

## **Maxine Madison 2024 Fandango Day's Grand Marshal**

By Harry Boulade

In 2006, after an illustrious career spanning a little over four decades in Modoc County government, long-time resident and past Modoc County Clerk Maxine Madison decided to call it quits and retire into the vast road map of retirement so she could fulfill her family bucket list that was longer than Main Street in Alturas.

Her dedicated public service to Modoc County graced the community with her effervescent smile, joyful demeanor and bubbly personality that was contagious to all who knew and worked with her those past four decades of public service. In celebration of the 150-year-old birthday of Modoc County, it seemed like the perfect moment to recognize Maxine as the 2024 Alturas Chamber of Commerce Fandango Day's Grand Marshal.

Her innovative leadership and commitment to excellence left a long-lasting legacy to the new future generation of Modoc County Clerks that had to fill her shoes; that was no easy task by any standard.

Born May 5, 1935 in Sardis, Oklahoma to Dale and Wilma Bunch, Maxine Bunch was already destined to make her way westward when she was a young child. Because of her father's job, the family relocated from Sardis to Broken Bow, Oklahoma where her brother (Gary) was born, and from there they moved to Arizona for a short stint, only to return to Broken Bow.

Her father was born one-half Choctaw Native American and lived deep in the heart of the Choctaw nation in northern Pushmataha County, Oklahoma. According to Maxine, her father was a skilled professional welder and was involved many years later in the construction of famous Sardis Lake (Army Corp of Engineer project), a 117-mile shoreline which offered many opportunities for every diversification of outdoor recreation.

The move to northern California and Willow Ranch was set in stone when a job listing was posted in the local Broken Bow newspaper looking to hire someone at the Willow Ranch Lumber Mill in Modoc County. This was in 1945 when Maxine turned 10 years of age. Her father took the job and off they went on their 1900-mile journey to "where the west still lives".

Not long after the Bunch family settled in, the population of Modoc County skyrocketed when Maxine's two younger sisters (Sandra and Jeanie) were born into the family mix. Maxine attended the Willow Ranch School up through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Her employment at the Willow Ranch Store as a young girl helped to sharpen her social and educational skills much needed to succeed in life; that became obvious later in her life.

Throughout her teenage years she rode the school bus to Alturas to attend classes at Modoc high school where she was involved in the Pep Club, basketball and the Senior play. "I remember

riding the bus when Buster Cundiff was the school bus driver from New Pine Creek to Alturas,” Maxine recalled. “I also wanted to add that I won the spelling bee competition at the Willow Ranch School when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was under the direction of Mrs. Alice Allen who taught at the school, I really liked her as a teacher.”

On May 2, 1953, Maxine married Bill Madison in a ceremony performed in Reno, Nevada. From this marriage, three children were born (Bill, Terri Privett and Andrea Halvorson). The inauguration of this romance began when they started dating when Bill was in the National Guard serving in Lakeview, Oregon. He had also worked at the mill in Willow Ranch on the west side of Goose Lake prior to his enlistment into the Guard. He also attended school in Willow Ranch right after moving with his family from Merrill, Oregon to the Willow Ranch area.

Maxine hesitated momentarily to promote a humorous thought and said, “Bill was always proud to have graduated third in his class; there was only three students in the class as it was.” The Madison’s moved to Alturas when Bill procured a job at the local Alturas Mill. A home was purchased on the East side of Alturas and from that moment on, the rest is history in the annals of the Madison family journal.

Over the years, Bill was employed as a Police Officer for the City of Alturas, a Sheriff’s Sergeant for Modoc County Sheriff Buck Server, and finally was Undersheriff for Lynn Harris. His final job description on his resume was when he went to work at the United States Postal Service in Alturas which he held until he retired.

In 1966, Maxine went to work for the Modoc County Clerk’s Office under the supervision of Iris Turner. At that time the Clerk’s duties included clerking for the Modoc County Supervisors, Superior Court and all the elections (including special elections) as well as overseeing the election precincts throughout the entire county. “All the women in those days wore dresses to work too,” she recalled. “So many things have changed since then.”

In 1982, Iris Turner retired, and Maxine was elected as the new Modoc County Clerk, a title she held with dignity and honor for the next 24 years. “I was working at the Clerk’s Office when they celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> year of Modoc County,” she said. “I even had the opportunity to marry many people as a Clerk, sometimes having to go to different locations in the County to perform the wedding ceremony.”

The duties of the County Clerk have changed significantly since the early days of county government. After the construction of the Robert Barclay Court Annex building on South East Street in Alturas, many of the Court duties were separated from the Clerk’s Office.

When asked about the most memorable moments she could recall working for the Clerk’s Office throughout her illustrious career, Maxine appeared at first to be overwhelmed with an encyclopedia full of potential responses, but finally she took a short relaxing pause to gather her thoughts and said, “I really liked meeting people and helping them in any way I could. I just loved working with people. I also enjoyed working with the Board of Supervisors back then, I kept all the meeting minutes for them, they were very special. And most of all, my staff of

employees throughout the years were so great too. We all worked closely with the Department heads.”

Life was simple for Maxine growing up in Willow Ranch and New Pine Creek where she enjoyed family picnics, swimming in the nearby creek, going fishing with her father or just babysitting the kids in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, her genuine smile and compassion to helping others reflected brightly throughout her life and to those whom she served as Modoc County Clerk for so many years. Modoc County, and especially the Alturas Chamber of Commerce, are so graciously honored to have her as our 2024 Fandango Day’s Grand Marshal. We couldn’t have chosen a better person.