

Biography of Ray Toler

Ray Toler was born in 1922 to Dr. R. W. and Mary Lyde Toler in Searcy, Arkansas. In recent years, he has shown his devotion to his hometown by contributing his memories of his youth in numerous articles in the White County Historical Society Quarterly. Anyone fortunate enough to read these articles will learn of a young, 1930s era boy as he occupied his time making and flying kite and model gliders, making and using tin can telephones, and experimenting with dry cell batteries, vacuum tubes, and Hot Shot six-volt ignition batteries. Ray's first bicycle gave him economic opportunity in the Great Depression years. He soon used it to earn money delivering groceries, messages for Western Union, and newspapers.

His stories of the places and people of that time afford the reader the opportunity to step back into an earlier era. The Sterling Store, Smith-Vaughan Mercantile, and Robins-Sanford Mercantile were establishments full of the items we like to collect today. He observed first-hand the wood-fired, steam engine at a dimension mill in a nearby town; his school's coal-fired boilers for steam heat; and the Carter flooring mill's huge Corliss steam engine. Most of us have seen such engines in operation, but he saw them being used for their intended purposes.

Besides the bicycle other vehicles he owned were a Harley Davidson motorcycle he bought in pieces and, in 1941, a 1932 Chevrolet Victoria Coupe. The Harley was complete with a sidecar, but the engine was in pieces in four boxes. After he assembled it, he made several eventful trips on the bike. The automobile also required attention. He apparently learned lots about mechanics from these two possessions.

Ray graduated from Searcy High School in 1940 and entered the University of Arkansas that fall. After completing his junior year in 1943, he was inducted into the U. S. Army during World War II. He received indoctrination at Camp Joseph T. Robinson at North Little Rock, Arkansas, and was then sent to Camp Crowder, Missouri, for Signal Corps training. After assignment in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he was sent back to Fayetteville, Arkansas. There he married Juanita Edwards. He received an appointment to the Signal Corps Officer Candidate School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. After his training, he was sent to Manila in the Philippines. Ray spent 20 months in the Philippines until the conclusion of the war. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his service.

Upon returning home, he attended one semester at the University of Arkansas and completed his degree in electrical engineering. He then began a forty-year career with Arkansas Power and Light. Upon his retirement, he and Juanita moved to Springdale, Arkansas, where they currently reside.

Ray began collecting antique engines when he was given a 3 HP Fairbanks/Morris farm engine in 1984. It had lain in a cotton field for 20 years. He restored it to running condition. He joined Tired Iron of the Ozarks in 1992, the inaugural year for the club.

After years of collecting antique items, Ray showed his generosity by three major donations to Tired Iron. He donated five hit & miss engines to be auctioned or sold, a fine collection of antique tools for auction, and blacksmith shop items for inclusion in our future blacksmith shop. Ray continues to attend all our meetings along with Juanita if her health permits. NOTE: Juanita is now deceased.



STATE OF ARKANSAS
COMMISSION OF REGISTRATION
FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Arkans Academy
Electrical Engineering
R. M. Taylor
Class No. 1222

Mr. J. M. Taylor
For the year
1912-1913
1914-1915
1916-1917
1918-1919
1920-1921
1922-1923
1924-1925
1926-1927
1928-1929
1930-1931
1932-1933
1934-1935
1936-1937
1938-1939
1940-1941
1942-1943
1944-1945
1946-1947
1948-1949
1950-1951
1952-1953
1954-1955
1956-1957
1958-1959
1960-1961
1962-1963
1964-1965
1966-1967
1968-1969
1970-1971
1972-1973
1974-1975
1976-1977
1978-1979
1980-1981
1982-1983
1984-1985
1986-1987
1988-1989
1990-1991
1992-1993
1994-1995
1996-1997
1998-1999
2000-2001
2002-2003
2004-2005
2006-2007
2008-2009
2010-2011
2012-2013
2014-2015
2016-2017
2018-2019
2020-2021
2022-2023
2024-2025

70 Years