



Resolution of Memorial Tribute
In Memory of
John Ellis Gray
1907 - 2002

John Ellis Gray, a native Texan, was born in Buckeye, Matagorda County, on March 3, 1907. He and his family moved to Beaumont in 1916 and he graduated as valedictorian of South Park High School in 1923. After graduating as the top-ranking male student in the first commencement of South Park Junior College in 1925, he taught and coached at South Park High School for six years. His early commitment to excellence in education led him to devote much of his life to that field as one of its visionary leaders.

John Gray and Mary Marine Hahn, his high school sweetheart, were married in 1930. Gray returned to South Park Junior College, renamed Lamar College, in 1932 and served as head coach, athletic director, teacher and dean over the next ten years. During that time he earned a B.A. in government in 1936 and an M.A. in educational administration in 1938 from the University of Texas. He became President of the college in 1941, taking leave in 1944 to serve in the United States Navy for two years.

Following his military service, Gray resumed the Presidency of Lamar College and was awarded an LL.D. from Centenary College in 1949. His efforts to develop Lamar into a four-year, state-supported institution culminated in Lamar State College of Technology opening its doors on September 1, 1951. Dr. Gray resigned the same day to begin a 20-year career in banking, serving as Executive Vice President and then President of First National Bank. He was instrumental in bringing about the merger of the bank with Security National Bank into First Security National Bank, where he served as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer until retiring in 1972.



Ann Gray Pigue, Paul Pigue and John Preston, Dr. Gray's daughter, son-in-law and grandson are joined by Dr. Brock Brentlinger (l), memorial presenter.

In February 1972, Dr. Gray returned to Lamar University as its President, serving in that capacity until 1977, at which time the Board of Regents named him President Emeritus.

Dr. Gray served in the following professional capacities:

- President of the Association of Texas Colleges and Universities
- Member and Vice Chairman of the Texas Commission on Higher Education
- First Chairman of the Coordinating Board, Texas College and University System (appointed by Gov. John Connally in 1965)
- Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve
- Steering committee of the Interstate Compact on Education
- Member of Education Commission of the States (appointed by Gov. William P. Clements, Jr. in 1980)

Dr. Gray was community-minded. He served as:

- President of the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce
- President of the Young Men's Business League
- President of the Rotary Club of Beaumont
- Campaign Chair and President of the United Appeals of Beaumont and North Jefferson County
- Advisory Board of St. Elizabeth Hospital
- Member of St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Dr. Gray received multiple honors during his lifetime, some of which include:

- Exchange Club's Golden Deeds Award
- Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver Award
- Texas Association of State Senior College and University Officers Distinguished Service Award

- Education Commission of the States Outstanding Service to Education Award
- Association of Colleges and Universities Mirabeau B. Lamar Award for Leadership in Learning
- The John Gray Institute of Lamar University named in his honor

Dr. John E. Gray passed away on March 20, 2002, at the age of 95. He was preceded in death by his wife of sixty-six years, Mary Marine Hahn Gray, and one of their daughters, Jean Gray Richardson. Dr. Gray is survived by his daughter Ann Gray Pigue and son-in-law Paul W. Pigue; three grandchildren: John Preston and wife Lori, Kathleen Richardson and Kevin Richardson; four great-grandchildren: Paul Preston, Alexander Gray Preston, James Christopher Richardson and Elizabeth Gray Richardson.

John Ellis Gray loved family and friends, education and Lamar. He is remembered by all as a gentleman who was also a gentle man, and as a leader in business, in the community, and in education. The Rotary Club of Beaumont especially remembers Dr. John Gray as a Past President, a Paul Harris Fellow and for his 56 years of service.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the members of the Rotary Club of Beaumont express sorrow at the death of Dr. John Ellis Gray and extend sympathy to his family as an expression of sincere feeling at the loss of a dear friend and long-time member of this Rotary Club; AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this resolution be spread across the minutes of this Rotary Club, and that a copy be furnished to his family.

Passed by unanimous vote of the membership this 28th day of August 2002.