

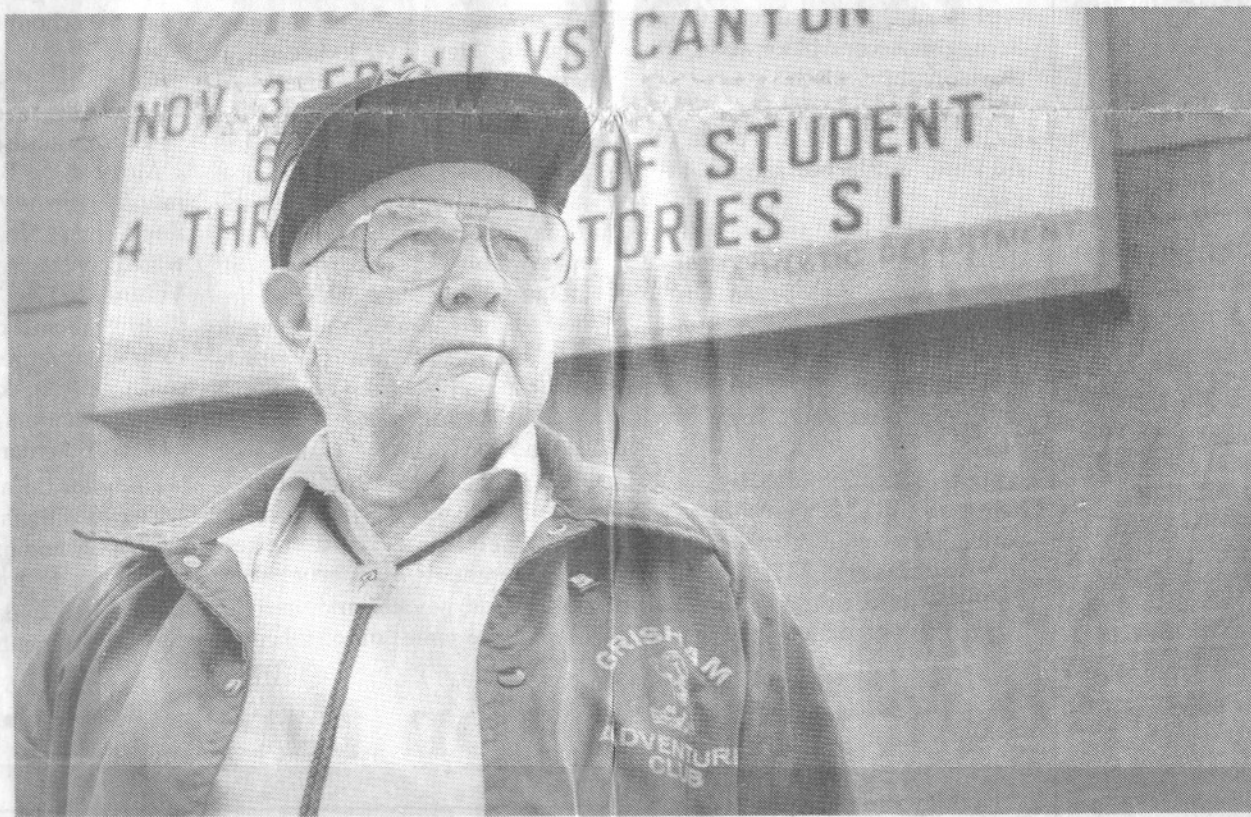
ROUND ROCK LOCAL LEGENDS

The City of Round Rock has honored five more of its own with the title, "Local Legend."

The certificates presented to them read, "This certificate is to show our appreciation of those Round Rock citizens who have had a positive and lasting impact on the culture, development and history of our community and who exemplify the very essence of Round Rock." Round Rock's 1995 Local Legends will be featured this week and next week in Homefront.

Stories by Wiley Gilmore

Photos by Mark Prochnow



Grisham's many talents have enriched local life

Noel Grisham was present at the creation. The creation, that is, of the mega-district known as the Round Rock ISD. Grisham's nurturing of that school growth process while serving as RRISD superintendent would alone be sufficient to qualify him as a Round Rock Legend. Add the writing and the politics and you have the makings of a renaissance man.

When he retired from public education in 1979, Grisham had led the growth of a school district that had launched the construction of several new schools, built one new high school and prepared for the construction of a second. Of his 22 years at the helm of the school district, Grisham said last week, he was proudest of getting the funds approved to build the facilities.

"Back in that time it was hard to get a bond issue passed," Grisham said. "Before I came, they had never passed one, but we sold our programs well."

Retired superintendent Noel Grisham guided Round Rock ISD through major growth period.

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Grisham's multiple talents make him legendary

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Grisham's dedication to providing facilities to match growth did not always endear him to the school board nor to the citizens.

"We had a very conservative school board," Grisham said of much of his tenure as superintendent. "We had one man who ran for the board on the platform of, 'Elect me and I'll see that Mr. Grisham doesn't build any more school buildings.'"

During and after his public school career, Grisham, a former English teacher, found time to write or co-author 10 books, including one dealing with the construction of the State Capitol. A book he wrote with the late Frank A. Driskill in 1980, "Historic Churches of Texas," was re-issued in

revised form by Eakin Press this year.

One of his books is titled "Buffalo and Indians of the Great Plains" and, Grisham said, appeals to young readers.

"The kids like it," he said. "It's a best seller in some parts of the country."

Grisham said all of his books were published in hardcover except one, adding his writing was principally an avocation performed in his spare time.

"Most of it I did from dark until about 11 p.m.," he said. "I'd usually work at school until dark and then write."

Grisham was elected to the Texas Legislature in the early 1980s and served a term representing Williamson and Burnet counties.

"Serving under (House Speaker) Gib Lewis was quite an experience," Grisham remembered. "Once Gib put the gavel down and said, 'Mister Grisham, would you take over for a while?' And sure enough a bill came up while I was presiding."

Grisham received a ceremonial gavel to commemorate the occasion.

"I think it was a very good learning experience," he said of his term in the House.

Grisham, 77, was born on Dec. 24.

"The fact I was born on Christmas Eve had nothing to do with the name my parents gave me," he said. "They were going to name me Noel anyway."

Grisham was born near the Nort-

heast Texas community of Leonard in Fannin County. He received his college education at Pepperdine University in California, at Abilene Christian College and East Texas State Teachers College. He taught high school English for five years before coming to Round Rock.

Active in the community as well as the school, Grisham has taught Sunday School and served as a lay minister with the Church of Christ. He's been a member of the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce, which honored him as 1977 Citizen of the Year, and served as a lieutenant governor with Kiwanis International.

Grisham and his wife, Helen, have two daughters, both of whom are involved in public education.