

J. B. Wheeler

J. B. Wheeler was a banker, community leader, patriot, and goodwill ambassador for his town. His life-long motto was “If I didn’t live in Plainview, I’d move here!”

John Bennett Wheeler was born in Plainview in 1917, grew up here, graduated from Plainview High in 1935, and attended George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. He served in Patton’s Third Army as a platoon sergeant in World War II.

In 1947, just three days after his discharge from the Army, J. B. joined Hale County State Bank as a teller. He rose through the ranks to president and eventually chairman emeritus of the board. His 55-year association with the bank ended with his death in 2002 at the age of 84.

As a banker, J. B. Wheeler was known for backing his optimistic, pro-growth attitude with the financial resources of the Hale County State Bank. When Missouri Beef (now Cargill Meat Solutions) announced it was considering coming to Plainview in 1971, in a two-day period he helped cinch the deal by raising several hundred thousand dollars to buy the land.

J. B. was a recognized community leader. He was chairman and founder of the High Plains Education Authority, chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board for Hale County, chairman of the board of High Plains Research Foundation at Halfway, and a board member of the Salvation Army and the Plainview Symphony Orchestra. He was instrumental in the local rodeo association and served as president of the stock show. He was a member of the Rotary Club for 47 years and a Paul Harris Fellow. He was president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1962 and was named Plainview’s Man of the Year in 1970.

He also served as president of the Texas Bankers Association and South Plains Bankers Association and board member of the American Bankers Association.

J. B. was a longtime member of First United Methodist Church and the Wesley Bible Class and used a long bout with cancer to encourage others with health challenges. He was also a strong supporter of Wayland Baptist University, helping with fundraising and serving as chairman of its business group. Wayland awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1986 and named a building in his honor.

The first state prison facility built here in 1995 was also named in his honor.

J. B. Wheeler and the former Katherine Waller were married for more than 53 years at the time of her death in 2001. In her memory, J. B. and his daughter Mary Katherine Mangum gave a fountain for the duck pond at 10th and Ennis.

2008 Centennial Circle of Honor, Plainview Texas