

Loving History of John and Maxine Conner and John and Emma Bistok

“The John & Maxine Conner and John & Emma Bistok Memorial Scholarship Fund” was established by Bob and Wanda (Conner) Bistok, members of the Wake Forest United Methodist Church, to honor their parents who have passed into heaven.

The following is a brief history of the lives of our parents:

John Robert Conner was born in 1923 and died in 1998. He was raised on a farm in western Pennsylvania. John attended primary and secondary school in Arcadia, Pennsylvania. After high school at age 19 he entered World War II on April 3, 1943. He served in the Pacific during the war. We do not know much about his military service since he never talked about it to any of his relatives. We do know that he served in the New Guinea and the Southern Philippines with the 153rd Engineering Combat Battalion. He received the following Decorations and Citations:

American Theater Ribbon

Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon with two Bronze Stars

Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze Star

Good Conduct Medal

World War II Victory Medal

Meritorious Unit Award

Carbine Expert

During the war John was a Construction Foreman for the Engineering Group and reached the rank of Sergeant.

After discharge in 1946, he returned to western Pennsylvania and settled into the coal mining industry. He was a mechanic for most of his coal mining days and was gifted with the ability to fix about anything. He loved to read and often was reading three books at one time. As a hobby, he studied maps. The 153rd engineering group remained close friends and had yearly reunions into the 1990's. All of those men are now deceased.

He was married to Maxine Smith in 1949. In March of 1951, his first child was born, a daughter Wanda and two years later a son Larry. John was a loving husband and father to both of his children and cherished his four granddaughters.

John retired from coal mining and died suddenly in December of 1998.

Maxine (Smith) Conner was born in 1931 and died in 2010. She was one of 12 children. She was raised in Gipsy, a small town in Western Pennsylvania. She graduated from Montgomery Township High School in 1949. She was married to John Conner. Together they had two children (Wanda and Larry) and Maxine created a warm and happy household. Friends and family felt extremely comfortable to stop in at any time for friendly conversation and a cup of coffee. Her mother was diabetic, and she cared for her daily. She was active in The Gipsy Christian Church. Her grandfather helped to build the church and it still has an active congregation today. She got immense joy watching her grandchildren and two great grandchildren grow. She enjoyed shopping for them and was pleased when she was able to find that hard to find gift like the Cabbage Patch Dolls. In later years when her children were grown and left the house, she worked for a home remodeling company.

Maxine had a heart valve replacement in 2010. She survived the surgery but passed away from complications after the surgery. She is very much missed by her friends and family.

John Carl Bistok, Sr. was born in 1910 and was raised in the small town of Ernest in western Pennsylvania. John was highly active in the church most of his life. He married Emma Yates in 1933 and they had six children.

John was 19 years old when the Great Depression hit the United States and the world. It was difficult to find work and to provide for yourself. John did any kind of work that he could find. He settled into being a Coal Miner and worked under very harsh conditions at the time. If you ever complained, you no longer had a job since there were many men looking for work.

John married Emma and in the first year they had a son named John Jr. John Jr. was soon the older sibling to Jim, Rose, and Anna Mae. Four years later sister Emily was born and five years later the youngest and last child, Bob was born.

The first four children were born right in the middle of the Great Depression, but he was able to keep the family together by hard work and determination.

John did not serve in the military in World War II because of an accident he had as a young man that removed several of his fingers from one hand. He did his service digging coal out of the ground to help the war effort.

John retired when the coal mine he was working at closed and there was no other work in the area. He died suddenly at age 64 from cancer. His youngest son Bob was only 24 years of age when he lost his dad.

Emma (Yates) Bistok was married at age 18 and gave birth to four children in her first six years of marriage. She was busy as a homemaker and a mother. She had help from her mother-in-law who also taught her to cook. Emma was a fantastic cook of all dishes and especially her pies. She was a member of the volunteer group The Christen Mothers at her local church, and they prepared meals for funerals and other church activities.

During these times in the 30's, 40' and 50's most women did not work outside the home unless they were working during World War II. Emma was busy taking care of her children. Her last child Bob was born in 1948 and in 1950 the family moved to the country on eleven acres of land. This provided room for a chicken coup, barn with a cow, several dogs, and a large garden. The entire family pitched in to help to take care of all of this.

Emma with two children still at home started working outside the home with a clothing manufacturer in the local largest town. She loved her job and made a significant contribution to the income of the family.

Emma was a wonderful mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great grandmother. She lived to be 94 years old and passed away in her sleep in 2010.

The above is just a brief history of our parents that we loved dearly and have the pleasure to offer a yearly scholarship to a youth member of the Wake Forest United Methodist Church in their memory.

The goal of the scholarship fund is to give a yearly \$1,000 scholarship to a Wake Forest United Methodist Church High School Senior who will be pursuing any of the following after high school:

Trade Schools

1. Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration Technology
2. Electrical Systems Technology
3. Facility Maintenance Technology
4. Plumbing Training
5. Welding Technology
6. Carpenter Training
7. Heating Technology
8. HVAC Heating & Cooling
9. Other Trades as Approved

Other

Health Care Field

The reason that we selected a Trade type field as primary was because both of our fathers worked at one time in the trades and the youngest Bistok son Bob was an electrician in the United States Navy and the Conner's daughter Wanda was a Registered Nurse.

If there are no students furthering their education in the above Trade related fields then the scholarship should be given to a deserving student attending any college for an Associate or Bachelor of Science Degree.

It is our honor to sponsor this scholarship

Bob & Wanda Bistok