

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: DAN BOONE

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When in the early 1900s Sylvester B. Boone bought a farm at Alief, fifteen miles west of Houston, he probably did not envision starting a dynasty of educators and civic leaders, but history reveals that is exactly what he did. Boone Road and Sylvester B. Boone Elementary School stand as testimonies to the service of



the Boone family to their community.

Dan Boone, a resident of Treemont since 2008 and grandson of Sylvester, is the subject of our story this month. Dan's

father James often recalled his early days on the farm. He told of the three-wagon caravan led by Sylvester in wagon #1, James, all of 6 years old at the time, driving wagon #2, and a hired hand in wagon #3. This may have been the time when James's mind would be set: he would not be a farmer. He would be an educator. James had six brothers and one sister, all of whom became prominent citizens, leaving a legacy for their descendants to emulate.

True to his plan James L. Boone became an educator, serving Beasley, Lolita, and Needville school systems

as Superintendent of Schools. On Christmas Day of 1921 he married Mora Waddell. They had two sons, James L., Jr. and Homer Sylvester (nicknamed Dan in 1942), named for two grandfathers and three uncles.

Dan's mother Mora was a born educator. With no college credits she entered Texas A&M and Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville to qualify to teach high school English. Later in life as her hearing began to fail she returned to college for a second degree, this one in Library Science. She finished her career as an assistant librarian years later at Jane Long Junior High School in Houston.

Dan graduated from A&M with a degree in Business Administration. His extracurricular activities reflected a wide variety of interests and talents. He worked as a journalist and eventually became editor-in-chief of the university's student newspaper The Battalion.

During his tenure at the Batt, a letter came in suggesting the Aggies make their beloved mascot a "4-star general." Immediately Dan contacted head yell leader Jack Knox and very soon a "Reveille for General" (2-man) committee was in operation mainly for the purpose of raising the \$100

needed. Their efforts netted an astounding \$320, not only meeting the cost of this particular “generalship” but providing for a life-size oil portrait of the mascot. The President of Texas A&M, Dr. Bolton, unveiled the painting before thousands of cheering fans and students on Thanksgiving Eve, 1943.

On October 6, 1944, Dan was married to Miss Margaret Benbow of Bryan. Prior to the wedding Margaret made a surprise announcement, “I want four children.” Her wish has been fulfilled in three boys and one girl, of whom three are teachers, plus two grandchildren who have joined the long line of educators in the family.

Meanwhile, since 1936 Dan had suffered from severe dizzy spells, diagnosed at that time as “nervous instability.” In 1943 this caused rejection for military service, but by 1945 when he presented himself again he was accepted and sent to Ft. Lewis, WA for basic training, after which he was sent to Seattle and assigned to the SS Sea Devil, an army transport ship.

During a 10-month span he made six overseas trips transporting 137 Japanese prisoners from Seattle to Yokohama, then 2000 German prisoners from California to Liverpool, England, as well as moving U. S troops at the end of World War II.

Post-war, Dan worked in insurance and settled into running his own agency, but even with a thriving business to run, his roots in helping others ran deep. It is not surprising that his major adult avocation involved founding 38 Kiwanis clubs in Texas and Oklahoma. A 50-year Kiwanian, he served the Texas Oklahoma district as Lieutenant-Governor in 1980-81 as well as other key positions over time.

He also served his church for a number of years as dean of its School of Continuing Education. Whereas some people who are new in a church have difficulty making friends or finding their niche, Dan never had any such problem. At a large Methodist church of several thousand members he undertook to expand the audio-tape ministry to a full videotape effort by buying videotape equipment, filming Sunday services himself, and then handing over a master copy to the church, which in turn duplicated them and distributed them to shut-ins and others. This has since become a full-time TV ministry.

Dan remains active in the world around him with a stellar role in the Troubadours and on the Treemont Employees’ Appreciation Fund committee. Hats off to people like the Boones, who enrich our lives and make the world a better place.