

Rockdale Independent School District

*Distinguished*  
ALUMNI AWARDS

**INDUCTION CEREMONY**

**Rockdale High School**

**6:00 P.M.**

**Friday, October 29, 2021**





## **Graham Kyle**

*Rockdale High School, Class of 1936*

When Rockdale's Graham Kyle, and his teammates at Texas Wesleyan University, wrapped up their 1941 football season, as conference co-champions, in November of that year they couldn't know what awaited them. A couple of weeks later came Pearl Harbor and Kyle did what members of the Greatest Generation did. He joined the Armed Forces. Kyle would serve in World War II, then rejoined the U. S. Air Force and served in the Korean War. He retired in 1969 with the rank of lieutenant colonel after a more than

20-year career.

He returned to Rockdale High School to become head coach at the school which had named him "Football Hero" in 1935. Kyle then embarked on an education career which saw him become Dean of Men at Southwest Texas University (now Texas State University). Kyle returned to Texas Wesleyan after World War II to earn a Bachelor of Science degree, then was awarded a Master of Education degree at Southwest Texas. He died in 1984 and was honored with a plaque in the SWTSU Veterans Garden.

Texas Wesleyan did not play another football game for 76 years. When the school resumed playing games in 2017 the families of Kyle, and his teammates, were honored.



## **J.W. (Bill) Cooke**

*Rockdale High School, Class of 1954*

John William (Bill) Cooke joined *The Rockdale Reporter* on Jan. 1, 1959 as news editor, responsible for all news and sports. Over a near 60-year career as its editor, then publisher, the paper received regional and state awards for news writing, sports coverage, feature writing, editorials, columns, photos and page design. *The Reporter* earned 18 "Sweepstakes" awards for best all-around newspaper, large-circulation weekly division.

He is past-president of the Chamber of Commerce. Cooke received the Chamber's Outstanding Citizen Award in 1991. In January 2019, he was inducted into the Texas Newspaper Foundation Hall of Fame, presented at the Texas Press Association's annual state convention.

Cooke received a B.A. in journalism from North Texas State College. He served as sports editor of campus newspaper as a junior and worked for the college news service and sports information director as a senior. Cooke received the Outstanding Senior Journalism Award at the North Texas Awards Day.



## **Penelope (Penny) Graves Redington**

*Rockdale High School, Class of 1966*

The Honorable Penelope (Penny) Graves Redington has deep roots in Texas history and has made some history of her own. Just two years after graduating from SMU Law School, she became the first woman elected Ellis County Judge. During two terms in office she led the fast-growing county in constructing a new \$6 m. jail and helped develop the first "Texas County Judges' Bench Book".

In 2003 Judge Redington became Federal/State Legislative Liaison for the Texas Association of Counties and from 2005-2015 served as

Executive Director of the Texas Association of Regional Councils. She was commended by the Texas Senate for her exemplary leadership and among other honors participated in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery.

A founder and first president of Historic Waxahachie, Inc., Judge Redington also served on the board of Preservation Texas, the Ellis County Museum and Historical Commission. She is a trustee emeritus of the Culver Educational Foundation. A proud sixth-generation Texan, Judge Redington and her son maintain a family ranching partnership in the Lilac Community.



### **Joan McKinney Ratliff**

*Rockdale High School, Class of 1969*

Continuing a proud family tradition of owning and operating the oldest motel in Texas, Joan McKinney Ratliff has been a tireless civic worker and historian for many decades.

Before returning to her home town she had a distinguished career in health care, including being on the team of renown heart surgeon Dr. Michael DeBakey at Methodist Hospital in Houston. She was also Director of Dietary for St. David's Hospital in Austin and for a facility in New Jersey.

In 1992 she and husband, Dan, purchased Rainbow Courts, which was opened by her family in 1918 and has remained in the family ever since. She worked tirelessly to get the motel designated a Registered Texas Historic Landmark in 2016. It has received publicity in numerous publications and is a perennial winner of TripAdvisor.com's Traveler's Choice Award. Ratliff's many civic posts have included hospital board president, Chamber of Commerce president, Milam County Appraisal District chair and Milam County Historical Commission chair.



### **William Earl Ray**

*Rockdale High School, Class of 1972*

A director/actor with 40 years in the business, William Earl (Will) Ray has been artistic director for three theatre companies, as well acting in scores of plays across the United States. He also has film and television credits and is a member of Actors Equity and Screen Actors Guild.

Ray started school at Aycock. The family moved to Midland for a short period, then came back to Rockdale where Ray entered Rockdale High School as a sophomore. During his high school

years, Ray excelled in sports, was a regional finalist in track, named most valuable back in football. After attending Texas State Technical Institute-Waco, he enlisted in the U. S. Army where he developed his passion for theatre. He graduated Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, with a BA in Liberal Arts.

He returned to Rockdale in the early 2000s where he was co-founder of the CrossOver Theatre and served as its artistic director. The troupe staged several plays, beginning in 2001. Ray has also served as artistic director for the Ndada Cultural Ensemble in Tacoma, Washington, and the Jubilee Theatre in Fort Worth.



## **2021 SELECTION COMMITTEE**

Gaye Bland  
Julia Cardona  
Dell Giles  
Rebecca King  
Dee Maines  
Camille Miles  
Susan Pantaleon  
Elissa Benford Roberts  
Patti Schneider

### **Aycock High School Song**

Composer ~ Susie Sansom Piper

Dear Old Aycock High School  
Of the Purple and White  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
For them we'll always fight.  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
Keep your colors flying  
Let them be our guiding light,  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
For you we'll always fight.  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
We're in love with you.  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
Say you love us too.  
Keep your Home Fire Growing  
In your heart so true.  
Dear Old Aycock High School  
We're in love with you  
We're in love with you

### **Rockdale High School Song**

Hail to old Rockdale High  
Long may you reign supreme  
We love thy honored name;  
You have built our hopes and dreams.  
We'll give a cheer for old Rockdale  
High,  
Faithful we will remain.  
Shout 'til the echoes ring,  
For the glory of your name!

### **Rockdale High Fight Song**

Onward Tigers, Onward Tigers  
Go right through that line,  
Grab that pigskin, hold it tight,  
And Victory is thine, Rah! Rah! Rah!  
Onward Tigers, Onward Tigers,  
We'll fight to the end,  
Fight Tigers, Fight, Fight, Fight  
We're sure to win!