your life's work. Maxine and Jack Tankersley have embodied the legendary community spirit of College Mound and it is our privilege to honor her and express our gratitude for all they have done for College Mound Church and its historic cemetery. -CMCA



College Mound Church Children's Choir 1955



'Tankersley Girls': (Clockwise) Madeleine, Julie and Joni Flowers, Vivienne, Maxine and Jana Brown