

William AUTRY

Class of 1925

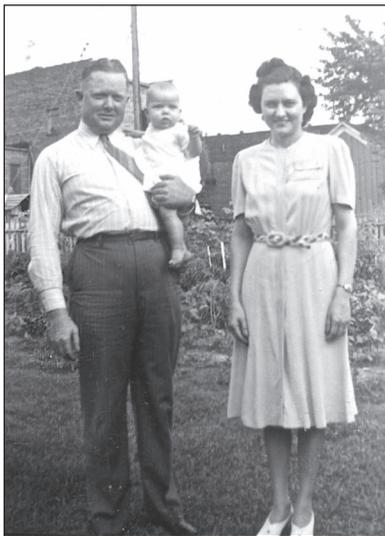
William T. Autry, the son of Tice and Tela Bass Autry, was born in 1906 near Weleetka in what was then Indian Territory, just down the road a piece from his cousin, "The Singing Cowboy" Gene Autry.

While he was quick to applaud his famous relative's fame and the life of a movie star certainly must have had its appeal, this Great Graduate from the Class of 1925 dedicated himself to earning "leading man" status in a far less visible business - the telecommunications industry.

The first steps down that career path were taken during his time as a sophomore at Broken Arrow High School when he went to work for the local telephone company. From there came years filled with challenges and personal and professional successes that didn't come to a halt until his retirement in 1970.

In 1939, six years after marrying the love of his life, Vela Laseman, in Duncan, Okla., the Autry family moved up North where he assumed responsibility as district manager for the Iowa Telephone and Telegraph Co. in Dyersville. He did so well, six years later he was lured back home as vice president of the Oklahoma Telephone Co.

Based on his accomplishments in that post, he was tapped to be vice president and general manager of the Nebraska Continental Telephone Co. and five years later took over as president of the company. A year later, following a merger with GTE operations in Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska, he was named vice president of



operations and moved to corporate headquarters in Grinnell, Iowa.

Despite the fact he was too busy working and building a career to take time for college, Autry proved so valuable to the operation he was quickly elected to the board of directors of all three companies.

Long-time Broken Arrowan Estelle Faull, described her brother as an executive who believed strongly in giving back to his industry and community. He began early in his career doing exactly that by serving as president of the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce and as a director of the Oklahoma Telephone Association. Over the years, he was volunteer leader of the Nebraska Telephone Association, Columbus Chamber of Commerce, the Grinnell Kiwanis Club, Grinnell Elks Lodge, Independent Telephone Pioneer Association and the Consistory and Shrine Masonic bodies. In addition, he was chairman of the Grinnell Planning and Zoning Commission, chaired the lay advisory board of St. Francis Hospital, was a member of the board of directors of Grinnell General Hospital and for three years served as its chairman.

In addition, he was a trustee of the Mayflower Home and served on the boards of the Grinnell Industrial Development Corp. and Grinnell Federal Savings and Loan Association, which recognized him with the title of Life Member, Emeritus.

Autry passed away on June 4, 1995 after dialing up a list of professional and civic accomplishments that distinguished him personally and as a member of this year's Broken Arrow High School class of Great Graduates.