



Frank B. Felton

July 30, 1933 - March 12, 2020

Frank B. Felton, of Thorndale, Texas, passed away March 12, 2020. Frank was born in San Gabriel, Texas, to Andrew Jackson Felton and Wilma Mattie “Billie” Worley Felton on July 30, 1933. As he repeated often, he “hit the ground in ’33 without a nickel to his name”, vowing never to return to a life of poverty he witnessed in the Great Depression, a potent motivation for his lifelong work ethic. Even at 86 years, he was driving tractors and barking orders. In his final days in the hospital, he ensured milo was being planted for the Springtime harvest, and talked of getting hay cutters ready for baling season.

He was baptized in the First Christian Church in San Gabriel. His mother died tragically when he was 10, and young Frank was raised by his grandmother Susie Felton for the remainder of his childhood. His school days were spent in San Gabriel, but following a colorful dispute with the Principal, Frank dropped out at age 15, proclaiming he could “make more money than you driving a truck”. And he did. He soon went to work in road construction, and then became a boilermaker. In the early days of Rockdale’s ALCOA operation in the 1960’s, Frank caught the eye of Commercial Contracting Company (CCC), when they tasked him to bid and build a furnace for the new power plant and smelter. He impressed the higher-ups with his ingenuity, which launched a 40-year career as the on-site Superintendent for CCC. Despite the company’s desires to send him around the country to other struggling sites, he refused to leave his homestead in Milam County.

He took great pride in that homestead. Straddling the San Gabriel River with hundreds of native pecan trees, this land was site of the San Xavier de las Horcasitas Mission founded in 1746. Left to Frank at 16 years of age by his grandfather, a famed Hereford cattleman named Frank Worley, it became nationally known as centerpiece of the epic story “Hold Autumn in Your Hand” by legendary writer George Sessions Perry. As a boy, Frank recalled seeing Mr. Perry perched along the roadside, writing his travails of tenant farmers

in the Great Depression, and the deep river banks of the San Gabriel, where protagonist Sam Tucker finally slayed the elusive monster catfish Lead Pencil.

Frank became a fixture at the ALCOA plant in Rockdale, providing jobs for hundreds and thousands of young construction workers over four decades. As the company flourished, the executives in San Antonio upgraded their company plane to a twin-engine 337, and Frank purchased their iconic single engine Cessna 182, despite not having a pilot's license. He quickly learned, and his favorite pastime soon became flying that green pin-striped plane all over the country. The consummate humorist, when friends asked to go for a plane ride, he'd often reply that "I can take-off really well. Landing.....ehhhhh." He was an avid motorcycle rider, starting with his 1973 Harley Davidson FLH. He was arrested for evading police on his 1991 Harley Road King when he was almost 70 years old, an infraction which landed him in jail. While he claims it was a misunderstanding, the officer was unable to keep up with Frank until he got to his driveway, returning from an evening at the local Steve's Place watering hole. Later he'd add a Trike and a sidecar; even when he got too old to keep them upright, he found ways to keep riding the open roads.

Frank retired from CCC at the age of 70. He continued to farm and ranch the land, acquiring a bulldozer, which he used to clear brush off the property. Within months, he'd shattered every window in the Dozer, was attacked by a swarm of bees, and somehow managed to get the bulldozer stuck. He once commented that he could operate any piece of equipment known to man, except for a Locomotive, only because he never had the opportunity.

Where he might have lacked modesty regarding vocational prowess, he was supremely magnanimous as an employer, citizen, and friend. A 32nd Degree Master Mason, he received his 60-year pin in 2017. A member of Thorndale Volunteer Fire Department, he was given Honorary Status for his years of service. He was a trustee for Thorndale I.S.D. School Board, and named Outstanding Citizen of Thorndale in 1979. An avid supporter of Milam County's 4-H and FFA, he purchased dozens of Grand Champion show animals at the Rockdale Fair over the years, providing ample sustenance for his critically acclaimed BBQ's and Fish Fries down on the Gabriel River. His favorite BBQ was always cabrito, even coming out of retirement in 2018 to smoke a whole goat for his grandson's 40th.

While the name Frank Felton now adorns the family BBQ business, he would readily tell you that they “need to add more salt.”

He ran unsuccessfully for County Commissioner in the early 1960’s against Tubby McAslin, marking the beginning and the end of his political career. Decades later he remarked, “Losing that election was the best thing that could’ve happened to me”. Soon after, he started his career with CCC, and the rest is history. He did, however, remain very active in politics as proverbial kingmaker, with virtually every local and county politician seeking his coveted endorsement for public office right up to the 2020 primaries. A lifelong Blue Dog Democrat, arguing politics with Frank was ultimately futile, and could turn a lighthearted discussion into an all-out brawl. It was his way or the highway, end of debate.

We once thought he’d outlive us all, but sadly, Frank left the world on March 12, 2020. He fought to the very end to get back on his feet. He is preceded in death by his mother Billie, father Jack, and sister Mary Jo. He is survived by his son, Frank “Barton” Felton, Jr. and wife Marcia of Thorndale, grandchildren Summer Odom and husband Len of Bryan, Texas, and Frank Barton “Trey” Felton, III of Thorndale. One great-grandchild, Chesney Odom, and his favorite cousin Marci Felton Zickefoose and her sons Jeff and Justin, along with other family and friends, and another notable cousin, the Honorable Judge Scott Felton, of Waco. Visitation and remembrance will be held at Phillips and Luckey in Rockdale on Thursday, March 19th, from 5pm to 7pm. A private memorial service will be held at a later time.

In lieu of flowers, memorial can be made to the Thorndale Volunteer Fire Department, PO Box 430, Thorndale, Texas 76577, or the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, PO Box 199300, Dallas, Texas, 75219-9842.

Events

MAR **Visitation and Remembrance** 05:00PM - 07:00PM

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Phillips & Luckey Funeral Home - Rockdale

1041 West Highway 79, Rockdale, TX, US, 76567

Comments



“ A tribute video has been added.



Phillips & Luckey Funeral Home - March 18, 2020 at 11:16 AM



“ Condolences to the Felton family

Lawrence Gabriel - March 19, 2020 at 07:09 PM



“ RIP my friend

pauline blanchard - March 20, 2020 at 08:09 PM



“ Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Frank B. Felton.



March 19, 2020 at 07:35 AM



“ RIP Frank. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. May God be with you and your family at this time. Carol Beard

Carol Beard - March 18, 2020 at 07:48 PM



“ 66 files added to the album LifeTributes



Phillips & Luckey Funeral Home - March 17, 2020 at 06:05 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Frank B. Felton.



March 17, 2020 at 09:25 AM



“ Frank started out as my boss, but quickly turned into friend. I picked on Frank. He picked on me. We'd get mad at each other, then forget. We'd try to best each other at having the last laugh. I always tried to make him laugh first thing in the morning, our day went smoother. He'd leave every day by 2 in the afternoon and make sure he'd rile everyone in a turmoil just to make sure we wouldn't forget who he was. "The boss!" He was also very kind and generous. Making sure I was taken care of in an uncertain time during Steve's M/C wreck. Checking on us. Encouraging us. Spending time with us. Always a handshake for Steve and a hug for me. After my stroke, he called. I had "aphasia". Couldn't speak. But I knew he was there for me. I wish I could speak better now. Tell him how much he means to me. I pray God knows my heart. And that Frank knows through him that I loved him. RIP Frank. We won't forget you.

Steve/Karen Lehman - March 16, 2020 at 04:58 PM



“ Delightful Dieffenbachia was purchased for the family of Frank B. Felton.



March 16, 2020 at 04:28 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Frank B. Felton.



March 16, 2020 at 04:24 PM



“ The family is my prayers during this difficult time.

Bonnie Wilkins Clark - March 16, 2020 at 02:10 PM