

Old Saltillo Cemetery Association Newsletter

Fifth Edition – June 13, 2012

Words From Our President

Mark your calendar and make plans for the 2012 Old Saltillo Cemetery Association Annual Meeting/Memorial Day. It will be held on the third Sunday in July (July 15, 2012) at 10:30 a.m. in the Old Saltillo United Methodist Church. Each year the members of the Old Saltillo Cemetery Association Board plan this day so that all of those in attendance can honor their loved ones, remember days of the past, visit with old and new friends, and enjoy wonderful food.



The program will begin with congregational singing led by Mike Briley, accompanied by John Points at the piano. A business meeting will follow that includes a formal report of the activities of the Board of Directors, the financial position of the Association, plans for the coming year, and the election of three Board Members for the 2012-2015 term.

Following the business meeting, Mrs. Jewel McAfee, Jo Ann Agee, and Steve Conley will present a memorial service to honor those that were buried in the Old Saltillo Cemetery during the 2011-2012 year.

Next will be a journey down memory lane, listening to recordings of the Tom Briley Quartet as we enjoy pictures from past Memorial Days and family pictures of community settlers. For those of you who remember the Tom Briley Quartet and for those of you who have never heard their great music, this program will be a rare treat.

Following the formal presentation, lunch will be served in the air-conditioned Kirby Memorial Center. You are asked to bring some of your favorite dishes – enough to feed all in your party and share some with others. Lunch will be served immediately after the program in a buffet manner with all eating utensils, plates, iced tea, and coffee provided. Seating is limited inside the Kirby Memorial Center, however, space is plentiful under the huge oak trees behind the church. *Continued on Page 2*

Spotlight:

The Tom Briley Gospel Quartet

Wolfe City, Texas in the early 1900's was a bustling railroad town with a public school, opera house, the Melville Hotel, churches, Wolfe City Cotton Seed Oil Mills, the Cotton Belt Railroad Station, and the Santa Fe Railroad Station. Thomas Byron Briley was born August 31, 1906, the sixth of nine children born to Charles and Albertine Henry Briley. Tom was born in Wolfe City, Texas, but by 1909 the growing Briley family was living in Paducah, Cottle County, Texas where Charles Briley was working on the Matador Ranch. Albertine's parents, Melvin N. and Irene (Wilbanks) Henry also lived in Paducah, but by early 1910 both families were making plans to move to Saltillo, Hopkins County, Texas. The Brileys arrived in Saltillo in December, 1910 by train with Elzie age 13, Will 11, Melvin 8, twins Ray and Ross 6, Tom 4 and baby Irene 18 months, but it was 1912 before Irene and Melvin moved to Saltillo, where Mr. Henry was a shoe cobbler. Grace was born in Saltillo in 1915, Gladys in 1917.



All the Briley children were musically talented. Mr. Frank Hicks would tell the story to Larry, "you just don't know what you missed by not being at the Briley home and singing with the whole family with Ray playing the piano" and Mr. Hicks was so touched by this, he would become emotional each time he told the story. In 1930, Tom was sent to Wills Point to the Stamps Quartet School of Music for six weeks. But, after all, this was the '30's' and every family had difficult times. Mr. Briley died in 1931. For a while Tom worked in Fort Worth for an oil company, but by the mid-30's, he was back in East Texas. Ray and Ross travelled some in northeast Texas singing as the Briley Brothers, and one or both of them would teach singing school with Tom during the summer in rural east Texas.

At a 1938 Union Singing School, Tom met the love of his life, Virginia Grace Adams. In the 1938 Union Singing School class picture are many of the Adams/Davis cousins including 8-year old Betty Adams and siblings, Mary Jo, Norva Gay, and

Zach Adams and cousins Neil Solomon and Virginia Grace. Betty (Adams) Cason said of the Union Singing School "We loved it, loved it, because if not for that singing school, we had nothing else to do!!"



Virginia Grace Adams was born January 23, 1921 to May and Grover Adams in Mount Vernon, Texas. She grew up in the Union Community, finished high school in Mount Vernon and received college degrees from East Texas State University in Commerce. Virginia Grace started teaching elementary school and she and Tom were married April 11, 1944. They lived in Mount Vernon.

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Photos Needed!

It's not too late to assist with this year's Memorial Day program, and we still

NEED YOUR HELP!!!

We need photos of Old Saltillo Memorial Days past... black & white or color, it doesn't matter. We need photos of the memorial program in action: speakers, entertainment, lunch under the trees, visiting among family and friends, the cemetery grounds... we'll take them all.

If you have photos you are willing to permanently donate to the Old Saltillo Cemetery Association archive, we will gladly receive them. If you prefer to loan your pictures for purposes of Memorial Day program planning, we will gladly scan and save a digital image of your photos, and return the originals to you within days of receiving them.

Please mail any and all Memorial Day photos you can locate to:

Ryan Agee
3900 Vitruvian Way, #467
Addison, TX 75001

If you already have photos in digital format or would prefer to scan and email them for submission, please use the following address:

ragee@yahoo.com

Words From Our President, Cont...

Feel free to bring lawn chairs, card tables, etc. to enjoy your lunch and fellowship with other Members of the Old Saltillo Cemetery Association.



We're looking forward to seeing you on the third Sunday in July, 2012.

Vivian Dennis-Monzingo, President

Board of Directors:

Louis Agee, Ryan Agee, Lou Briley Daniel,
Darwin McGill, Vivian Dennis-Monzingo,
Barbara Conley Norris, Johnny McAfee,
Kenneth Patrick, and Chris Skelly.

The Tom Briley Quartet, Cont...

In 1948 they formed the Tom Briley Gospel Quartet. Two years later, they were broadcasting Monday through Friday from Winnsboro's Old City Hall over KIMP radio station, afterwards broadcasting from the KIMP radio station studio in Mount Pleasant. The program was produced from the studio, live for 30-minutes each Sunday morning at 9:30AM on KIMP for sixteen years until Tom's death in 1965.

Original members of the Tom Briley Gospel Quartet included Tom and Gracie, Mr. Hiram Clinton, and Mr. Sam Johnson, who sang bass, with John Points playing piano. By 1950, with John Points going off to college, Virginia Grace had taken over playing piano or the accordion, depending on the venue. By 1952 the faces of the quartet had changed with Mattie Lou (Burgin) and Curtis Rhoades becoming members. Mattie Rhoades was the daughter of Joe Ben Burgin of Mount Vernon. The Tom Briley Gospel Quartet was in demand at singing conventions, and they performed at local and area Rotary Club variety shows and talent venues such as the Reilly Springs Jamboree. And as always, they would sing a few specials at Memorial Day at Old Saltillo. Virginia Grace continued teaching elementary school and they both still taught singing schools in the summer.

In 1955, Mattie left the quartet to be at home with their children. Tom was a candidate for County Treasurer in Franklin County and held that office for four years. Virginia Grace taught school at Hagansport Elementary School.

Bobby Conley, son of Raymond and Ovetta Conley of Saltillo, became a permanent part of the Tom Briley Quartet in 1955 after he returned from the Navy. The quartet continued to grow in popularity and they became well-known headliners at the Autumn Trails annual Wood-Franklin County Songfest, along with the Stamps Quartet, the Pine Forest Quartet and a host of others who travelled across several states each October and May to perform at the two-day event. Advertised in 1960 as "good old time singing with dinner on the grounds will be featured Saturday night and Sunday at the 65th annual Wood County Singing held again in conjunction with the Franklin County Society, at City Park Auditorium – held since 1926 in Winnsboro, the convention was organized way back in 1895 and has grown to be one of the largest in the state." Mayor Author Nichols said, "if this auditorium is not large enough for the crowds that will attend, the walls of the building will be raised and loud speakers set up so that everyone can hear and take part." He also requested that "women attending bring extra cups, bowls and spoons for the free stew and coffee that will be served at noon Sunday by the convention."



The Wood County singing was one of the oldest and largest in the state and drew an average of 3,000 persons at each of the two conventions held every year with "old time religious songs popular a half-century ago, as well as the latest gospel selections being rendered by singers from 4 states.

The Briley family would gather at Thanksgiving and Christmas and as often as possible and singing around the piano was a normal event. Tom and Gracie were as pleased to be singing with us as with the Stamps Quartet. Tom was a natural comedian, and more than once had us doubled over with laughter or surprise. He and Virginia Grace LOVED children and made each of us feel special and that we were their favorite and that feeling was certainly returned.

Tom died July 30, 1965. About 30 singers who had been associated with him over the years formed a choir and provided music for the services. A special section was reserved for ministers who had been his friends for many years. An estimated crowd of 600 persons filled all the rooms of McCrary-Waggoner-Edwards funeral home and many

persons could not get into the building.



In addition to her full-time musical career with the quartet, Virginia Grace taught school for thirty-seven years in Hagansport, Mount Vernon, Saltillo, and Winnsboro before retiring from teaching in 1977. At one time, she was secretary of a county, district, and national gospel singing convention. Virginia Grace's life was always filled with gospel music, along with teaching. Virginia Grace died February 13, 2009.

Tom and Gracie Briley are buried in the Old Saltillo Cemetery.

Lou Briley Daniel, Secretary

Interments

Since last publication, the following individuals were laid to rest in the Old Saltillo Cemetery:

Delana Holman, interred March 7, 2012

Teresa Holman, interred April 30, 2012

Blanche Gibbs, interred May 12, 2012

"It is not length of life, but depth of life."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Treasurer's Comments

As always, your financial support is essential to keeping the Old Saltillo Cemetery grounds in pristine condition. All OSCA funds are invested in FDIC insured instruments, namely checking and savings accounts and certificates of deposit, with sound local financial institutions.

A full accounting of the OSCA's annual revenues and expenditures is provided (both orally and in written form) during the OSCA's Annual Meeting.

In memory / honor of your friends, family and loved ones, consider a donation to the Old Saltillo Cemetery Association, at P.O. Box 123, Saltillo, TX 75478. Donations are tax deductible.

Ryan Agee, Treasurer