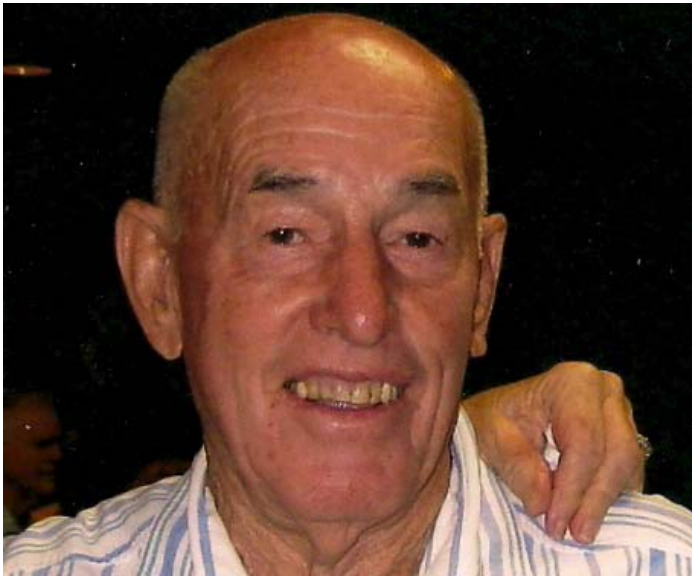


George Samuel Cope



George was born at home in Inverness, Alabama, Bullock County, on October 13, 1929. He was the fifth and last child of John Thomas and Vera Hixon Cope. He had two older brothers and two older sisters. His father, J.T. Cope, was the Postmaster and a country store operator in Inverness. His mother, Vera, was a homemaker.

George attended school for twelve years at a little brick building just 1/4 mile up the dirt road from the Cope home. He ran home each day to eat lunch. He spent his childhood afternoons and summers playing marbles in the sand at the country store and fishing on a nearby creek. His graduating class consisted of only 9 students. This small school still managed to have a basketball team which, of course, George played on. The closest town to this small community was Union Springs. There George found the opportunity to play baseball all the way up to the semi-professional level.

George found his inspiration for teaching in Algebra and Geometry classes, taught by his Aunt Stell. To get enough

students to have these two classes, they had to combine two grades together. Following graduation, George attended Troy State Teachers College, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Physical Education and a minor in Math. While there he played both baseball and basketball.

The Korean War was in full swing during this time and upon graduation George entered the service of his country. He was discharged after two and a half years and then started working for Bonnie Plant Farm and attending Alabama Polytechnic Institute (Auburn University) in a co-op arrangement. He received his Masters in Education degree in December of 1954. While at API, George met the lovely Barbara Wamp from Cullman, Alabama, who graduated in June of 1954 with a degree in Physical Education. They married in December and George continued his employment with Bonnie Plant Farm until June of 1955 when the couple set off for Florida (the more promising land for teachers at that time) in search of teaching positions. George landed a job teaching Math at the newly opening Lake Weir High School in Sunset Harbor (Summerfield address officially) where he remained until the school moved to its new location in Silver Springs Shores. At this new location, he was convinced to accept the position of Dean of Boys and leave his Math classroom behind. Several years, and a few ulcers later, George left this stressful position to become a full time beekeeper, an activity that had been a hobby of his in previous years. The Cope family had bees of their own and jointly owned bees with a neighbor. The Cope honey label read: Bee Buddy Apiary Summerfield, FL.

With changes occurring in the teacher retirement regulations and the retirement of the Math teacher that replaced George when he left Lake Weir, George returned to teaching Math at Lake Weir High School to finish his 30 year requirement for full retirement benefits. He had often thought of having a ten acre citrus grove when he retired. Instead, he went into a share-cropping relationship with a friend named Richard Fritch. They planted 25 acres of citrus on Mr. Fritch's land which was higher and warmer than most land in the Weirsdale area. After George retired in 1991 he began working physically in the grove. The Copes ran an "honor system" fruit stand on highway 42 for about 8 years. His relationship with Mr. Fritch finally ended and, being a man who likes to be outside and watch things grow, he turned his efforts to his yard.

The Cope Family:

George and Barbara have four children. David, the oldest, and his sister Kelly, both graduated from the original Lake Weir High School in Sunset Harbor where George started his career. The two younger girls, Robin and Landra, graduated from the new location in Silver Springs Shores. David lives in Ocala with his wife, Laurie, and their two children, Dalton and Marquesa. Kelly resides in Denver, CO, with her husband Mark Petrash and their three children, Kenan, Carson, and Davis. Robin and David Knupp live in Asheville, N.C. and Landra is near her sister in Denver, along with her husband, Eric, and their four children, Bowen, Kyla, Brenna, and Cooper.

George has always been an active member of the Weirsdale Presbyterian Church and involved in community events. The Copes spent their recreation time at Lake Weir and Belleview sporting events. George has also done a lot of quail hunting, a good bit of fishing, and even some frog gigging. George and Barbara feel they have lived an especially blessed and good life and are very proud of their four children.

The following two pages contain a reprint (with permission) of a Voice of South Marion article about George, written by Louise Deegan in the Spring of 2011.

George S. Cope ... A Teacher To Remember

By Louise Deegan

Mr. Cope came to Marion County in 1955 from Inverness, AL with no connection to the area. He had finished college with a major in Physical Education and a minor in Math. He had been working for Bonnie Plant Farm, which has a family connection, running a plant route for three years. George and Barbara met at Auburn University and got married December 17, 1954. They both majored in P.E. Barbara encouraged him to find a teaching job. He had already served 19 months in the Army during the Korean Conflict.

They came to Florida by way of Tallahassee looking for a teaching job in P.E. They stopped at several cities and school board offices looking for a job. In Ocklawaha they met Gwen Crum, who was the principal at the Ocklawaha Elementary School. She mentioned that a new school was being build in Sunset Harbor and got him in contact with Leo Armstrong and Don Kearsley. They didn't have a P.E. job but had a math opening. He got hired by a post card from Mr. Armstrong that he had the job it he wanted it. He was certified in math so he took the job starting in September 1955. He liked the looks of Lake Weir and the orange groves and fell in love with the area.

They rented a large two story house on Lake Weir that was fully furnished for \$60.00 a month with utilities furnished. The house was so large they had an elementary teacher rooming with them and later on another teacher.

Baseball is Mr. Cope's game but he coached J.V. basketball for a couple of years. Barbara taught P. E. one year until she was expecting another baby then Juliette, Mr. Cope's sister who had a degree in P.E. finished the last six weeks.

When the principal, Paul Collins passed away during the school year Mr. Cope was put in the office. He had his administrative certification so he moved into an Assistant Principal position under Mr. Clyde Folsom, the new principal. He was Dean of Boys. He developed stomach ulcers and after two years he stopped teaching. For two years he was in the bee business and three years in the citrus business. The rules for retirement from the school system changed and he



George Cope, Assistant Principal at the old Lake Weir High School in 1974. *(Voice of South Marion file photo)*

came back to Lake Weir High School, teaching the same math after Mr. Hilliard retired. He taught for nine more years and his last year he supervised the In School Suspension class and grew the most beautiful African Violets in the

window of that room. They had perfect sunlight, water and the last of his cup of coffee each day. He retired in 1991 after 31 years of teaching and two years of military service credit at the age of 61.

Mr. Cope was able to balance the discipline in the classroom with his friendships with the students off campus. It became a tradition at Halloween to do something to the Cope's. One year they were throwing rotten oranges at his house. He went out and dug a hole behind Sam Long's VW Beetle. He snuck around and got in with them and he was tossing oranges at his own house. They soon realized it was Mr. Cope and they ran. They got in the car and backed into the hole and couldn't get out of it. Mr. Cope also ran and caught the clothes line across his forehead.

Another year Mr. and Mrs. Cope got in the upstairs bedroom window and when the students came up the walk they sprayed them with water. Another year students covered his house with toilet paper. They rang the doorbell and when Mr. Cope opened the door about 20 students were standing there singing "White Christmas". He made them clean up the paper. They asked what they were to do with the paper so Mr. Cope took them to Roland Farring's house and put

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George and his wife Barbara at a 4th of July picnic at the Anderson's on Lake Weir in 1996.

George S. Cope ... A Teacher To Remember

(Continued from Page Before Last)

it all over his yard. The next morning Roland couldn't understand why his good "Watch Dog" did not bark. The dog knew Mr. Cope.

Toward the end of the Halloween pranks Mr. and Mrs. Cope had not had anything done to their place by midnight. They left David in his bed and decided to ride around to see what was going on. When they got home every light in the house was on, the doors were locked and all the kids were in the house. These stories have been told and embellished over the years and are still funny.

The year Mr. Collins passed away the yearbook was dedicated to Mr. Cope. He had it on the counter in the office and it went missing so he doesn't have a copy of it anymore.

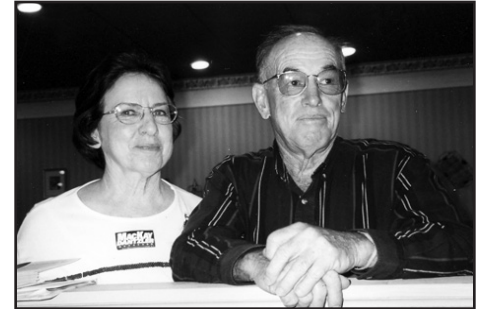
Mr. Cope had an "Aunt 'Stelle" that taught him in math all through his high school days. She had him put notes

in the margin as to how he solved the problem. He taught by her method. At a PTA meeting a mother told him her son was having a problem with written problems. He told her to have him read it and work it a little at a time - not all at once - and it would be easier. Sure enough it worked.

Mr. and Mrs. Cope have been active in the Weirsdale Presbyterian Church and he has been an Elder several times. He has been active in clubs and golf tournaments but now just works around the house doing yard work. He is also out of the citrus business. They have one son David in Ocala who has two children and three daughters; Kelly in Denver who has three children, Robin in Ashville has no children and Landra in Denver with four children. All his children graduated from Lake Weir High School and they all have college degrees.

Mr. Cope attends all the class

reunions he gets invited to. He has students looking him up and telling him how much they appreciate him for teaching them math and making it so understandable. He enjoyed his work at Lake Weir High School. The faculty and students have been a source of good memories. When you talk about those years you can see in his face that he enjoyed them all.



Barbara and George Cope at a Marion County Democratic Executive Committee dinner at Maggie's Restaurant in Ocala, on October 27, 1998.