

## William Charles Sanders, Sr.

Nestled deep into the rugged mountains of Eastern Kentucky, Beattyville, Lee County, Kentucky, emerged one long, lanky “Hillbilly boy” – one of thirteen children, the oldest boy. My father was killed in Pearl Harbor in 1941, the year I was born; and shortly thereafter my mother remarried. I felt as though I was very ill-equipped to attempt going to college, so I joined the United States Air Force in 1957. I worked on B-52 Bombers as an Airframe and Sheet Metal Technician, and was stationed in Plattsburg, New York. I never did rule out the idea of attaining an education, and after the military, I enrolled in North Texas State University (NTSU).

My first major was Music where I learned to play the piano and sing “Bass Opera”. Imagine a Hillbilly learning to sing “Bass Opera”! What a revelation to my family in the hills, and, a self-realization which inspired me to do even greater things. My fellow hog-stompers could not believe the stories that they were hearing about me down in the great state of Texas. As a young curious boy I asked the local hometown Piano Teacher to teach me how to play the piano. Reluctantly she replied that I was “too dumb” to learn how to play the piano! One will never know the joy of accomplishment in which you were deemed “ignorant” by another who looked down on folks not in their social standings. College life was an adaptation from “Hillbilly Standards” to “City Slicker Status” overnight – no in-between. The stigma of being different in an educational institution gave credibility to my demeanor to strive to understand information, and for the most part, was a huge barrier.

My second major was English – let it not be said that it is impossible to teach a “Hillbilly” English. As I progressed deeper into the curricula, a very talented professor, Dr. Kurt Rulon, tackled my handicap in a linguistics class as he analyzed my “Native Kentucky” slaughter of the English language. He finally conceded that my vocabulary and pronunciation of three and four syllable words were acceptable in the college setting. Requiring knowledge of some type of “Foreign Language”, I was advised to begin with the classical language: Latin. As I was trying to find the Latin classroom, a tall slender gentleman dressed in a blue “Philadelphia Lawyer’s Suit”, approached me and asked if he could be of assistance. I replied, “I’m lost”. He introduced himself to me as Dr. J. C. Matthews, President of NTSU. He escorted me to Dr. Anthony Damico’s Latin class and introduced me as “the boy from Kentucky”. Since that day most of my professors and classmates referred to me as “Kentucky”. Dr. Damico explained that he was a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, and, he seemed interested in me as a fellow human being. I required an extra amount of instruction from him, and I can say that he earned every bit of his salary as he went the extra mile for my benefit. Today, we are still very good friends and talk to each other occasionally. I was taught by my parents to never give up on any endeavor instilled in my mind, and to always finish what I started. Although it took me nine years to accomplish my

dream of earning a college degree, I have never ceased trying to learn something new or innovative.

My third major was “Industrial Arts”. I knew that my hands were attached to my brain and I was convinced that I could teach other people what I had learned. I was surrounded by many professionals in my neck of the woods, such as school teachers, lawyers, and doctors who were all highly respected by the community, but as a young man I was never taught that they all had earned a college degree. Had I known that fact, I would have traveled a different route. Unfortunately, none of my siblings attended college or trade school. I, to this day, am the loner. Some of my folks may probably look down on me because of my education! Dr. Earle Blanton welcomed me with open arms into the Industrial Arts Department. I was amazed with the machines, tools and technology that were present for my use. My step-father taught me how to build various useful objects as I was growing up in the mountains, but with hand-tools only – the same ones that his father had used to instruct him as a boy. Dr. M. D. Williamson was a professor with whom seemingly everyone was trying to schedule an appointment or a class. Professor C. C. Davis was a wood-working genius who never left a student wondering about his instruction. Considering all the professors that I encountered, Mr. Davis was always exceeding my expectations at every level of educational performance! Dr. Jerry McCain, Welding, Machine-shop, Foundry, and Metallurgy Professor, taught me the exact science of metals and their uses, as well as how to teach others these skills and knowledge.

I am a product of the “1960s Era” at NTSU and am extremely thankful for the Administration and Faculty available to guide and teach me the necessary knowledge to become a productive citizen. I taught Industrial Arts Technology to 3,226 students for thirty years and retired in 1996 from El Campo High School in El Campo, Texas.

My name is William (Bill) “Kentucky” Charles Sanders, Sr., and I live in Louise, Wharton County, Texas. I am married to Patsy Ruy (Boland) Sanders. I have served in most all of the industrial technology professional organizations at the local, state and national levels. I am a member of the Louise Lions Club, United Methodist Church, National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, and several genealogical societies. I am Registrar and Genealogist for the Cradle of Texas Chapter #33 of the Texas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.