

The Jimmy and Donna Dean Endowed Scholarship

In loving memory of Ruth Dean

The Jimmy and Donna Dean Endowed Scholarship is given to deserving students in loving memory of Jimmy's mother, Ruth Taylor Dean. Ruth taught Jimmy to play the piano and raised him in Seth Ward, a community just northeast of Plainview. As a devoted and single mother, she provided for her family by cutting hair in her home. Ruth Dean was a faithful member of Seth Ward Baptist Church, and in April of 2008, Jimmy and Donna donated a new digital organ for the church in her memory.

In 1946, Jimmy dropped out of Plainview High School to help his mother, and then went on to serve his country in the Merchant Marines and later in the U.S. Air Force. Under a special program for veterans, he received his high school diploma in 2003. Following his military years, Jimmy performed with several bands in the Washington D.C. area, and eventually landed his own television show on CBS in 1953. He was the first country music performer to have a variety show on network TV, and from 1963 until 1966, "The Jimmy Dean Show" on ABC helped launch entertainer soared, he played such venues as Las Vegas, Carnegie Hall, and the London Palladium. He had a co-starring role on the TV series "Daniel Boone," and also starred with Sean Connery in the James Bond film "Diamonds Are Forever."

In 1969, Jimmy founded the Jimmy Dean Meat Company in Plainview and his products were sold nationwide. From his appearances in commercials, he became known as "The Sausage King." His likeness is part of the Plainview "Walk of Fame" in front of the Fair Theater. In 2005, Jimmy was inducted in the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame. In 1990, Jimmy moved to Richmond, Virginia, and married country music artist Donna Meade, and in 2004, they collaborated on his life story, "Thirty Years of Sausage, Fifty Years of Ham."