

## **Christopher Columbus James: January 26, 1895-December 12, 1992**

Christopher Columbus James was born January 26, 1895, in Vernon Parish Louisiana to Dan and Octavia James. After spending his entire childhood on a homestead farm in the Drakes Creek area of Ft. Polk, Columbus, as he was called, left Vernon Parish and attended Tyler Commercial College. He soon returned and found employment as a school teacher. After a short while in the education field, he moved to Beaumont, Texas. He was employed there as a salesman in a department store. That's where he met Willie Bullard of Cass County, Texas. She was employed in the piece-goods department in the same store. On April 17, 1919, Columbus James and Willie Bullard said their marriage vows in the back seat of a T-Model Taxi.

After a short time, they returned to Vernon Parish where he farmed and raised cattle and hogs in the Drakes Creek area. He was also employed during this time as a substitute mail carrier. In July of 1941, Columbus, Willie and their three children were compelled to leave their Drakes Creek homestead due to the war and necessary government occupation of maneuver areas. He found residence on the Section Line road just south of Leesville. During the construction of Camp Polk, he was employed in the payroll department of W.R. Aldridge & Co., which was a local contractor. Upon the completion of Camp Polk, he went to work for the Post Exchange system. After tiring of this, Columbus made his last career move -- he became a school bus driver for Pickering School.

Columbus retired in 1960. He lived 32 years after he retired. He spent those years living life as he had first known it -- farming and raising livestock on his 40-acre farm on Section Line Road. Columbus and Willie James were married for 73 years, yet their deaths were less than one month apart.

To put the life of Columbus James in retrospect: He was born only 30 years after the surrender of the Civil War; and lived 20 years after the Viet Nam conflict. At the time of his birth, the U.S. cavalry had finally subdued Geronimo and moved him to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. When Columbus was born, Chester Arthur was President of the United States. At the time of his death (and 21 presidents later) Bill Clinton was President. His first recollection of travel was a trip from Drakes Fork to Leesville in an oxen-drawn wagon. In an ironic but fitting twist of fate, his last trip was from Leesville to Drakes Fork cemetery.

Note: Other items describing the era in which the James' exchanged wedding vows include the fact that an average new three bedroom home cost approximately \$4,000, a new Ford was \$525, gas was 25 cents per gallon, a loaf of bread was 10 cents, WW 1 had just ended, and posturing has been accomplished to soon ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment allowing women to vote.