

JAMES MERRITT HARRISON

1933 - 2014



Jim was born to W. W. (Bill) and Allie Harrison in Luling, TX, while his dad was working in the oil field. They had lost their farm, due to the Depression, and Jim's dad was sending half of his salary back to San Antonio to feed his dairy cows. They were finally able to move back to San Antonio and begin to rebuild their dairy business. Almost all of the Harrison families were in the dairy business, and populated the area that is now called Buttermilk Hill. Bill and Allie and little Jimmie soon became members of the Coker Methodist Church, and Jim grew up as the church grew up. They were active in all areas of the church, especially the choir. Sometimes Jim would ride his horse to church or hitch up his donkey Seabiscuit to the wagon, and enjoy the trip to church with a wagon full of fellow churchgoers. They first attended church in the original wooden building, and then in the sanctuary that was built during the Depression era and has now become the chapel.

Jim attended the country schools of that era, Coker Elementary (1939 - 1943), Serna Elementary (1943 - 1945), and Salado Valley Elementary (1945 - 1946). When it was time for high school, he went to Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio where he was in the choir and the band. He was a born entertainer with his fine tenor voice, beloved guitar, curly black hair and great big smile. While in high school Jim won a contest to sing and play in the first local televised show from San Antonio. He was also the singing caller for the Do-Si-Ballannette Set Square Dance Club, a square dance group of local youngsters. They got the opportunity to go to North Carolina to demonstrate the Texas style of square dancing, and while there, Jim was heard singing and playing his guitar. He was asked if he could do anything he wanted to do, what would he choose. He replied, "To sing with the Grand Old Opry!" Well, he was given an audition, and as a result of that, was offered a contract with Decca Records, one of the foremost recording companies of the day. He chose instead to come home, graduate, and attend Texas A & M University and become an engineer.

While at Texas A & M, he sang with the Singing Cadets. Upon graduation from Texas A & M, he served in the U.S. Air Force for two years and then went to work for the Humble Oil and Refining Company. That began a 53 year career with the oil industry, working in almost every oil patch in Texas and beyond. He married Nancy June Hale, who he met while he attended Texas A & M. Nancy was the daughter of an A & M professor, and she followed him to every assignment in the oil industry, making 17 different houses homes for them and their three beautiful children, Willis, Merri and Cathy.

Retiring to their 1890's farmhouse in Spring Branch in 2002, Jim and Nancy remodeled it and have loved being a part of the Hill Country. As the children grew up and married, they welcomed four grandchildren and four step-grandchildren, plus their families, along the way. These grandchildren have become the light of their lives.

Now Jim has come full circle and will be buried alongside five other generations of Harrisons who are buried in the historic Coker Cemetery. He has fought the Good Fight, and has gone home to be with God. God bless him, he was a good man, a good husband, a good father and good friend. All who knew him know that he will be truly missed.

Prepared by Nancy H. Harrison – 08/2014