

Clifford W. Stone

1918 - 2010



Mr. Clifford Stone was the son of Wilber Ernest and Olive Clifford Stone. William Emanuel Stone, Clifford's grandfather, came to Butler County from Berlin, Germany in 1879 and became one of El Dorado's wealthiest citizens. Clifford attended El Dorado schools and graduated high school cum laude. Mr. Stone attended Kansas State University and graduated with honors in 1939 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture. The year following graduation, he returned to El Dorado upon the death of his father to become a partner with his mother in the operation of Stone Farms in Butler, McPherson and Finney counties. Later the mother son team would purchase and operate the Walnut Valley State Bank in El Dorado.

Clifford married Sara (Sally) Lou Connell, of El Dorado, on December 10, 1941. In 1942 he enlisted as an aviation cadet in the U.S. Army Corps. The nation had been at war for only four months. Stone, a young man in his early twenties, served as a B-24 pilot with the 763rd Squadron of the 460th Heavy Bombardment Group of the 55th Wing of the 15th Air Force in the European theatre of operations in Italy. While participating in his 50th mission, his B-24 was shot down. He was captured

by the Germans and spent the remainder of WWII at Stalag I prisoner of war camp. His military decorations include the distinguished Flying Cross and the Air medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. At the time of his separation from active duty, he was a captain, but he later attained the rank of Major in the U.S. Air Force Reserves.

After the war, Stone became the managing director of Saco Oil Company and Yuma Oil Company, positions he held for the next 27 years. Both companies had been owned since 1934 by Stone's father in law, O.J. Connell. These companies had leases in Butler, Marion, Russell and Sedgwick counties, as well as interests in Texas and Oklahoma. Adhering to his belief of being a good corporate citizen, he saw to it that both oil companies actively supported all civic and county endeavors in addition to furnishing labor and supplying resources whenever they were needed. Clifford Stone not only managed Saco's and Yuma's oil leases, he also pursued a 42 year banking career as C.E.O of Walnut Valley State Bank and Trust in El Dorado, serving as “banker to the oil patch”. It was his wish and mission to provide leadership in the field of community betterment.

In 1962, Clarence Rice told Mr. Stone, “There ought to be an oil museum at El Dorado, it’s the logical place; and you young fellows will have to do it.” Mr. Stone actively pursued that vision which led to the Kansas Oil and Gas Legacy Gallery and exhibits honoring the Kansas petroleum industry at the Butler County Historical Society.

SOURCE: The Wichita Eagle. January 23, 2010.