

James Merle Baker

1926-2010

Friend, Husband, Dad and Grandfather

Education:

Texas A&M, Veterinarian Degree

Most knew him as "Doc Baker", however, J.M. Baker certainly wore many hats during his 84 years of life, mostly spent in the Rio Grande Valley. Joining the Navy and serving in the Philippines as a Ship Clerk (because he was the only one that could type). Merle was determined to continue his education and attend Texas A & M University to earn his Veterinarian Degree.

Difficult times were certainly ahead with a new bride, Maxine, coupled with the burdens of a brand new veterinarian practice in Mission, Texas in 1951, soon moved to Edinburg in 1953, where his life-long practice was established.

Doc was president of the Rio Grande Valley Mounted Quadrille in the 50s and 60s, performing with Maxine Baker, in the horse show riding all over the state of Texas.

As one of the founders of the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Posse, Doc was instrumental in initiating the Rio Round-up in Edinburg, Texas. He remained active until his first stroke, which left him with partial paralysis. No matter what the need was, he would sell candy or flip burgers; anything to help the youth that he enjoyed so much.

Assisting with the Hidalgo County Youth show for decades, many were fortunate to know his caring and love of life.

Truly a pioneer in his days, Doc mentored many new associates in the veterinarian field. Always being more personable with his animal patients than most people; Animals never had long stories!!!

Friends were abundant, 4-H and FFA were known to him as future leaders of America. Time was never a factor when it came to youth in Hidalgo County. Doc always enjoyed teaching and sometimes learning from our future leaders. James Merle was fortunate to have collected friends to cherish throughout his life. Veterinarian was only one facet of his life, Doc took great pride in his many forged friendships, many of whom helped in his final years of practice and life. The family is grateful for the help, whether it was in the form of visitation or transportation. Doc's daughter, Merlene Bledsoe and youngest grandson, Sheldon Bledsoe, who cared for him in his last years, certainly knew the impact made by their beloved James Merle Baker. Known as "Doc" to some, Merle to others and "Pop" to those who were close and young. Never meeting a stranger and taking immense pride in our youth are truly the testimony left by our friend, husband, dad and grandfather. You are missed!

Gerald W. Eckel

September 11, 1954 - October 6, 2017

Birthplace: Karnes City

Spouse: Deborah "Debo", married for 33 years.

Education: Texas State University

Daughter: Annika

Gerald was raised and spent most of his life in Poth, TX. Gerald worked at his family business, Lyssy & Eckel Feeds, from the time he could push a broom to his retirement. He did a three year stint as teacher / coach in Kenedy, TX, shortly after his graduation from Texas State University.

Gerald was passionate about supporting all children. His support ranged from helping with stock show projects all over South Texas, to announcing Poth football games for 23 years, to supporting all athletic events at his beloved Texas State University.

Gerald's true calling was as an advocate for Driscoll Children's Hospital. His 26 years of involvement with the South Texas Cattleman's Roundup resulted in helping so many children in South Texas.

Rafael A. & Carmen C. Guerra

Rafael A. Guerra:

November 30, 1915 - October 25, 2005

Carmen Chapa Guerra:

May 7, 1920 - January 18, 2008

Married:

June 15, 1946

Children:

Felo Guerra

Hector Guerra

Carlos Guerra

Gerardo Guerra

Victor Guerra (deceased)

Carmen Elvia Yzaguirre

16 Grandchildren

Carmen Chapa Guerra

Mrs. Guerra worked early in life and for several year's at her family's San Manuel General Store. She later was Postmaster at the Linn Post Office. Once she married, she became a devoted housewife and partner with her husband Rafael in his businesses. She was a lifelong volunteer serving as a church leader at Linn-San Manuel, La Reforma and McAllen. She was very active with the Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Our Lady of Sorrows Altar Society, the Pan American Round Table, St. Anne's Altar Society, Catholic Daughters and the Cancer Society.

Rafael A. Guerra

Attended schools in La Reforma, San Antonio, Mission, Brewster and Edinburg

Attended Edinburg Junior College, Texas A & I and Draugh's Business College

Mr. Guerra represented one of South Texas's pioneer ranching families with their cattle brands and ranch holdings dating back to the early 1870's, when his widowed grandmother, Antonia came from Mier, Mexico.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1941-1946. Shortly after he returned from the war, he married his best friend, Carmen. In 1947 he started his long life of community service. Mr. Guerra together with, Mundo Margo, created the Starr County Soil Conservation District. Having been involved in agriculture all of his life, he was always interested in and looking for new and better ways to raise crops, grass, wildlife and cattle. Mr. Guerra was also an ASCS Committeeman for 27 years and was recognized by that office for 42 years of dedicated service. He was a founding board member of the Hidalgo County Rehab School (which is now South Texas Independent School District). He was an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts of America where he served several terms as a board member. He sat on the Hidalgo County Tax Appraisal Board and was founding board member of Hidalgo Savings & Loan and served as a board member of First State Bank and Trust in Edinburg. He was very active in Our Lady of Sorrow's Men's Club and a member of St. Anne's Catholic Church in San Manuel. He was a lifetime member of the Knights of Columbus achieving the third degree rank prior to earning membership into the Alhambra.

Contributions to 4-H Program

Mr. & Mrs. Guerra were kind hearted, generous and soft spoken people that loved agriculture and believed strongly in family values. Mr. Guerra was a founding board member of the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation, which at the time was the only one of it's kind and he was a large contributor for the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation fundraiser the "4-H Country Hoedown".

Rafael and Carmen's legacy of giving and of community service is continuing with their children and grandchildren as they are all very involved with their community, church, schools and professional organizations.

A. H. "Dutch" Karcher

December 14, 1917 - January 22, 1998

Husband, Father, Grandfather and Great-Grandfather, EXTRAORDINAIRE

Birthplace: Giddings, TX

Spouse: Helen N. Bage on July 4, 1939

Children:

Alba Jo, married Jim Guffey of Harlingen

Son - J.F. "Jimbo" Guffey, Jr., New Orleans

Daughter - Mrs. Janna Preston (Philip)

3 Daughters - Jullian, Jordan & Jaycie

Daughter - Joyce Guffey, Dallas

Barbara Kay, married John Magness of New Braunfels

Son - Brian Magness (Stacie), San Antonio

Son - Greg Magness, Houston

Daughter - Amy Magness, New Braunfels

A.H. "Corky" Karcher, III, married Hazel Greig of Scotland

Son - Geoffrey

Education:

Texas A&M, B.S. in Agriculture, lettered in baseball, was a Ross volunteer intramural athletic manager and was captain on the Calvary Regimental staff.

Master's Degree through graduate studies at Colorado State University and the University of Maryland.

In 1939 Dutch entered the U.S. Army, serving in the 1st Armored Division Reconnaissance Battalion in Ireland, England, Africa and Italy as company commander. He was discharged from the service in 1946 as Major, Calvary

He retired in 1973 after 34 years with the Agricultural Extension service, the last 16 of which he served as County Agricultural Agent of Hidalgo County. During that time he was cited for his step-by-step training program for new agents.

Organized or Assisted:

Area I of the Texas Vegetable Growers Counsel; Rio Grande Valley Swine Breeders Association; Program Building Sub Committee on Aging in Hidalgo County; The North Alamo Community of Hidalgo was Judged 4th Best in the Texas Community Improvement Program; Hidalgo County 4-H Youth Development Foundation in 1967 to support the training of rural and urban youth in leadership and citizenship development; Lower Rio Grande Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Past President of the following:

Titus County A & M Club; Rio Grande Valley A & M Club; Rotary Club of Edinburg; First Lutheran Church of Edinburg; Brotherhood Southern District of the American Lutheran Church; Valley Lutheran Laymen's League; Texas County Agricultural Agents Association; All Valley Winter Vegetable Show; Rio Grande Valley Horticultural Society; Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show Superintendent of the Fat Steer Division; Texas Citrus Fiesta - Fruit Exhibit Chairman; Consultant to the All Valley Winter Vegetable Show holding various offices over 16 years.

Awards:

Professional Man of the Year for the Southmost Soil Conservation District; Meritorious Service by the All Valley Winter Vegetable Show; Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents of 1969; USDA Superior Service Award 1973; and many others too numerous to list.

4-H Contributions

Hidalgo County 4-H members have won many awards during Dutch's time as county agent, including: 5 members went to the National 4-H Conference, 1 member to the 4-H Report to the President and 14 members to the National Farm City Week. Coached the swine judging team to high team at the American Royal 1963. Many adult leaders have won district and state recognition. Organized a Junior Leaders organization and Adult Leaders organization, a county 4-H Council and published an annual yearbook covering club and council program and activities.

Anthony "Tony" Keller

Born:

October 11, 1932

Birthplace:

Kosciusko, TX (a small town 30 miles SE of San Antonio)

Education:

Edinburg High School

Spouse:

Alice Keller

Children:

John, Betty Jean, Julie, Alex and Phyllis

14 Grandchildren

4 Great Grandchildren

Mr. Keller farmed and ranched in McCook for over 50 years. His sons continue his legacy today with the knowledge he passed on to them. He was a member of Immaculate Conception Church of McCook, where he served several terms as President of the Parish Council. He also served as a board member for the First State Bank of Edinburg and the FSA board for a number of years. Mr. Keller was named Outstanding Conservation Farmer by the Hidalgo County SWCD and was selected as "Muy Grande" Rancher of the Year in 2001. Mr. Keller served in the Army during the "Korean

4-H Contributions:

Mr. Keller instigated the "Longhorn Auction" by donating a Longhorn steer to the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation live auction. Every year the steer sold for \$1000 but the bidder never did take the steer home so for several years this same steer was redonated to the live auction. Finally it became old and Carlos Guerra bought the longhorn steer and had it mounted for Brewster Elementary School. He served as a board member for the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation.

Mr. Keller's five youngest grandchildren are all proud recipients of the Anthony Keller Memorial Scholarship.

James Carlton McQueen

Born:

November 14, 1919

Birthplace:

Mercedes, TX

Education:

Graduate of Mercedes High School

Texas A & I University, Kingsville - B.S. & M.S. in Education

Spouse:

Marjorie Lowell DeGrooff McQueen

Children:

James Carlton McQueen, Jr.

Susan McQueen Girard

Mr. McQueen was a World War II veteran and served in the U.S. Army in North Africa and Italy. He started his educational career as a principal for West Oso High School. He taught football and science at Donna Junior High School. He retired after 40 years of teaching biology, being head of the science department and senior class sponsor at Mercedes High School.

He was founder and director of the South Texas Lamb and Sheep Exposition. The coliseum where the show was held was named in his honor, The James Carlton McQueen Coliseum. Mr. McQueen also served 50 years with the Southwest Football Officials Association, officiating at games throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

Mr. McQueen served as president of the Rio Grande Valley Audubon Society and as a member of the National Wildlife Federation. He was the first president of the Hidalgo County A & I Alumni Club and a member of the National Environmental Educators Association. In 1973 he was honored by the City of Donna by declaring a James Carlton McQueen Day. He was a host father for foreign exchange students for 30 years and a coordinator for the American Institute fo Foreign Students. He was a member of the First Christian Church in San Benito.

4-H Contributions

Mr. McQueen dedicated 48 years as a 4-H Club Leader. In 1972, he was named Adult Leader of the Year. He received various awards and recognition for his work in 4-H including: project leader for livestock, sheep and lamb; method demonstrations, coaching various county, district and state level winning demonstration teams. He was also an Honorary Board Member of the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation.

Norma Linda Perez Larralde

February 11, 1948 - January 16, 2001

Birthplace:

Edinburg, Texas

Education:

Graduated Edinburg High School in 1967

Attended University of Texas-Pan American

Spouse:

Noe Larralde for 24 years

Children:

Michael Rene Larralde

Noe Ronnie Larralde

Mrs. Larralde worked as a secretary and administrative assistant in the Department of Education at the University of Texas - Pan American for 22 years. She was active as an Edinburg North High School Cougar Band Booster and served as an officer of the Booster Association, assisting with fundraising and serving as bus chaperone on various band trips as the band travelled to competitions.

4-H Contributions

Mrs. Larralde was active in the community as a 4-H leader for 15 years, serving the Town & Country 4-H Club as project leader for: foods & nutrition, horticulture, recreation and arts & crafts. She also served the Hidalgo County 4-H Council as a County Leadership Camp Chaperone and "Camp Mom" for over 12 years. She was an active member and supporter of the Hidalgo County 4-H Leaders and Parents Association assisting with fundraising efforts, community service and leadership projects. In 1997 she was honored as Hidalgo County 4-H Adult Leader of the Year by the Hidalgo County 4-H Organization.

Nellie Solether

August 8, 1900 - March 27, 1979

Birthplace:

Boscobel, Wisconsin

Spouse:

Harry C. Solether

Children:

Gerald Solether

Jack Solether

Mrs. Solether a resident of the mid-valley for 60 years, was also known as the "flower lady" to a generation of Weslaco residents. She took over farming operations, engaging actively in cotton and citrus growing, after the death of her husband. She grew roses at her residence in Weslaco, taking hundreds of them daily to place in bud vases at downtown eating establishments because she wanted the roses to be enjoyed. Her roses were used in decorations for numerous banquets, club meetings and for corsages.

Mrs. Solether was a former member of the Weslaco Garden Club, Zonta International, McAllen Country Club and was a tournament bridge player.

4-H Contributions

In 1980 the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation received notification that the Nellie Solether estate named the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation in a will. Records show the Foundation received a total of \$33,459.81 from the Solether Estate. As noted in her will, said money was to be distributed to participants in the Weslaco area, with emphasis on those with extreme financial need as determined by officers of the Foundation. During a ten year period (1980-1990), 57 scholarships totaling \$32,000 were awarded.

William Kelley Looney

August 25, 1974 - July 21, 2003

Education

Graduate of Edinburg High School
Graduate of Texas A & M University
Attended University of Texas

Will was a natural leader, while attending Edinburg High School, he was elected to serve as the Texas State 4-H President. He went on to attend Texas A & M University where he became the president of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity during his senior year. At his time of passing Will was enrolled in the McCombs School of Business MBA program at the University of Texas in Austin.

Upon graduating from A & M, Will moved to or traveled to any city he wished to explore, from New York City, to Boston, to the coast of California, to the Amazon, to South America. His greatest interest laid in traveling through Mexico, learning to master the language, studying the culture, delving into it's history and becoming a part of it's future. Will was one of those amazing people who could decide he wanted to do something and somehow always worked his way into acheiving what he wanted to do.

Will is survived by his parents, Cullen and Carol Looney of Edinburg; his sisters, Loren Runnels of McAllen, and Courtney Looney of Los Angeles; his fiancée Margot Marsh of Austin. Will is the grandson of the late J.C. and Margaret Looney of Edinburg.

Margaret Montgomery Looney

Birthplace:

Dalhart, TX November 23, 1909

Spouse:

J.C. Looney

Children:

Margaret Looney McAllen

D'Ette Looney Fowlkes

Cullen R. Looney

Education:

Graduate of Edinburg High School
University of Texas at Austin - B.S. in Business Administration

Mrs. Looney was president of the Edinburg Improvement Association; founding member and past president of the Edinburg Junior Service League; an organizer and board member of the Hidalgo County Historical Museum; board member of the Hidalgo County Cotillion Club; longtime board member of the Edinburg Public Library, where the children's wing is named in her honor. She was also a charter member of the Hidalgo County 4-H Youth Development Foundation. She and her husband, J.C. Looney were named Mr. & Mrs. Edinburg in 1969. Mrs. Looney was named the Edinburg Daily Review's Woman of the Year. She was also a recipient of the University of Texas-Pan American Founder's Day Award. She was also a member of the Pan American Round Table, the Delta Delta Delta sorority, the Edinburg Hospital Auxiliary and Trinity Episcopal Church in Pharr.

4-H Contributions

Mrs. Looney served as a 4-H club leader for over 20 years, as a charter member of the board of directors for the Hidalgo County 4-H Youth Development Foundation, project and acitivity leader for the 4-H Roundup - method demonstrations, she coached a state winning method demonstation team.

Neva Iona Hatten Smith

January 11, 1906 - 2000

Spouse:

Dewey Smith, married in 1928

Children:

Joan, Sue, Sherry and Dewey, Jr.

Birthplace:

Marshall County, Kansas

Education:

Graduated St. Joseph's School of Nursing in Ponca City, Oklahoma in 1926.

Mrs. Smith was active in PTA, the Edinburg Hospital Auxiliary, the Friends of Edinburg Library, the Hidalgo County Museum Guild and most important to her the 4-H, especially when her son, Dewey "Smitty" Smith joined in 1955. She was involved in almost every aspect of 4-H at the local, district, state and national levels. For the next 30 years, along with Mrs. J.C. Looney and Mrs. C.E. Townsend, she was instrumental in getting the Edinburg 4-H Clubhouse built. Mrs. Smith was also involved in organizing the first chicken barbeque, the major fundraiser for the Edinburg 4-H Club for many years.

Neva coached two state winning beef demonstration teams and one second place team in the state co-op demonstration. Her children taped an interview of Mrs. Smith on June 15, 1986; she said "One year, I took 5 method demonstration teams to State Roundup and one of the teams won first place and the rest of them were in the top three. For about 15 years, I took teams. I had three state winners and the rest of them were in the top ten, which I felt was very good.

Mrs. Smith attended the National 4-H Forum in Washington D.C. in 1970, where she first heard the idea of a 4-H Foundation. Neva was one of the founders of the Hidalgo County 4-H Foundation and served on the board for many years. She was named an Honorary Member of the Hidalgo County 4-H Youth Development Foundation in 1991.

Her grandchildren who lived in Edinburg were 4-H members; her grandson Mike Flanagan was a Gold Star recipient in 1971, matching his Uncle Dewey Smith, Jr's Gold Star in 1963. 4-H was near and dear to Neva's heart and she touched many lives along the way.

Dewey Smith, Sr. died in 1995 and Neva could no longer live alone. She moved to Grand Prairie, TX and lived with her daughter Joan until she died in 2000. She is buried beside her husband Dewey in Edinburg.

Carroll Vaughan

Born:

March 26, 1940

Birthplace:

Donna, TX

Education:

Donna High School
Pan American

Spouse:

Ginger Vaughan Roane

Children:

Baylor Vaughan
Tinka O'Dwyer
Twyla Vaughan

Mr. Vaughan was the South Texas Regional Manager for Holt Cat. A member of the Weslaco Church of Christ. President of the Weslaco Beef Club for many years. Worked with the Weslaco FFA. Volunteered at the Mercedes Livestock Show on the Sheep Committee. He won many awards for stock car racing and was an airplane pilot.

4-H Contributions

Carroll was awarded Adult Leader of the year. He and his wife ran the Weslaco 4-H Club. They worked with rabbits, sheep, cattle and dairy projects. He was there for the 4-H kids at shows and projects.