

## Elwyn Cheatum

“Elwyn Cheatum was a charter member of Kinmundy Historical Society. He loved Kinmundy and shared its history and his vision for the future to everyone he met. Influenced by his faith and his training with the Dale Carnegie program, he was a very positive person and contributed greatly to his community.

Elwyn’s companion of nearly 70 years, his wife Louise, shared information describing the remarkable life he led. She should know because they dated for five years starting when they were seniors at Kinmundy High School and celebrated their 64<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary before his passing. In a high school graduating class of 36, four couples married—Louise Green and Elwyn Cheatum, Helen Robb and Floyd Garrett, Leah Williams, Carl Vallow, and Marie Bailey and Bob Johnson. Elwyn and Louise welcomed a son, Dan, and a daughter, Janice, into their family and, over the years, they have been devoted parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

A man of many interests, Elwyn took oil painting lessons as a teenager. Eight of his paintings are still on display. He took a taxidermy correspondence course and started a business making bear skin rugs, mounting deer heads, and preserving all sorts of wild critters. A picture is included on the website of some of his work. Another artistic endeavor was refinishing furniture which he pursued in his antique shop. He liked rocks and had a large collection from his travels. Louise shared an anecdote about one of his rock collecting ventures. While visiting Louise’s sister, they packed up three adults and four children to visit Big Bend National Park in the rain. The more rocks they collected, the heavier the car load became. When they came to a place in the road where rocks had slid down the mountain, a rock punctured the gas tank. Being a good problem solver, Elwyn took some of Janice’s modeling clay and crawled under the car to temporarily repair the leak. They were able to drive to Presidio, Texas where they found a family owned gas station. Not only did they get the tank repaired for \$5, but the owners invited the Cheatum family to their home for rest and refreshment while the repair was made.

Elwyn lived in Watson and moved to Kinmundy while in grade school for his dad’s railroad job. After high school graduation, Elwyn, as well as his three brothers, worked for the railroad. He served as a telegraph operator for the railroad in various locations until, much to his dad’s chagrin, his brother asked him to work for Dale Carnegie. With a love for travel, he and Louise attended Dale Carnegie conventions all over the country and even taught the course in Trinidad, Tobago, and Barbados. A friend suggested that Elwyn would also be a good real estate agent. With his Century 21 franchise, at one time he had 23 sales persons working for him. Louise was by his side working with him on every business venture.

While coming back to Kinmundy to visit his parents, Elwyn admired the Calendar Rohrbough home, owned at that time by 98 year old Fred Grissom. Fred agreed to sell the house with the condition that he continue to live there. Fred lived to be 102. Then Elwyn’s parents lived in the house until the Cheatums were ready to move back to Kinmundy. They also purchased a downtown building which housed a real estate office. They operated the agency as well as starting an antique shop. The move back to Kinmundy started a new chapter for Elwyn. Besides his business interests, he served as mayor of Kinmundy and was instrumental in procuring

property and getting a grant to build a city lake which provided a water supply for the city. He was instrumental in getting the old wooden water tower placed on the national registry and then getting it restored. Elwyn was active in the Kinmundy United Methodist Church and was actively involved in planning the church parsonage, restoring the railing around the church bell tower, and restoring the church stained glass windows. Knowing that his home had historical significance with original owner, Calendar Rohrbough, serving in the Civil War, and having architectural significance with its Italianate villa style, Elwyn made presentations to gain approval for the home to be placed on the state and national registry.

A visit to Elwyn's office was a treat. He could offer information about a long lost relative. He could tell a good story about one of his adventures. He could share something from his vast collection of historic memorabilia, or he could just make a person feel good with his positive spin on the world. He was a Kinmundy treasure."