

Mrs. Bonnie Wilkinson

Bonnie Cassil Wilkinson was born and raised on a farm in northern Kansas. During her childhood, she experienced the devastation of the mid-west dust bowl, a cyclone that destroyed the farm, and the Great Depression.

Aunt Charlotte Miller, a former teacher, and Uncle Leo Miller, who had ridden the rodeo circuit, provided a loving, caring home and later adopted her.

Throughout her elementary school years, she attended one room Lowe Center School that stood a half mile from the farm.

Bonnie attended a rural high school in Morrowville, Kansas. During her senior year of high school, she substituted in the rural schools when a teacher became ill. She was also “secretary” for the high school principal and earned twenty five cents an hour.

After graduation from high school as valedictorian, she borrowed \$200 from her grandmother in order to earn a provisional teaching certificate from Emporia State Teachers College in Emporia, Kansas.

That fall at the age of 17, Bonnie taught her first term as the teacher of grades one through eight at Lowe Center School.

In 1949, Bonnie married Neil Wilkinson, a World War II Veteran and a graduate of the University of Nebraska. She continued to teach in a small town near Neil’s work until daughter, Kathy, was born in 1951 and son, Tom, in 1952.

By 1954 the family was living in Iowa for Neil’s position with a large natural gas corporation. The children grew up in the rural Iowa setting with life centering around the church, school and community.

Neil was transferred to Lufkin, Texas, in 1964 and Bonnie attended Stephen F. Austin University. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree and teacher certification in 1968.

By 1969 the family experienced a corporate transfer to Conroe where Bonnie was employed as a special education teacher at Anderson Elementary. While at Anderson, Bonnie served on the Region VI, Special Education Advisory committee and helped initiate the first Parent Information Nights. She contributed to Special Education guidelines for CISD and chaired the committee that brought the first health insurance to Conroe teachers.

During the years from 1969 to 1974, Bonnie earned a masters degree with counseling certification and later acquired administrative certification from Sam Houston State University.

She served as counselor at Lamar Elementary from 1976 to 1978.

During the fall of 1978, Hailey Elementary opened with Bonnie as the assistant principal.

1980 found Bonnie at Glen Loch Elementary as its first principal. It was there that she gratefully received the endless love and support of the Glen Loch school family when Neil passed away in the fall of 1982. During Glen Loch's first ten years, the school received recognition for its TV Turnoff, involvement with the Statue of Liberty Restoration, and the annual Special Day for Senior Citizens. In 1986, Bonnie was named Region VI Texas Principal of the Year by the Texas Elementary Principals Association. During those years, Uncle Leo, at the age of 86, lovingly restored Lowe Center School with the hope that the school built in 1885, would be placed on the Kansas register of historic buildings.

In 1990 Bonnie was asked to open the new Giesinger Elementary school in Conroe. Again, a loving school family established traditions that would live through generations of children. The beautiful Christmas Nutcracker was a favorite of all of the students.

Bonnie retired in June of 1994 with many happy memories of the caring staff, the children and their parents.

A new era in her life began as she watched her six grandchildren and two special grandchildren grow to adulthood. And joyfully soon, great grandchildren were arriving.

During her retirement years, Bonnie helped her church and community in leadership and service roles. She served as president of the Montgomery County Retired School Personnel, The Montgomery County Performing Arts Guild and the Delta Kappa Gamma Society.

She served on boards of the Conroe Symphony, The Assistance League, Montgomery County Republican Women, The Performing Arts Society and the Board of Trustees of the First United Methodist Church. She helped establish the Art Camp for Children and Life Long Learning for Seniors at Lone Star College. By 2009, she had been part of life in Montgomery County for forty years.

On January 20, 2009, the Conroe ISD school board named one of their newest elementary schools in her honor. The school was dedicated on October 25, 2009 with over 500 people attending the celebration.

On February 4, 2010, the students and faculty celebrated Mrs. Wilkinson's 80th birthday with special songs, stories and reader's theater presentations. She was quoted as saying "This is the best birthday I ever had."

In honor of her 81st birthday, the day began with Mrs. Wilkinson being interviewed by one of our 3rd grade students on morning announcements. He asked questions about her life in

Kansas and how she decided to be a teacher and principal. Next, students presented Mrs. Wilkinson with special cards from each grade level. She was also presented a beautiful and detailed photo scrapbook of all the events of the first year of the school and was extremely moved by the gift. She said, "The scrapbook is special beyond words."

For Mrs. Wilkinson's 82nd and 83rd birthday, she was honored by a special birthday breakfast. One student from each homeroom was selected by the teacher to present a class birthday card. They were all wonderful cards and Mrs. Wilkinson took time to read each one and visit with each student. It was a wonderful celebration.