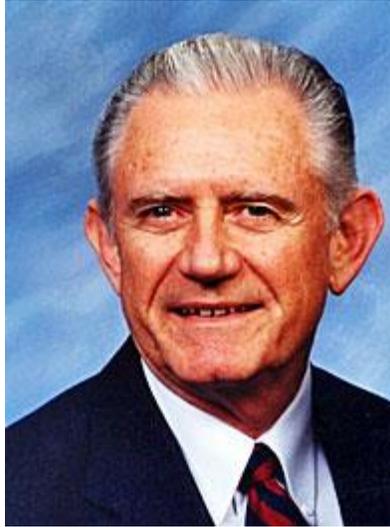


## **Teddy (Ted) F. Swindle** **Pampa High School Class of 1956**



An uncommonly ordinary man, Teddy (Ted) Franklin Swindle is the author of the question and answer – “Who is this ‘Pampa Harvester’?” – inscribed on the wall of the Pampa High School rotunda above “The Harvester” statue given to the school by his PHS Class of 1956. This honor has given him a special place in the life of his old school. Also, his successful pursuit of an annual contest for seniors at Pampa High School to have them give their own answers to the question he first posed has made his place in the history of a school more than 100 years old a lasting and continuing contribution in behalf of his PHS Class of 1956. This information is offered to provide a means for viewers of “The Harvester” statue and what he wrote to know something about who *this* Pampa Harvester was.

Mr. Swindle was born in Pampa Jarrett Hospital in Pampa, Texas, on August 16, 1938. His parents, Pete and Elsie Swindle, were farm workers migrating from East Texas on their way to Oregon when his birth delayed them in Pampa where his father worked as a laborer with Works Progress Administration on projects such as the Lake McClellan dam and the construction of Pampa High School. Around the age of three, Mr. Swindle accompanied his parents to a farm job on the Duncan farm east of Mobeetie, Texas. Two years later the family returned to Pampa where Mr. Swindle went to public schools – Woodrow Wilson Elementary, Pampa Junior High, and Pampa High School. During his years in the Pampa schools he was active in Cub Scouts, the Boy Scouts of America, and Employers, reaching the Star rank and serving as Junior Assistant Scout Master for Troop 4 sponsored by the First Christian Church in Pampa. In 1956 Mr. Swindle graduated with honors from Pampa High School. He was recognized as All School Favorite (boy) and Highest Ranking Boy, and he had the male lead in the Senior Play, “Harvey.” Also, he was President of Junior Red Cross, Student Council Vice-President, “Little Harvester” school newspaper business manager, Mr. Future Teacher of America of District 9, President of the Panhandle High School Press Association, and member of the National Honor Society, Quill and Scroll, and Thespians.

After graduation from high school, Mr. Swindle attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, where he was selected as a member of the Freshman Honor Fraternity. Subsequently, Mr. Swindle transferred to West Texas State College in Canyon, Texas, and in August 1961 he enlisted in the United States Army. Before shipping overseas, he married Audrey Marilyn Ayers on May 11, 1962, and she joined him in West Berlin, Germany, where he had arrived just prior to the first anniversary of the Berlin Wall. Mr. Swindle reached the rank of Specialist Fourth Class and headed the Officer Records Section in personnel, assigned to Headquarters Company, Berlin Brigade. He was chosen Soldier of the Month during his tour of duty. Mr. Swindle completed military service with an honorable discharge, and he is a lifetime member of The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). After military service, Mr. Swindle returned to school at West Texas University in Canyon where he achieved a BS degree in Education. He taught high school English in Hereford, Texas, and he also taught Language Development in elementary school there, as well. His young students, sons and daughters of migrants, managed to write their own play, build a set with puppets, and perform their play for other students in Aikman

Elementary School. He eventually achieved a degree of Master of Arts in English from West Texas State University in Canyon. His thesis for his Master of Arts degree was *Robert Frost's Theory of Poetry*.

Mr. Swindle began work with the Texas Employment Commission in 1967 serving as the first Job Corps recruiter for Deaf Smith, Parmer, and Castro counties and working in the TEC local office in Hereford until he secured a position in the State Office in Austin. He and his wife lived in Austin for 22 years. During his time with TEC Mr. Swindle was a key person in the initial computerization of the unemployment insurance program for the State of Texas, creating and doing the first training of local office unemployment insurance personnel. He reached the position of Associate Chief of Benefits. He also worked briefly as Assistant Director of the Retirement Division at the Employees Retirement System of Texas. After a short time when he and his wife were in business in Austin, he returned to TEC where he had the unique job of Knowledge Engineer. Mr. Swindle and his co-worker developed an artificial intelligence expert system that instructed those making decisions about payment or denial of unemployment insurance benefits. The system, developed under contract with the US Department of Labor, mimicked the mental processes of experts, interviewed by Mr. Swindle, in making decisions of paying or not paying unemployment insurance benefits. Mr. Swindle did diagrams on a Macintosh computer, and a co-worker programmed the system. They presented their AI system in Washington, D.C., and in Austin, Texas. Mr. Swindle retired from TEC in September 1993. After a short stint as a teacher of developmental English at Austin Community College, Mr. Swindle and his wife moved from Austin to Amarillo to help older members of their families. Mr. Swindle re-careered as a technical support manager with the HMO FIRSTCARE. He developed the first directories for the company using special computer software in which he was trained in Kansas City, Missouri. Mr. Swindle worked in Amarillo for FIRSTCARE for almost eleven years, ending his working years in February 2005.

In that year, with encouragement from his wife, Mr. Swindle published his book of poetry, a collection of his poems written over a 50-year period, entitled *Poems by an Ordinary Man*. The book was not sold but gifted to those who wanted a copy. The PHS Library has a copy of the book donated by Mr. Swindle.

Married to his beautiful and talented wife Marilyn for more than 53 years, Mr. Swindle made her the focus of his life. However, along the way, he managed to be involved in at least four other interesting pursuits. In the 1980s in Austin he served as the first president of the Lamplight Village Neighborhood Association, formed when the Michelin Tire Company tried unsuccessfully to build a tire manufacturing plant across the road. Mr. Swindle was instrumental in the formation of an umbrella group in the North Austin area named Citizens to Keep Austin Austin. Also, Mr. Swindle served as an elder in the Hyde Park Christian Church in Austin for some fifteen years. In addition, he ran in the first Capitol 10,000 foot race in Austin in 1978, and he ran more than 18 races in subsequent years, running one at age 70 with a time of one hour and 22 minutes.

One of the most lasting honors came to Mr. Swindle in Year 2000 when his Pampa High School Class of 1956 classmates asked him to write something for the artist/sculptor Don Ray to help him with his creation of the eight foot tall, almost 1,000 pound bronze statue, "The Harvester," which was given to Pampa High School by the PHS Class of 1956. What Mr. Swindle wrote, a response to the question he posed, "Who is this 'Pampa Harvester'?" was inscribed on the wall of the high school rotunda where the statue was eventually positioned. For several years, Mr. Swindle has given the PHS Class of 1956 first place award to seniors who answered that question in an essay contest, "Who is this Harvester," to give a current view with each passing year.

Mr. Swindle lives in Amarillo, Texas. His extended family besides his wife Marilyn, consists of daughters Stephanie Bailey (husband Mark Bailey), her daughter Amanda Mathena, and great-granddaughter Octavia Vasquez (father Miguel Vasquez), and daughter Valerie Corry (husband Jim Corry), her son Josh Taylor (wife Franny Vandervoort), along with great-grandsons Charles and Harrison Taylor, and Valerie's daughter Ashley Taylor Riseman along with great-grandson Baxter Riseman (father Ben Riseman).



