



## Wana Witson – Shivers Librarian and Volunteer Extraordinaire

Tyler County Booster (10-03-13), 3B.

Wana Whitson was 94 when she passed last month. Beside her was her lifelong friend of 45-plus years, Elsie Stewart. The memorial service was held a few days later at the Woodville United Methodist Church, officiated by the Rev. Bryan Harkness.

Last Friday, Sept. 27, at 11 a.m., Brian Shivers came down from Dallas to present to the Allan Shivers Library and Museum a plaque honoring Whitson for her 39 years of service. She was employed at the library from March 1974 until she presented her hand-written resignation on Jan. 4, 1999. Then she continued to volunteer at the library and so much more.



Presentation of Plaque honoring Wana Whitson's 39 years of service to the Allan Shivers Library and Museum. Seen in the photo (L-R) are Library Director Rosemary Branch, Lawrance Hicks, Darby Kethan, Brian Shivers, Fred Sullivan, Harry Lou Shields, Mike McCulley, Whitson's niece Sheila Barton, Catherine Deason, Whitson's sister Maxine Page, Michael Maness, Helen Robertson, Huntley Kennison, and Rhonda Tally, with Whitson inset.

Whitson was a veritable legend in Tyler County for her candidness and loving heart.

During the presentation, Mr. Shivers lauded Whitson's service, noting how remarkable it was that after 25 years as an employee she continued to volunteer and serve. She saw the library enter into the 21st century of computers and kids grow.

Shivers mentioned how Whitson assumed a grant-funded position for the Experience Works program (ExperienceWorks.org) for the library which helped employers take advantage of the experience of seniors. When funds ran out, she returned to volunteer again.

Whitson's sister, Maxine Page, and her daughter, Sheila Barton, both reflected upon their fond memories and relished once again in the hometown affection so generously given to Whitson.

Many a patron of the library have been helped by Whitson, and not a few have been corrected, as one man said, "I remember answering my cell phone in the library years ago, to be quickly corrected by Mrs. Whitson, who walked quickly to me and said, eye-to-eye, 'Sir, you need to take that outside.' Her confident expectation made me obey at once."

Library Director Rosemary Bunch, in her distinctive English accent, lauded Whitson, saying, "She monitored the summer reading program until a month before she died. That's pretty good going, isn't it?"

Whitson would help Rhonda Tally, Bunch's assistant, with the library's book lending program that twice a month would deliver books to local residences of nursing homes.

Harry Lou Shields worked with Whitson at the library for 13 years, and for 15 years Whitson shared Thanksgiving with the Shields family. Shields said, "Wana told it like it was." A trait readily acknowledged by all, with a smile, and a quick clarification that Whitson had a big heart too.

Rachel Broussard remembered Whitson helping stuff pillows for the VA.

Elsie Stewart, Whitson's running-around-pal and fellow Eastern Star member, fondly remembered Whitson's dedication to children and the OES. Whitson had become a Grand Officer in 2011 and their last long trip together to the OES's Texas convention in Houston was a highlight of 2011.

Fred Sullivan kindly related Whitson's steadfast spirit in raising his children as they grew from ages three to about nine, where her rule was law, unshakable, and how relieved his children were to get a more lax teenage babysitter.

The plaque presented by Shivers read, "In Loving Memory of Mrs. Wana Whitson, Friend and Library Employee with 39 years of Dedicated Service. August 2013." A perpetual reminder that among the shelves and hallways walked a humble lady who guarded and cherished the town's library and its people with an honest heart.