

SMITH KITE

Smith and his identical twin, Haun, were born May 2, 1920, near Princeton, in Collin County, Texas, to Lacy and Delia (Rainwater) Kite. At an early age, the family moved to West Texas near Snider and Lamesa. The family later moved back to East Texas, and Smith went to High School in Princeton.

He grew up near Dallas, where the Stamps – Baxter Printing Company printed religious songbooks with new songs two or three times each year. The company supported several men's quartets in the area. When Smith was in high school, Sunday singings were held at many local churches, and these quartets would sing the new songs. Smith's mother had four brothers who sang in a quartet. As they grew and left their quartet, Smith and his brothers were often asked to be part of the group. Smith learned about music and became good at singing when he was very young. This was an important part of his being for the rest of his life.

After graduation from high school, Smith and Haun attended East Texas State Teachers College (now Texas A & M at Commerce), where he planned to major in music. He ran track and competed in the 400-yard run. He and Haun hitch-hiked or rode the bus to college because the family did not have a car. He met Mary McAuley in college and married her in 1940. She was from Mt. Vernon, TX. Their oldest son, Terence, was born, and Smith had to leave college to support his family.

He taught at a one-room school near McKinney, TX, for two years. His second son, Sydney, was born during this time. This was when the US war machine was dominating the nation and hiring many people. Smith got a job with the Convair Aircraft Factory in Ft. Worth, and worked there for two years. His third son, Paul, was born. Smith was drafted in 1944. He was away from his family for 16 months. He went to the South Pacific Theater and spent time in the Headquarters helping with plans. His twin brother, Haun, was in a tank in Europe. His older brother was in the US Navy. Smith was in the Philippines when the two Japanese cities were destroyed. He went into Japan with some of the earliest groups.

When he returned to the US, the family moved back to Ft. Worth, because his return to the same job had been guaranteed. He was moved up into the administration of the factory and had several people under his supervision. During this time, he was the song leader for the Arlington Heights Church of Christ in South Ft. Worth. His older sons sat with him on the front row in church assemblies.

His eldest son remembers a particular day when several of the administrators of the aircraft factory attended a party on a lake near Ft. Worth. On the way home, Mary and Smith decided that they could not continue in this kind of work because of their desire to have their sons understand that the love of God and His Kingdom is more important than any kind of earthly job, even a very good one. Mom said that "they drank beer and told smutty jokes" at the party. They wanted something better for their boys.

Smith had led the singing at a very large week-long gospel meeting in South-East Ft. Worth. He became good friends with the preacher from Stamford, TX. Within weeks, he moved his family to Stamford, where Smith was the assistant preacher and song leader. This was about 40 miles from Abilene, where he could take some courses in order to help him become a preacher. His fourth son, David, was born in Stamford.

After two years, the family moved to Anthony, KS. Smith was the first full-time preacher of the Church of Christ. Of course, he taught all the boys about leading songs, and taught everyone about singing.

After two years in Anthony, the family moved to Norwich, KS, where a new church had been established. After two years there, the family moved back to Texas – Saint Jo, to be nearer to their parents.

After five years, the family moved to Kearney, NE. The oldest son went off to college and the rest of the family moved. Smith and Mary were in Kearney for 16 years. During this time, all the sons, except the oldest, attended

York College. York was a 2-year college at that time, so all the boys had to transfer in order to complete a 4-year degree. Mary and two of the boys earned bachelor's degrees at Kearney State Teachers College.

Smith, himself, never finished earning a complete college degree, even though he had more hours than a bachelor's degree requires. He changed his major too much for them to count up correctly. He was awarded an honorary Bachelor's Degree from York College in 2008.

Smith performed many weddings and funerals in Nebraska. He knew people from many places in Nebraska and he was well known. Nebraska became the first real home for Smith and Mary Kite. They became very strong Cornhuskers. They loved Nebraska.

Smith enjoyed fishing, golf, camping, hunting, being outdoors, and gardening, especially tomatoes. Smith enjoyed most sports. He attended many high school and college games, especially football, wrestling and track. He took his sons to track meets all over the state. He met with many of the athletes and encouraged them.

But more than anything else, he wanted to be with people. He wanted to study the Bible with somebody. He loved the Bible. He taught many people about changing their lives to the path of following Jesus for a better life.

MARY KITE

Mary Frances McAuley Kite was born 12 February 1922 in Ft. Worth, TX, to Walter J and Lola McAuley. She was the youngest of four children. She was at least twenty years younger than her oldest brother. Her mother died before she was one year old. Her older sister cared for her for some months, and then Mary was passed from family to family until she was about three. The family of her father's brother took her in and reared her through high school in Mt. Vernon, TX. Her father passed away before she was nine, so the home of her uncle, George T. and Evy McAuley, was the only home she knew.

She attended East Texas State Teachers' College and probably would have become a teacher. However, she met, fell in love with, and married Smith Kite in early 1940. She immediately became a wife and soon a mother. She would tell you that her entire goal in life became taking care of Smith and her sons. Smith taught Mary how to cook and Mary taught Smith how to drive. Though they were quite different, they complemented each other very well. She steered away from Smith's limelight and was proud when he was recognized. Where Smith was very much an extrovert, Mary was an introvert.

She attended Kearney State College and graduated in 1962 with a teaching degree.

Mary enjoyed reading, playing the piano, and painting. She and Smith enjoyed classical music. The family did not hear popular music at home until the boys were in high school. Later in life, Mary enjoyed painting and firing China cups and saucers. She was an avid bird-watcher and 'flower-watcher'. She often said that she could keep up with the little flowers, but birds moved too fast. Smith and Haun had learned pinochle while in the military, so whenever the two and their wives got together, the four would play cards every night.

She taught many children's classes, attended church events and fed many, many people. She enjoyed watching her boys lead singing. After the boys left home, Mary felt that her duty was to keep Smith healthy and going at full strength.

The family often traveled. Smith and Mary were determined to introduce their boys to all sorts of places and endeavors. The boys became collectors of fossils, arrowheads, stamps, rocks, and minerals. They learned about the stars, birds, plants, animals, etc. They went to many church camps. The family usually camped in KOA-type campgrounds during their travels. Loading six into a car meant reducing what you had to what you really needed.

Requiring that everyone take the bare minimum on a trip was normal. Life in the home was very similar. The family did not need very much, and so did not have very much.