

Moriss Baldridge Taylor

Contributed by Charles Ray Wilson



Moriss Taylor was a well-known entertainer in Butte County. He was born in Miami, Ottawa County, Oklahoma, on December 3, 1924. His parents, Mance and Lola Taylor moved to Palermo in Butte County in early 1940, while Moriss stayed behind and lived with his Aunt and Uncle in Picher, Oklahoma while he finished the eighth grade. In June 1940 he took second place in an amateur contest in Picher that was attended by 1,500 people¹. He had learned to play the guitar as a small child in Oklahoma. Shortly after joining his parents in Oroville in 1940, his radio career began with him doing a 15-minute weekly country-western music show for KDAN Radio in Oroville.

Mr. Taylor enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp. while still in high school and entered into active service on July 22, 1943, in Sacramento. Moriss wasn't a big man, he stood 5' 7" and weighed 147 pounds, and he had blue eyes and brown hair. For reasons unknown, he started using his mother's maiden name, Baldridge, while still living in Oklahoma. On

October 16, 1944, he sent a letter to his commanding officer requesting his name be changed back to Taylor.

He began his army training at the Monterey Presidio. He was then based at Buckley Field in Colorado before being assigned to the technical school, Army Air Forces Training Command, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for a twenty-week course training as a radio operator-mechanic. After completion, he was placed as a member of a highly skilled bomber crew of the Army Air Forces. During his training, he qualified as a Sharpshooter with an M1 Carbine.

During his military career, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross and several other medals including the Air Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the World War Story Medal and the American Campaign Medal. He was honorably discharged at Camp Beale, California on January 13, 1946.

His dedication to his craft was evident in the longevity of his TV show. The Moriss Taylor Show on KHSL-TV started in 1956 and broadcast until 1997, making it one of the longest-running, locally produced television shows on KHSL-TV. Prior to joining KHSL in 1953, he was an announcer on KMOR radio², a year earlier he sold cars for Fleming Motors in Chico.³

On October 23, 1957, the headline in the Enterprise-Record read, "Local Entertainer to Make Recordings." Moriss had been signed to a recording contract and was to have two of his disks in nationwide circulation before the holidays. His first release was introduced at the annual convention of 1,200 country-western disk jockeys in Nashville, Tennessee.

Moriss and his western band, the Sierra Melody Gang, which featured Bashful Charlie Robinson, were regularly heard on television and radio, and played various venues throughout Northern California.⁴



Mr. Taylor made headlines again when he was honored with a State Resolution for his significant contributions to county music. State Senator Jim Nielsen, R-Rohnert Park, accorded Taylor the honor. Co-authored by Assemblymen Stan Statham, R-Redding, and Chris Chandler, R-Yuba City, the resolution was a testament to Taylor's outstanding contributions to country music and the citizens of the north state.⁵

Moriss passed away on January 8, 2018, at 93 years old. His children, Mike, Terry, Christy, Sherri, and Renee survived him. He was preceded in death by his wife, Velma Faye Parsons and his son, Moriss Steven Taylor.⁶

¹Tri-State Tribune, Thursday, June 13, 1940, Page 1.

² Chico, California City Directory 1953.

³ Chico, California City Directory 1952.

⁴ Enterprise-Record, Friday, January 10, 1997.

⁵ Enterprise-Record, Wednesday, October 21, 1987, Page 20.

⁶ Obituary on Find a Grave Memorial ID 186594107.