

The mayors in order of service (l-r) John Morrison 1979-1983, Johnny Nelson 1983-1987, Ward Stanberry 1988-1991, Skip Conner 1991-1995, Hank Schmidt, Jr. 1995-2001, Doyle Callender 2001-2007, Don Elder Jr. 2007 - Present



Katy Mayors Reunite

Seven prominent Katy leaders share memories and stories over lunch at Katy Heritage Museum. Katy Magazine was honored to be part of this historical reunion.

Written by Heather Lowrie and Katrina Katsarelis

*In memory of former mayor Dan Cox (served 1971-1979).
Dan passed away shortly before the Mayors Reunion at the age of 93.*

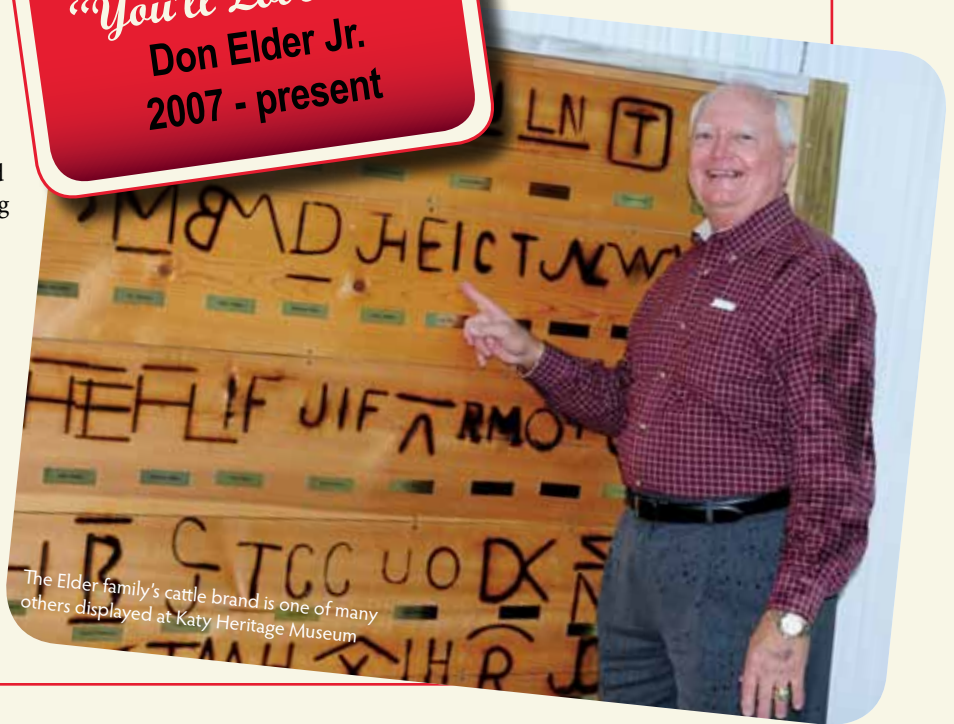
Handshakes, hugs, hoots, and hollers were abundant as seven prominent men entered the Katy Heritage Museum around noon one by one. These current and former mayors met for lunch and laughs at an understated candlelit table draped in white linen. It was quickly apparent that they shared a special bond. No ordinary civil servants, this group of seven represented Katy's finest mayors, past and present.

Although they gathered to dine, the invitation was not about the food. It was about the respect each man had for the other and the bonds of friendship that held them together. They marinated on the rice farming community, the Katy Mills project, tough economic times in the past and present, and appreciation for the office of mayor before sitting down for the main course. Katy Magazine was delighted to be there and share in part of Katy's history.

Katy's current mayor knows how to take care of local business, but more importantly, he knows how to be a true community servant. From volunteering for the Special Olympics to supporting the senior citizens of Katy, this Eagle Scout has a radiant warmth, a twinkle in his eye, and a smile that makes you feel like family. He was raised by a hard working, rice farming and ranching family in Katy. He married true love Ida Fay and the couple has one son, Shane. All three Elders proudly graduated from Katy High School.

Growing up, he remembers the best advice he ever received from his father: "Whatever you do, no matter how much book knowledge you have, use your common sense." Just as his city's hometown's slogan claims, "you'll love Katy," after spending a few moments with Mayor Elder, it's certain "you'll love Don".

"You'll Love Don"
Don Elder Jr.
2007 - present

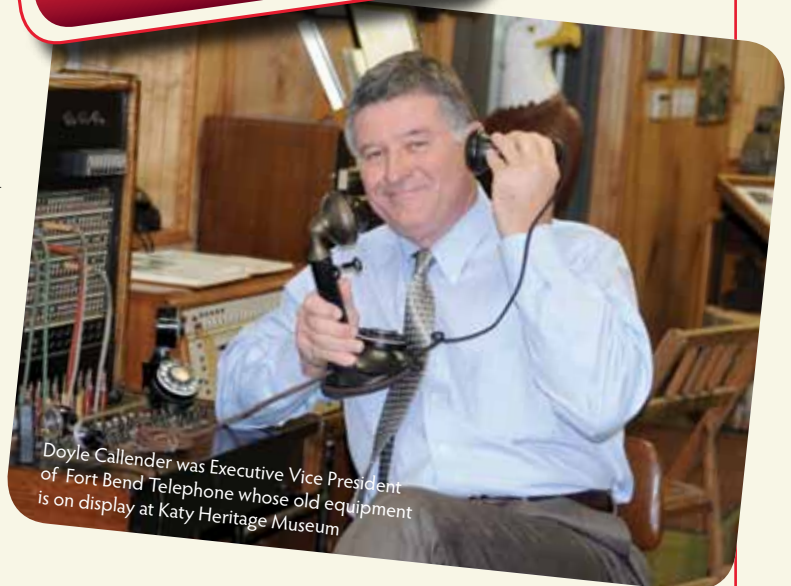


The Elder family's cattle brand is one of many others displayed at Katy Heritage Museum

Doyle Callender enjoys raising Texas longhorns, but that isn't why he was honored on the floor of the House of Representatives. A resolution passed by Rep. Bill Callegari honored Callender for his accomplishments as the mayor of Katy. Community awards, from his Greater Katy Citizen of the Year Award to his VFW Post Community Service Awards highlight his history of involvement with Katy and his passion for those who live here. Along with earning a title based on his hard work, Mayor Callender also earned the respect and admiration of the community.

Always humble about his accomplishments, Carol Adams, executive director of the Katy Heritage Society and a current city council member, often credits Doyle for helping launch Katy Heritage Park during his tenure. Katy Heritage Park is a beautiful community park on George Bush Drive, where a collection of historic Katy buildings is showcased. Doyle has been married to his wife Kay for 38 years, and the Callenders have two grown sons. When asked about his most memorable experience as mayor, his response is simple. "Katy has wonderful people." His motto is to always give back to the people; always see them as friends. Despite a recent bout with cancer, Doyle came back as strong as ever. He remains a respected pillar of the community and works for Amegy Bank.

The People's Mayor
Doyle G. Callender
2001 - 2007



Doyle Callender was Executive Vice President of Fort Bend Telephone whose old equipment is on display at Katy Heritage Museum



Hank Schmidt is Katy's current mayor pro tem

The Schmidt Legacy
M.H. "Hank" Schmidt
1995 - 2001

Along with serving as the past mayor of Katy, Hank Schmidt also serves as Katy's current mayor pro tem by a unanimous vote. It isn't very often in politics that anything is unanimous, but one meeting with Schmidt and you will quickly understand why. His father was the first fire chief in Katy and his wife was part of the rice business in Katy. Not only was Schmidt the mayor for six years, he also followed in his father's footsteps serving as the assistant fire chief for five years, as well as the current fire chief over the past five years. Schmidt also owns Schmidt Funeral Home. He served as mayor during the Katy Mills project, which greatly impacted the city economically.

When Schmidt isn't putting out fires or running his funeral home business, you can find him shooting competitive skeet. His winning attitude and willingness to go above and beyond in many aspects of the community make him one of the greatest, and that's unanimous.

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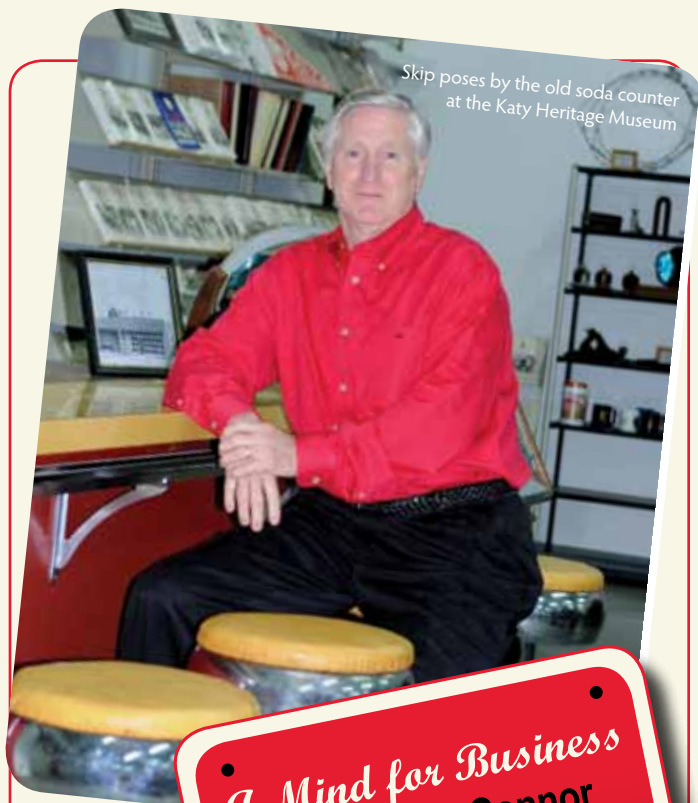
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A Mind for Business
J.W. "Skip" Connor
 1991 - 1995

Since 1976, Skip Connor has owned and operated Katy Insurance Agency, Inc., juggling a successful business with his duties as a successful Katy mayor. Backed by his business expertise, Connor was able to pay off a 10-year bond while in office. Today, he also serves as president of the Katy Development Authority.

One of his most memorable experiences as mayor was when he hired former mayor Johnny Nelson as an administrator, because he helped keep the city together. When Connor isn't taking care of his customers, or working on the development of Katy, you can find him traveling or skiing on the slopes at Keystone.

After college in 1948, Ward Stanberry called Katy home. He assumed both the role of a public servant for the city of Katy, as well as a public servant for our nation. He fought in World War II and has been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post for 60 years. He was elected to the city council in 1961 and served three terms before becoming mayor in 1988.

He is married to Marilyn, who considers Stanberry her favorite yard man. He cherishes the saying, "The older I get, the better I was." Stanberry does not focus on the past and what he was, though, concentrating instead on the present and what he still has left to do. After fighting for the U.S. and advocating for Katy, he is a wonderful reflection of what the community truly represents.

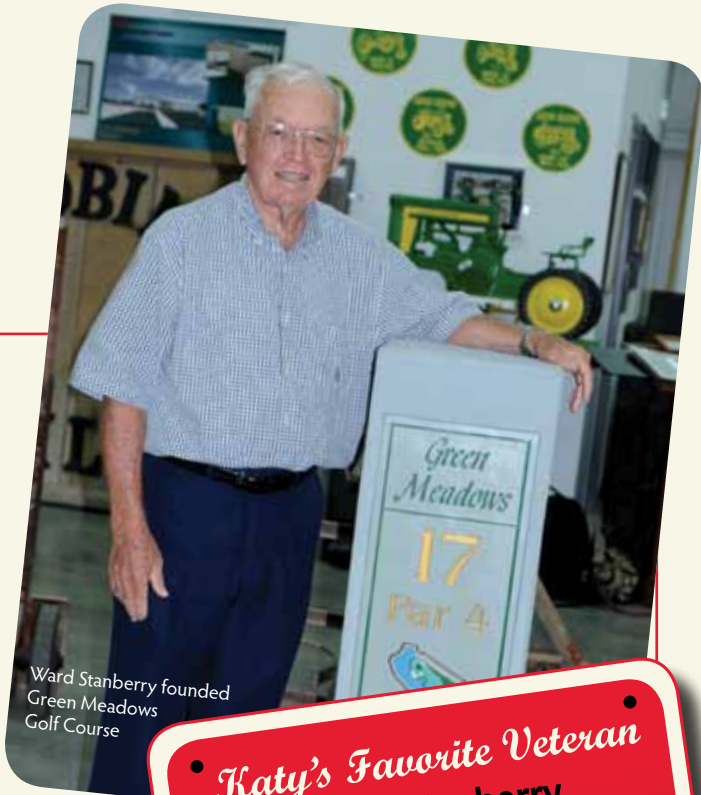


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Katy's Favorite Veteran
Ward Stanberry
 1988 - 1991

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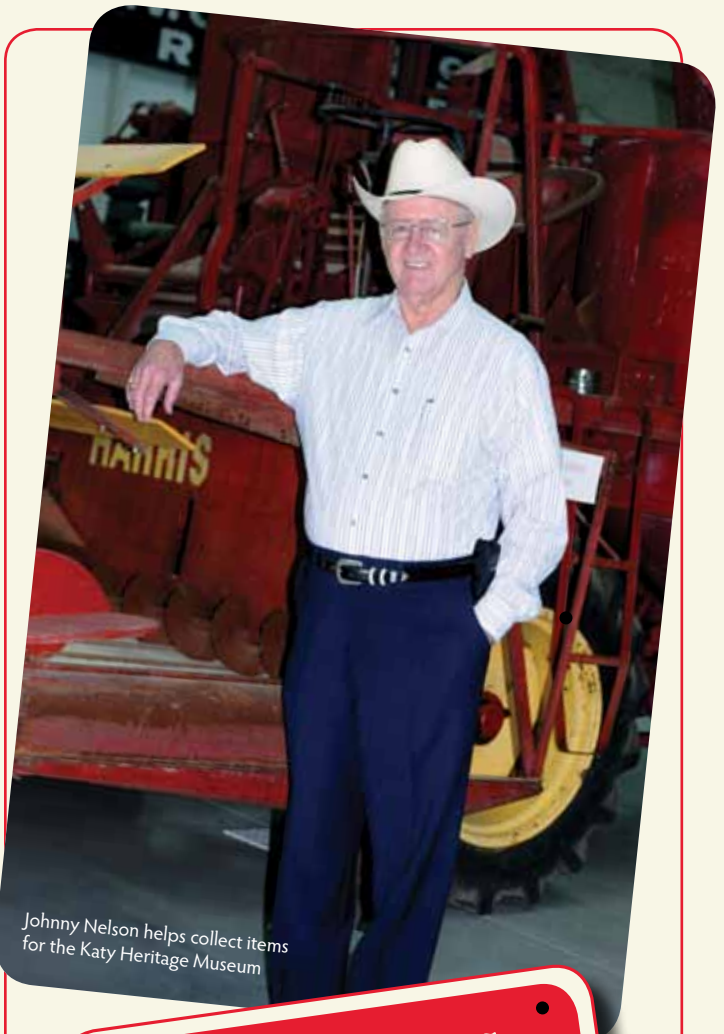
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Johnny Nelson helps collect items for the Katy Heritage Museum

A Longtime Katy Icon
Johnny Nelson
 1983 - 1988

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A lifelong resident who comes from a prominent rice farming/ranching family, Johnny Nelson's roots are firmly planted in Katy soil. After serving as mayor from 1983-1987, Johnny became the director of the Greater Katy Area Chamber of Commerce in 1998 and the chamber president in 1990. He has served as the administrator for the City of Katy since 1994.

Nelson remembers that when he served as mayor, one thing was certain, the city was poor. The biggest change he saw came when they turned Avenue D from a two-lane road into a four-lane highway. The former rice farmer has been married for 43 years and enjoys spending time away at the lake every summer. His best kept secret can be found inside the 9,600 square foot Katy Heritage Museum, where you can unlock the history of the city and pay tribute to one of its great leaders.



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As a retired United Methodist preacher, former mayor Jim Morrison has a historic place in the Katy community as a charter mayor. Katy was incorporated in 1945 and then went on to receive its home rule charter in 1981, when Morrison was the mayor. He served as part of the charter commission and was responsible for becoming the official charter mayor. A charter brings government closer to the residents and gives them the authority to manage their own affairs. The Katy community has always been about the people, putting their needs first, and because of the tedious work of Morrison, this became a reality that all residents can be thankful for today.

One of the many gifts Morrison has is that of oil painting, and he proudly has one of his works on display at the Heritage Museum. As a gifted artist, retired pastor, and public servant, Morrison continues to display qualities that can help area residents appreciate the hard work, dedication, and passion put into creating the community so many call home today.

The Artist & Preacher
John Morrison
1979 - 1983



One of John Morrison's oil paintings is on display at Katy Heritage Museum

Coming Together

Bringing the past and present mayors of Katy together isn't something that happens by accident, but is the result of a group of men committed to the Katy community, whether or not they still hold office. All truly care about the future of Katy, and together, they hope to make it one of the best cities in the U.S. KM

HEATHER LOWRIE is a local kindergarten teacher and mother of two. She is married to her high school sweetheart, James. She is a freelance writer and author of The Inspired Wife, and enjoys the opportunity to encourage people through her writing.