

Citizens of the Month by Bobbie Sue Shelton

When you think of February, you think of red hearts, cupids, and other symbols of love. Nationally, February is referred to as "Express Your Love" month. The dictionary defines love as: affection; strong liking, goodwill; benevolence; charity; devoted attachment to another and adore. It has also been stated that love comes in many degrees: Love for God, family, children, pets, friends and neighbors, to name a few.

All of the above are very important in one's life, but it has been proven that love for God and love for one's family can be the best recipe for a wonderful life. I think this is proven in a very popular Unionville, Tennessee couple: Thomas and Margaret Maxwell who have been married 71+ years.

Margaret Beatrice Ezell was born February 3, 1917 in a log home on Enon Church Road near Unionville. She and her twin sister, Mary Elizabeth, were the first children of Arthur Cecil and Anna May Purvis Ezell. Their younger siblings were Ernest and Virginia Ezell Smith Williamson.

Margaret attended Community School, graduating in May 1935. She and her sister, Mary, wanted to play basketball when they entered high school, but their father was against it. He later changed his mind and allowed them to play the last two years of their high school days. At this same time, there was another set of twins, Margaret and Mary Walheiser, who played basketball for Shelbyville



Community High School Senior Class 1934 - Front Row L-R: Miss Agnes Kingree, teacher, Geneva Preessgrove, Begie Sutton, Elizabeth Spence, Iris Wortham, Elaine Reed, Nina Turrentine, Ruby Sudberry. Back Row: Jim Edd Crowell, Neal Vincent, John Milton Kimmins, Aubrey Reed, Thomas Maxwell, Ervin Heath, Famon Sudberry, Nowlin Moon.

Thomas & Margaret Maxwell

High School, and the two sets of twins often played against each other. Growing up, Margaret always had a love for music and was blessed with the gift playing the piano by ear. During high school, she had a total of five months of piano lessons; two months from Mrs. Potts and three months from Mrs. Stem. Because of her ability to



Thomas and Margaret Maxwell

play anything she heard, her lessons were not needed and were soon stopped. She would often play the piano at school for programs and for her classmates.

Thomas H. Maxwell was born October 24, 1915. His parents were Willie Newton and Edna Lee Sudberry Maxwell of the Longview Community. Thomas graduated the eighth grade at Longview Elementary School and entered into high school at Community School, Unionville. Thomas has a sister, Velma May Maxwell Cooper Cartwright. While visiting with the Maxwell's, I asked Thomas what his middle initial H stood for. He said, "The H is all there is to my middle name. My grandfathers were named James Henry Sudberry and Hugh Lawson Maxwell and my parents wanted me to be named for them so they decided on the letter H."

Thomas and Margaret met when Thomas entered high school at Community. They were sweethearts during their high school years. Thomas also liked to play basketball and was on the Community School team his sophomore, junior and senior years.

On December 28, 1935 Margaret Beatrice Ezell and Thomas H. Maxwell were married at the Unionville Methodist Protestant Church parsonage by Reverend C. I. Kelley, the same preacher who

had performed the marriage ceremony for Margaret's parents, who also celebrated a 70th wedding anniversary.

When Thomas and Margaret married, they made their home with Thomas' parents at Longview. In about a year, they moved to the Unionville area on Enon Church Road near the house where Margaret was born. In 1946, they purchased 4 acres of land from Margaret's grandfather, Purvis, and built their present home. They acquired more of this land after the death of Mr. Purvis.

After Margaret and Thomas married and moved to the Unionville area, they started attending the Unionville Southern Methodist Church. Attending church in their horse and buggy, they often tied the horse to an old cedar tree in the churchyard. The same old cedar tree still stands as a constant reminder of days gone by. Margaret's music talent was soon needed in church, and she became the church pianist. Margaret started encouraging Thomas to sing, and he became the song leader. This dedicated couple still fills these positions and is thankful they are able to do so. Since that time, the name of the church has changed to the Unionville United Methodist Church, but the love of music hasn't changed for their pianist and song leader.

Margaret and Thomas have many memories of community activities of yesteryear. Several community centers were located throughout the area. Usually on Saturday nights, family orientated square dances were held at most of the centers. They attended some of them, enjoying the music and fellowship of their friends and neighbors. Margaret would play the piano with the "square dance" band while Thomas and Rover resident, Elroy Holden, would call the dances. This, like many other older community activities, has changed over the years, and some of the community centers have closed their doors.

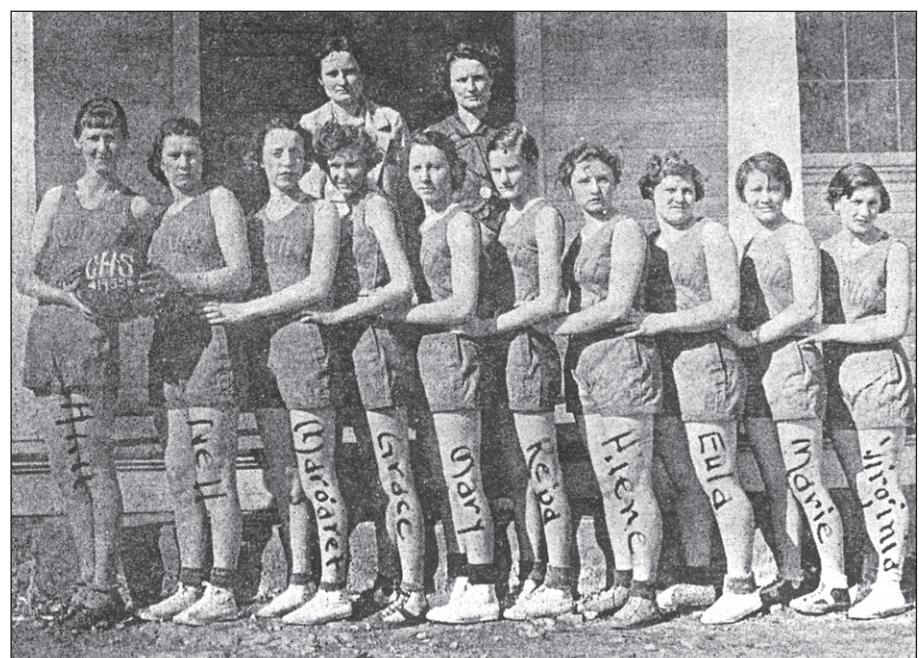


Thomas was a farmer for several years before entering into public work. In August 1946, Thomas, Robert Orr and Ernest Sudberry were hired to drive the first school buses to Community School. For several years, Community School only had the three buses. Thomas drove the school bus for 12 years, watching some students complete their Grades 1-12 educations. Leaving the driving to someone else, he went to work for the

Bedford County Highway Department as a road grader operator, retiring in 1962. Thomas served on the Bedford County School Board for eight years and is also a charter member of the Unionville Lions Club. Margaret was employed by Durango Boot Company in Chapel Hill, later working at Allied Rubber Company in Shelbyville for several years. She retired in 1975.

Although Thomas and Margaret never had any children of their own, they have been very involved in the lives of their nieces, nephews and their families. They attribute being involved with young people, whether it's family or youth from school and church, to keeping them young at heart. Over the years, they may have slowed down a little but still remain very active in the community. They have shared their talents with many other area churches and have entertained local nursing homes with music programs. This is a joy to Margaret and Thomas as well as the residents.

They are quick to agree that during their 71+years of marriage, their hard work, love and dedication to God and each other have seen them through the good times and the hard times.



Community High School 1935 Basketball Team - Only two players still living: Nell Harrison (Moon), 2nd from left and Margaret Ezell (Maxwell) 3rd from left. Margaret's sister Mary Ezell is 5th from left. Coach Agnes Kingree, back row, 1st from left. Others not identified