

R. Malcolm Brown, Jr. Pampa High School Class of 1957



I was born January 2, 1939 in Pampa, Texas , the son of Clementine and R. Malcolm Brown. My father was a new physician in town, and my mother was to engage in the exciting and challenging business of raising three children (Malcolm, Michael, and Mark). My earliest memories of school life in Pampa centered around school policy to take a 15 minute enforced nap in the first grade. We had to sleep on a special blanket brought from home. Well, at least I could have some "thinking time" on that blanket in Mrs.Hamilton's homeroom at Sam Houston Elementary School!

Growing up in Pampa was a remarkable experience for me. We lived at 1206 Christine Street. I grew gladiolus in my parents' back yard. I also spent many hours practicing the piano under the guidance of Elise Donaldson Waters. I enjoyed playing the piano in the junior high school assemblies. One of my closest neighbors was M.E. Lamb , a Pampa High School biology teacher. Her son went to school at an Ivy League college, and when he returned with the exciting news about college life back East, I really became interested in science. Photography and gardening were my first serious interests, and my father, an excellent photographer, taught me the art of making movies and slides during our summer vacations. Eventually, I learned how to develop and process film and prints.

With this budding curiosity in science, gardening, and music, I entered Pampa High School in 1953 with perhaps too many interests. My grades suffered and one of my teachers told me that I would never make it to college! I needed guidance! Luckily, I came across a very influential teacher, Elizabeth Hurley , who had great patience and taught me how to write and use my creative skills as a photographer and member of the annual staff. I might add that Miss Hurley also taught me how to budget my time! My senior year, I was appointed Editor of The Harvester 1957 There were many highlights of those experiences, including a photo I made of Mary Inmon , our Oil Progress Queen . This photo won the first place for photography in the State. Also, I remember traveling as school photographer for Coach Clifton McNeely's basketball team to Austin where we won the State Championship! I decided I wanted to attend The University of Texas at Austin I eventually received two degrees from UT-Austin, and now I have the extraordinary privilege to teach and conduct research in this Texas flagship institution.

In high school, I also became interested in amateur radio, thanks to Herman Whatley who taught me code and helped me to pass my novice and conditional licenses (K5GHY) . That single event launched me

all the more into science. I built dozens of Heathkits, including a hi-fi system for our neighbors, Gene and Polly Sidwell. I worked summers in my dad's clinic doing x-rays and laboratory work under the excellent tutelage of T.M. Whitely, laboratory technician of the Pampa Clinic. With experience in electronics and interests in amateur radio, I decided to build an x-ray machine and enter it in the science fair in Canyon. To my own surprise, I won first place with the option to invite a teacher of my choice to attend the National Science Fair in Los Angeles. I chose my chemistry teacher, Elaine Ledbetter. This one event truly influenced our future lives. Mrs. Ledbetter went on to become President of the National Science Teacher's Association, and I used my knowledge much later in life, choosing a career in botany to work with cellulose biosynthesis and atomic and molecular imaging with electron microscopes. (see projects)

The most important message for any Pampa High School student who would ever take the time to read this plaque is to realize the truly extraordinary opportunities which await you in the loving environment of your family, your town, and your school. The remarkable education given me in Pampa through its schools and citizens undoubtedly molded my life forever. Pampa, Texas was and still is a most unusual small town. First, it is geographically isolated to the extent that its citizens often turn outward and thus really get to know and help each other. Second, Pampa always has valued the education of its youth, and it is just such a challenge Pampa High School gave me that will inspire you to make the sky the limit for your life's dreams. Finally, when you come to realize many years later that you cannot get your hometown experiences out of your mind, it suddenly dawns on you that growing up in Pampa was not such a bad thing, after all! I am confident that many future generations will benefit from the wisdom and knowledge of the noteworthy citizens of Pampa, Texas, USA!

R. Malcolm Brown, Jr.
May 20, 1997

I should point out that in 1960 at UT-Austin, I met my wife-to-be Ann Callaway . Today, 36 years later, we are still very happily married! My parents were first introduced to Ann's parents over a Thanksgiving Turkey Dinner in November, 1960.

Note- below are some links to photos recently taken during the two days of the Induction, May 19 and 20, 1997.

Bill and Ramona Hite
The Browns and the Orrs
The Brandts, Ramona Hite, and the Orrs
Malcolm with Mary Jane Rose Johnson
Malcolm in Front of PHS on the day of his induction