

Marge and T. E. "Gene" Mitchell

Marge and Gene Mitchell were well known in Plainview as businesspeople, pilots, and active citizens. Together, they received the Chamber of Commerce's first Citizen's Through the Years award for longtime community service in 1991.

Margaret "Marge" Godlove was born in Oklahoma City in 1913, attended Lawton (Oklahoma) High, and graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1933 with a major in theatrical production. She met Gene Mitchell at the university, and they married in 1933. They eventually had a daughter, three grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

T. E. "Gene" Mitchell was born in 1908 in Cache, Oklahoma. He graduated from Muskogee High in 1929 and from the University of Oklahoma in 1929. After moving to Plainview in 1936, Gene and Marge owned and operated a gas station, then sold it, bought the Cosden Oil Company, and changed its name to National Oil and Butane. Gene ran the company and Marge was office manager and secretary until they sold it in 1979.

After the war the Mitchells accepted a small airplane in lieu of a debt, took flying lessons, and became avid pilots, receiving their licenses on the same day in 1950. Gene became vice-president of the Texas State Aviation Association and belonged to the Aero 87 Club. Both were members of the National Flying Farmers and Texas Flying Farmers. Marge, an accomplished pilot in the days when female pilots were rare, chaired the Top of Texas Chapter of the Ninety-Nines, a club started by Amelia Earhart in the 1920s and made up of the 99 charter members of the International Women's Pilot Association. She competed successfully in numerous air races, including the Powder Puff Derby. In 1964 she was the first woman to fly a U.S. Air Force jet, a T-37 trainer.

Gene headed the group of local businessmen who founded the First National Bank in 1960 and was chairman of the board for ten years. He was president of the Texas Oil Jobbers Association and a board member of the National Oil Jobbers Council. He also served as president of the Plainview Chamber of Commerce.

Both Mitchells belonged to the First Presbyterian Church. Gene was an elder as well as finance chairman for the building of the new sanctuary and facilities.

In addition to the oil business, Marge was a partner in Miller Flying Service in Plainview from 1960 to 2002. She also worked for an aircraft manufacturer, Bellanca Aircraft Corporation of Alexandria, Minnesota, from 1964 to 1994, rising from secretary to chairman of the board.

The Mitchells gave unselfishly to community causes. They organized and sponsored the town's first youth center, which the YMCA took over. Gene was on the boards of the local United Fund, Central Plains Hospital, and Date Street Housing Project. He was a Mason and Shriner, a member of the Eastern Star and the Kiwanis Club, and a supporter of the YMCA and the Boy Scouts. He died in 1994.

Marge was the first woman to be elected to the Plainview School Board and served a term as its vice-president. She helped raise funds for the Plainview High band, was a charter member of Plainview Little Theater, and was entertainment chair of countless school and community programs. Among her many causes were the Cotton Carnival, YMCA, United Fund, and Junior Service League. She is a charter member of the Plainview chapter of the Soroptimist International, from which she received the Mae Carvell Award for advancing the status of women. In 2001 she was honored with the Pioneer Woman of the Plains Award from the Business and Professional Club of Plainview.