

Rev. W.C. "Bill" Beasley toasted by the Friends of Rayburn

By Jacqueline White and Emma Trent

The 8th Annual H.G. Dulaney Public Service Award was presented Saturday, Nov. 2, 2013 to Rev. W.C. "Bill" Beasley, at the Friends of Sam Rayburn Banquet. This award is presented to someone who embodies the attributes for which Speaker Rayburn was known and admired – integrity, devotion to his country and a man who is helpful to people from all walks of life. The Rev. Bill Beasley is all of those things. Those who spoke of him, during the evening's program, described him as an honorable man, a great pastor, counselor, an American hero, a great father, grandfather and husband to his late wife Sadie.

The emcee for the evening's program was Allen Sanderson, President of the Friends of Sam Rayburn. To open the program he recognized the previous award winners, which include H.G. Dulaney, Elizabeth May, Dee J. Kelly, Robert Weddle, Coach Leonard Gerner and Barbara Gore. The evening's festivities were possible in part by the event sponsors: Fannin Bank, Cole Title, The Fannin County Leader, Fannin County Republican Party, Hon. Lauri Blake, and the Democratic Women of Fannin County.

Throughout the evening, speakers spoke with great affection and humor about Brother Bill and their interaction with him over the years. Dr. Randy McBroom, Vice President of the Friends of Sam Rayburn, said a "few minutes wasn't enough time to talk about him" and everything he's done for the community and its people. Deloris Clemons spoke of his service at the Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center telling how Rev. Beasley's experience as a WWII POW allowed him to develop a unique camaraderie with the veterans. "He touched thousands of veterans' lives during the time he served as a chaplain at the VA," stated Clemons. VA Chaplain Gene Owen described Rev. Beasley as someone who "always led with his heart."

Randy Bowen told how much his friendship has meant to him and fellow members of the Bonham Kiwanis Club. He shared a story of a couple that worked in Dallas and left Bonham early in the morning to get to work. They would see Brother Beasley drinking a cup of coffee and studying at his kitchen table each morning and both agreed he was very devoted to reading his Bible and serving as pastor at First Baptist Church in Bonham. At a later date they mentioned to him that they saw him studying his Bible in the morning and he admitted he'd really been working a crossword puzzle, a revelation that gave the couple and the audience a good laugh.

Allen Sanderson shared a message from former Sam Rayburn Library Museum Associate Director, Patrick Cox, stating that Brother Bill (as he is known locally) is a longtime friend of the Rayburn Library and of the late H.G. Dulaney saying, "He always provided us with inspiration and responded many times – planned and unplanned, with well-chosen words and blessings for all our endeavors." Sanderson continued by sharing his own relationship with Rev. Beasley, likening him to the

biblical story of the Good Samaritan. "Brother Bill never passes by someone in need," Sanderson stated. He also drew a comparison between Rev. Beasley, Speaker Rayburn and H.G. Dulaney saying these men understood and embody the idea of "Service Above Self."

In accepting the award, Rev. Beasley expressed his appreciation to everyone who had been a friend to him and his family since moving to Bonham in 1972. He shared his love of Bonham and Fannin County. In response to his desire to serve those around him, Rev. Beasley said, "God has given me all these ninety-one years of life. I've tried to give the best I could."

All agreed that we've been blessed he came our way. Dr. Randy McBroom ended his words with, "When I grow up I want to be like Brother Beasley!"