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## Males Appreciation Day Honors Couple for Service

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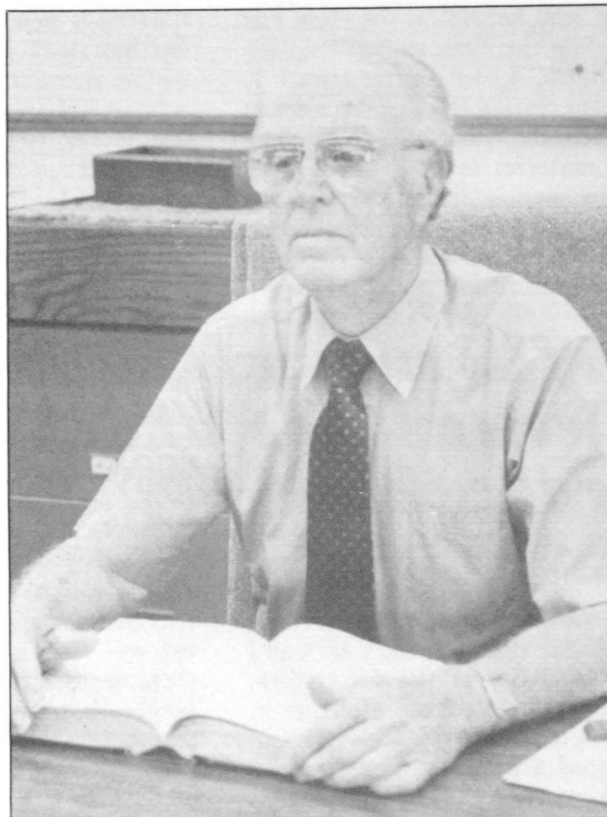
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*L. L. "Red" Males — "A business or bank can only prosper in proportion to the prosperity of the people who patronize them. I knew that for the people to do well in Roger Mills County, the land had to be saved and conservation was the means to use." In service to others, Red has found himself and his strength as a person. Because of him and other soil savers, the land is being conserved, but "the effort must not stop. It must go on and on, because each generation has to be convinced again." (Photo by Dee Ann Ray)*



*Lorena G. Savage Males at her beloved piano. "I owe a great debt to my parents. My father could have used all us children in the store as a work force, but when it came time to go to school, he saw to it that we got to go. My mother and other ladies of Hammon worked to see that we children had cultural opportunities and training in music and the arts. They allowed us to be ourselves and develop as individuals." (Photo by Dee Ann Ray)*

— by Dee Ann Ray

# Males Appreciation Day honors couple for service

On Saturday, July 7, 1984, Roger Mills County observed Males Appreciation Day in honor of the contributions of L. L. and Lorena Males not only to that county but to Western Oklahoma. Married more than fifty years, the Maleses are an integral part of Roger Mills County's history.

L. L. "Red" Males was born at Rankin, which later became Reydon, Oklahoma. He is

the son of G. W. and Bertie Males, who farmed all their lives in the Reydon area. Even as a boy, Red had a feel for the land and he could see the constant abuse of it, although conservation was an unknown term in those days.

As a 4-H member, Red participated in the projects of the club, but recalls nothing being mentioned about the need to save the land for

future generations.

School days for the first eight grades were spent at "Skip-Out School," which was located across from present-day "Skip-Out Lake." In many ways it is ironic that a boy attending Skip-Out School grew up to help build a conservation program that developed Skip-Out Lake.

With no high school available in Reydon, L.



*Lowell Lawrence (L. L.) Males is the little boy second from the right on the front row. The photo was made when he attended Skip-Out School, which was located across from what is now Skip Out Lake, near Rankin-Reydon. His parents were G. W. and Bertie Males. There was no High School in the area, so he went to Strong City on an Athletic Scholarship to complete his schooling.*

L. accepted an athletic scholarship at Strong City High School, one of three such scholarships given to Reydon boys. In 1924, Red went to work for the First State Bank of Strong City, headed by D. N. Hunt. His first job was as janitor and then bookkeeper while he attended school during most of the day. Between his athletic commitments with the relays, basketball, baseball and the mile which he ran in a little over five minutes, and his job at the bank, Red was busy all the time.

When he graduated from Strong City High in 1925, Red wouldn't accept the position of Valedictorian for his class because it meant he would have to make a speech. "I was shy and I didn't think I could do that, so I threw away the chance to be Valedictorian." There is another irony in that, because Red has since made thousands of speeches in favor of conservation efforts and in explaining the Sandstone Creek project. The difference is in Red's own words, "I believed I had something important to say about conservation and

something to contribute. I overcame my shyness to do so. I had lots of help from Bob Wright and other Soil Conservation workers, but I knew I had to speak up."

In the late 20's, a new music teacher moved to Strong City. Her name was Lorena Savage. One of eight children born to E. B. and Mary Savage of Hammon, Lorena was a new graduate of Southwestern State College. As she tells the story, she questioned a friend about eligible men at Strong City after she knew she was going to teach there. She was told there were only two, one at the lumber yard and one at the bank. Before she moved to Strong City, Lee Wells at the lumber yard was spoken for by Nig Polk and that left Red Males at the bank. When she got settled at Strong City, Lorena met him and "things turned out good."

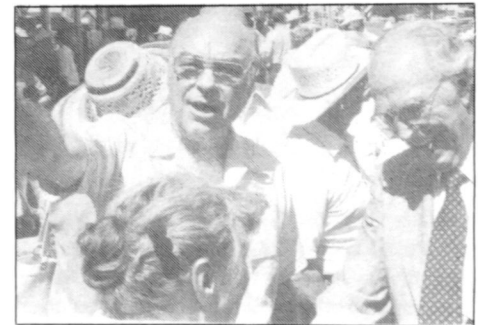
Lorena's mother held the distinction of being the first coed to enroll at Southwestern State College. When Mary Mabry married E. B. Savage, and began to raise a family which eventually consisted of eight boys and girls, the family push was always for education for the children. Lorena expresses a debt of gratitude to Hammon, and the environment it provided for children who had talent in the arts. "The ladies at Hammon then did everything possible to promote music and speech and all of the arts. They saw to it that we had good teachers and opportunities to compete. They told us to try to be ourselves. We were so fortunate. Do you know that Hammon once placed first in one act plays in

the state? Josephine Smithey was the speech teacher then. We also had four talented girls from the Indian Missionary family. They were all named Kliewer and they were educated in Kansas and came back to teach music. Later, Grace Crump Boal taught music.

"Hammon is still promoting the growth of culture and the arts. They even have a wonderful new auditorium at their school for programs. I was just born at the right time to the right family in the very community where I should have been to give me every opportunity to develop my musical talents. It is only a little talent, but a lot of work has gone into developing it."

Lorena also found just the right husband too. "He has always wanted me to be myself, develop and grow, and that has made a difference, because we complement each other's lives but we also have our own fields of interest. We do share our common heritage of growing up in Roger Mills County. Often when we are talking, we discuss the three or four generations of families we have known through the bank and through my work in the schools," says Lorena. "We've covered the waterfront, since we represent Reydon, Strong City, Hammon, and Cheyenne in our background."

Red's first decision to do something about



*A candid shot on Appreciation Day*

conservation occurred the day he along with everyone else in Roger Mills County was frightened by the wall of dirt which swept in from the north in the first dust storm to hit in the "dirty thirties." "We didn't know what it was. It was like a wall and it kept coming toward us. It was only the first, but we knew we had to stop it."

By that time, the Extension folks were talking conservation, and Red knew about equipment which was available to help in terracing, ditching, etc. The bank purchased several pieces of equipment to loan to area farms in 1934-35. But the equipment was heavy for horses, and most farmers didn't



*Red and Lorena in 1953*

have tractors in those days. However, a start was made with a Corsicana grader, some farm levels, and so forth.

E. B. Savage, Lorena's father, was also conscious of the need for conservation. He grew up in railroad camps where his father operated road-building equipment. E. B. saw what happened to the soil when it was not taken care of by the farmers. Later when his father opened the E. F. Savage & Son store in Hammon, E. B. continued his efforts, es-



*The honorees on Appreciation Day*

pecially after the real conservation move was made in Roger Mills County, E. B. and Red were always friends and worked together on the early efforts, which Red continued after Mr. Savage died.

Red became the head of the bank at Strong City in 1929. In 1935, the 1st State Bank of Cheyenne failed. Red moved the bank from Strong City to Cheyenne and named it the Security State. His staff then consisted of two plus himself.

Throughout his banking career, Red's philosophy has been that the bank could do well only if the people it served did well. The farmers of Roger Mills County depend on the land; therefore, the land must be protected. "That is why I have worked so hard on conservation. I believe it is the only hope we have for the future of the land and the people of Roger Mills County," says Red.

In the 30's, not only was Roger Mills County ravaged by the dust storms, and the

loss of population, but the big flood of 1934 and subsequent infrequent hard rains did even more damage to the soil. "In 1934, Dr. Winters and other Washington officials came down to survey the damage on the Washita from the big flood. I went with them on the surveys and we talked. I became more and more convinced that we must promote conservation," related Red.

In 1942, Congress authorized the Upper Watershed Conservation programs, but the war prevented any work being done. In 1949, the Sandstone Creek Project started. In 1953, Sandstone was the first Flood Control Watershed program completed in the whole world. "It was all new. We pioneered and developed as we went along. There was little red tape—at least not like now and we just did what seemed to work. The Soil Conservation boys today have lots more training, but they don't have the zeal, the evangelistic attitudes of the first Soil Conservation men we had," muses Red.

Following the completion of Sandstone, Red and Bob Wright of the soil service, hit the road with a slide show explaining what they had done. "We would leave our work at 2 or 3 p.m. in the afternoon, and give programs in Tucumcari or places in Kansas or Texas. Bob would drive back while I slept after doing the program. We always went to work the next day. I'm not sure what we were worth, but we did lots of programs that way. I made my first speech at the State Convention, and then I went to Boston to the National Convention. Even the Ph.D's listened to me because we had done something new and inventive. I didn't have time to worry about being shy," laughs Red.

Thousands of visitors from countries all around the world came to Roger Mills County and Western Oklahoma to view the conservation efforts being completed. Tours and speeches explaining the project were held all the time by Red and the Soil Conservation people.

Red and Bob Wright went all over the United States working on conservation. For Red it was a labor of love, which still goes on. He was a volunteer and he worked hard because he believed in saving the land. He speaks with reverence of the early area soil conservationist such as Bob Wright, who literally gave his life to the program.

While Red was promoting conservation with Lorena's support, she was raising their two boys — Jim, who is now a physician in Oklahoma City, and Bill, who is an innkeeper in Sweden. "I did all the things that mothers are supposed to do—Cub Scout, band mothers,

school programs, etc."

Lorena was also studying the piano and the organ. She still takes lessons on both instruments. "I go once a month to Oklahoma City to OCU for lessons with Dr. Burg on the organ. I go once a week to SWOSU for lessons on the piano with Mr. Breckinridge. I keep learning all the time. I also learn from my students, who after all are my best teachers. I never believed they could be when my good friend Lura Chalfant, who also taught piano, told me that. However, through the years, I find that I get so much from my students in the form of stimulation and elation at their progress."

Through her efforts, the Cheyenne School developed a program of choral music and students have placed well in state, county, and area meets. Piano students earn awards through the continuing efforts of Lorena Males, who believes in them and their talents. "I try to work with each student to develop his or her individual talents. I believe everyone has some talents born in them. Some have talents in being plumbers, and some in music, and some in other fields, but I try to encourage each child to be the best they can in whatever they choose to do in life," states Lorena.

A rather quiet, unassuming man, Red is accessible to his bank customers. He can be found at his desk in the front of the bank. Strangers to Roger Mills County are probably surprised to learn about the accomplishments of this tall, gentle-spoken man. But folks in Western Oklahoma know of the



*Bank meeting in the presence of Augusta Metcalf's "Prairie Fire"*

many honors given to Red. He was president of the Oklahoma Banker's Association in 1951; has served on all kinds of executive committees, National Agriculture Committee; the National Banker's Association Board; An Advisory Board to the Secretary of Agriculture on soil and water; the Food and Fiber Commission Board; and is senior member of

the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, with 27 years of continuous service. He is also a distinguished honoree of the Western Oklahoma Hall of Fame. The honors are many, but Red has not been changed by them. He still works hard and believes that Conservation efforts are just as important now as they were when begun.

Lorena too has won many honors, not only as a teacher, but as a performer. She long ago lost count of the programs she has given and the number of students she has taught. She currently performs with a group composed of Mr. and Mrs. Rollin Reimer and their son David. Quality is the main driving force behind her efforts. Both of the Maleses use excellence of performance as their measure in life.

Both Red and Lorena seem to have been born into the right time for their talents. Saving the soil is needed, and Red was the man to do it because he believed in the work. Development of cultural activities is needed, and Lorena was born into the right climate to work with developing talent because she believes in people. Both of the Maleses are people-oriented and share a common delight in working to help people develop themselves. Their shared joy is in seeing people be all they

can be, whether it is financially or as a person.

Red's concern for the future of conser-



*Lorena as a young woman with her grandmother, Mother Conley*

vation is profound. "Saving the soil is a job that will never be completed. We have learned that some of our early efforts were fruitless while others have worked well. We just can't stop, although we have come a long way."

Lorena's concern for the young people of today is that they "are being robbed of their heritage of songs and poetry. The books just don't have the richness of songs and stories as they once did. Children don't sing songs like 'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean' and 'I Dream of Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair' and 'Skip to My Lou.' The only place they hear such songs is in lessons because the piano books still have them," says Lorena.

The efforts of Lorena and L. L. Males can be summed up by saying their work is for the joy of it. They found themselves in doing for others and because of their efforts, the lives of many people have been and are still being enriched.

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