

# Museum News: Herbert Winston – A Man Called Pappy

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

Terrell County was founded by visionary men who saw a beautiful place to create a life and had the fortitude to bring it to life. But it was built by common men, men who labored hard in the hot sun and unforgiving environment to carve a life and a legacy. Herbert “Pappy” Winston was just such a man.

Herbert, Anna Foree Winston and their young son, Molloy, first came to Terrell County in 1936. As they pulled a small trailer with their Model T Ford, they tore up a tire just west of Dryden and had to spend the night on the side of the road. As they spread their bedrolls under the star-spangled sky they had no idea that Terrell County would fulfill their destiny.



Herbert had just finished a job in Spofford, Texas and the family was headed to a ranch in the Davis Mountains near Balmorhea for a new job. The next morning they limped into Sanderson, bought a new tire and headed on to the Davis Mountains.

In the spring of 1937 they returned to Terrell County and spent most of the remainder of their lives there. Herbert got a job with Ernie Hamilton managing a foreclosed ranch just northwest of Pumpville, almost in Val Verde County. They bought their groceries and went to church at Pumpville, but had to vote in Terrell County at Dryden. It was a long trip, but they observed very conservative politics and Molloy remarked decades later that they made that long journey to Dryden over very rough roads to try to bring Wendell Willkie into the presidential office. They knew he couldn't beat Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal promises, but they exercised their rights anyway.

Herbert was raised in a very conservative farm family. His father was born in Alabama in 1870 and his mother in Georgia in 1874, but they moved to Texas shortly after their marriage in 1900. Herbert was the third of four children, two girls and two boys, and all were born in Texas. Not wanting to farm for the rest of his life, Herbert embraced the cowboy lifestyle and decided to ranch. He and Anna married in early 1929 and Molloy, their only child, came along at the end of the year. Molloy called his father “Pappy” and that name stuck for many of their friends. And now, 1937, they were living in the God-forsaken desert of West Texas...and they loved it.



Because they lived so far out in the country, Molloy had to stay home and be taught by his mother, who was a certified teacher. He did not go to public school until eighth grade.

Those years of living at home were like a dream come true. He was a good student and got his work done quickly, giving him time to run in the country and do all the things a boy on a ranch could do. There weren't many deer in those days, but there were plenty of rabbits, dove and quail to satisfy his hunting interest. He also was taught to trap by his father and they spent many times running the traps and preparing the hides.

But, it wasn't all hunting and trapping. His “jungle gym” was the windmill and there were plenty of horses to ride. And, he did have to do ranch work taking care of animals and helping at shearing time and with marking and shipping. The Winstons and their son loved those times because the neighbors would come to help and it was a time for ranch fellowship. They had frequent visitors who came to drink coffee and visit, or to eat and stay for the night. It was an idyllic life for a growing young boy.

After four years on this place, Pappy got a new job on the Cinco de Mayo Ranch managed by J. H. Fisher. This was quite a job because Mr. Fisher traded frequently for stock and there was constant work which, unfortunately, required all three Winstons to pitch in. Besides that, the terrain was rocky and rough with lots of dog cactus and lecheguilla, an environment that required careful navigating. On top of that, when spring came the air was clouded

with buffalo gnats that bit hard and almost sucked all the blood out of the livestock. Frequent rains often left bog holes that trapped sheep that had to be rescued before the buzzards pulled out their eyes. It was a grueling job, and after a year, the Winstons pulled up stakes and moved to greener pastures.

In 1942 the Winstons moved to the Long Ranch northeast of Dryden and Anna got a job teaching elementary school at the Dryden Elementary School. Molloy rode in with her and caught the school bus to Sanderson to attend eighth grade and high school. He graduated in 1947 and went on to Sul Ross State Teachers College to get his bachelor degree in 1951.

Meanwhile, Pappy stayed with the Long Ranch until 1949 and then went to work as a River Rider until 1952 when they bought a farm in Arkansas and moved away. But, it was not a good move and they had to move back to Sanderson frequently for work. Anna taught at Sanderson Elementary School and Herbert got a job driving a Pierson butane delivery truck to Marathon, among other things.

Finally, in 1961, they moved to Arkansas for good, or so they thought. In 1966 Anna was diagnosed with terminal cancer and they sold their equipment and livestock and moved back to Texas. She passed away in 1967 and Pappy had hoped to return to Arkansas, but without Anna at his side he lost interest and sold everything. Using that money he settled in Water Valley, near his birthplace, and built a home where he lived until his death in 1989. He and Anna are buried in the Water Valley Cemetery.

During all those years Molloy had married Jettie Rae Holmes of Sanderson in 1955 and pursued several careers, living in Dallas and Phoenix and finally settling in Water Valley to teach school. During her final year of life, Anna and Pappy lived with Molloy and Jettie until she passed away.

Molloy and Jettie had long teaching careers at Water Valley and they spent their retirement years there, as well. Molloy passed away in 2004.

Most of us lead normal, mundane lives. But there are those who lead a life of adventure. Pappy and Anna Winston and their son Molloy lived in a harsh desert environment and thrived. It would be such an understatement to say that they had ideal lives, full of adventure, joy and sweet memories of Terrell County.