



## ***Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial***

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### **MAX J. STITES**

July 17, 1943 - February 17, 1981

Stillwater High School Class of 1961

6th Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

September 29, 2001

Max James Stites was born in Stillwater, on July 17, 1943, to Chester (Chet) and Ethel Stites. Max grew up in Stillwater with his three older brothers, Zane (Class of '52), Carol (Class of '53), Gary (Class of '56), and younger sister, Linda (Class of '65). He married the former Lana Devine on August 30, 1963, and they had two children; a son, Greg, and daughter, Melanie.

The very basis of Max's character and athleticism began very early in life. Growing up with three older brothers, who were all outstanding athletes, he had no choice but to move in that direction. Starting with the little league programs, playing basketball and baseball, he moved into the junior high level playing football then to high school playing football and baseball as well as American Legion baseball during the summers. He culminated his high school career as the outstanding nose guard of a football team that went 8-1-1 his senior year.

More importantly, that upbringing established a work ethic that carried on through high school, college and a professional business career. Max was not "work brittle". During the summers, while playing American Legion baseball, he also worked on the "brush crew" for Central Rural Electric. While earning an Associate Degree in Fire Protection Technology, Max worked at Harris Skelly service station after school and on weekends. Summers were spent driving a concrete truck and pouring concrete for Hoke's Concrete Co.

As an example of Max's tenacity, while pursuing a bachelor's Degree in Business, Max successfully completed 21 hours during his final semester of college in order for him to report to work with IBM, the start of his professional career in business. Staying with the fledgling computer industry, Max later worked for Honeywell Corporation and for K Wolens, a chain of retail department stores as their computer manager. It was his task to computerize their operations. At the time of his death at age 37, Max was the Associate Director of Medical Arts Clinic, a 40-doctor medical clinic in Corsicana.

Max was very active in his community and church. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Corsicana YMCA where he coached football and soccer. He also coached little league baseball and softball. He was a member of the Administrative Board of the United Methodist Church as well as the Board of Trustees, and served as an usher and Sunday school teacher. Max was also a member of Rotary Club and Chairman of the United Fund Campaign.

It is Lana's firm belief that Max found a meaningful life by devoting himself to loving others, by devoting himself to his community, and by devoting himself to those things that gave him meaning and purpose. Without his life as an example, his family could not have moved forward following his untimely death. Their memories of him remain as encouragement in times of fear, and loneliness . . . An ongoing and final gift from him.

Quite often a man's family is a testimonial to his character. Lana, Greg, and Melanie are an example of the perseverance and Pioneer Pride that Max exhibited on the playing field, at school and at work. When faced with the adversity of Max's death, they started over and tried even harder. Lana returned to school and completed a Bachelors Degree in Education of the Deaf from Texas Woman's University. After teaching profoundly deaf students for 15 years, she completed a Masters Degree in Education at the University of Texas at Tyler and did graduate work at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Greg, who was 13 at the time of Max's death has a degree from Texas A&M and he and his wife, Julie, live in Austin. Melanie, who was 11, has a degree from Texas University and she and her husband Dean Asofsky have a son (Max) and a daughter (Mia) and live in Houston. If a man's family speaks to his character, Lana, Greg, and Melanie have spoken eloquently of the man they called husband and father. They have affirmed what many of us have known all along; Max was a man of strong character and was a man we were all proud to call FRIEND.

Today, we induct Max James Stites into the Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial . . . A truly deserving honor and one in which Max would be extremely proud.

Presenter  
Gale Andrew  
Stillwater High School Class of 1961