



Roots 'n' Branches

Your Award Winning Newsletter

Monthly Grand Prairie Genealogical Society Newsletter
 P.O. Box 532026 Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-2026
www.gpgstx.org

Shirley Apley May 6, 2010

Forth Worth Public Library Genealogical Collection

An Introduction to the Fort Worth Library's Genealogy Department: learn how to use the collection in researching your family history. The third largest genealogy collection in the State of Texas holds many resources that will aid you in your family research. Take a tour of the department via a PowerPoint presentation. A beginner's research packet will be distributed.



Shirley comes from South Dakota and has worked for the Fort Worth Library for over 16 years. She has a Bachelors of Science in History from the University of South Dakota and a Masters in

Library Science from Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas. Shirley has been involved in genealogy research since she was eighteen years old. She has taught "Advanced Genealogy" classes at Tarrant County College. Shirley enjoys research and working with others to find their family heritage as well as playing in competitive Scrabble tournaments.

Cynthia Jones
 Vice President of Programs

OFFICER INSTALLATION

The Grand Prairie Genealogical Society officers for the 2010-2011 Executive Board will be installed at the societies May meeting.

Refreshments and Conversation at 6:30 PM
 Program at 7:00 PM
 Officer installation to follow.

Grand Prairie Memorial Library
 901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

Visitors Are Always Welcome

May refreshments provided by
 Trish Nunn and Sallyann Hoernke

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From the Gavel

The vitality of an organization like the Grand Prairie Genealogical Society can be evaluated by the 3P Principle: People, Programming and Projects. Looking back on this GPGS year, I think we measure up.

People: I've never served on a board that was better at sharing the work and coordinating with other officers than this year's GPGS Board. Nor have I ever known a greater percentage of the general membership willing to share their excitement, ideas, experience and labor.

Programming: Our speakers not only interested and informed us; they also attracted guests, some of whom became members.

Projects:

- We had another lock-in that was both fruitful and fun. We researched; we helped one another; and we enjoyed ourselves.
- The profiles of Grand Prairie citizens written by GPGS members last year for the city's centennial are being published in *Roots 'n Branches*, which, in turn, is accessible to the public at our website. The profiles are also being added to the vertical files in the Genealogy Room. We invite anyone (GPGS member or not) willing to research and write additional 1 to 3 page biographies to add to this collection we call "The Folks Who Made Grand Prairie."
- We're indexing old scrapbooks that have been donated to the library. This will make it much easier for librarians to help researchers whose ancestors were active in Rotary Club,

Garden Club, PTA and similar organizations.

- We're indexing and photographing tombstones in Grand Prairie cemeteries. This work, which includes directions to each cemetery, complete with GPS coordinates, will help surviving relatives and researchers.

Now it's time for me to hand the gavel to Regina and take a back seat. Thank you for the honor of being your president this year. As my grandchildren would say, "You guys rock!"

Barb

Barbara Brixey Wylie
President, 2009 - 2010

In The Coming Months

June 3, 2010 David Appleton

One approach to writing your family history

As genealogists, we know how important it is: preserving and sharing not just the names and dates, but the stories, the events in the lives of the people in our family trees. But it is such a daunting task that too many times it never even gets started. How do you begin? What do you write? What about pictures or other personal touches? How do you print and publish? This presentation discusses one approach to writing and sharing these stories.

David Appleton (B.S., History) is an internationally known lecturer and author who has written and published a number of books. These include an on-going series of illustrated family history books for his children, grandchildren, and parents entitled *Appleton Family Stories*, which he began writing to share some of his genealogical finds with them.

Cynthia Jones
Vice President of Programs

The Folks Who Made Grand Prairie

ALVERNA BENNETT WILLIAMS

Alverna Bennett was born September 3, 1918 in Sharon, Pennsylvania. On October 19, 1919 her family was involved in an automobile-streetcar accident that resulted in the amputation of both Alverna's legs, just below her hips.

In spite of this great handicap, Alverna was a tomboy who learned to do all the things other kids did, including swimming, ice skating and roller skating. After seeing the acrobats at a Ringling Brothers circus when she was 8 or 9 years old, Alverna dreamed of being an acrobat. Her father built her a balance beam in their cellar and later added rings for her to practice.

During this same time Alverna learned to dance by watching the local dance teacher give lessons. Soon, Alverna was entered into the many shows and fairs that traveled the country in the 1920s and 1930s, performing dance routines and acrobatic stunts.

At the age of 15, her mother took her to New York to join Ringling Brothers Circus. Much to Alverna's bitter disappointment, she was placed in the freak show rather than being able to perform her routine. For several years she and her mother toured with traveling tent shows. At age 17 Alverna met and married Lou Babbs, a motordrome owner and stunt man. Motordromes featured a motorcycle rider riding perpendicular walls of an enclosure. Alverna became a part of this act. Alverna and Lou Babbs were very successful with their motordrome routine and enjoyed a lavish lifestyle.

Lou Babbs decided to feature Alverna in a show as a legless pilot and purchased a Skyfarer Airplane, which had its rudders, ailerons and elevators all controlled by stick shift - no feet needed. Alverna was not happy about these plans, but after the first flying lesson, she was caught up in this wonderful experience. She credited her instructor, Judd Yonkers, Chief Pilot at Bernard Airport in Youngstown, Ohio, for giving her good, solid instruction and instilling in her a love of flying.

Alverna soloed after three hours of instruction, but needed to apply for a pilot's license in order to be legal. She passed the physical easily, but was refused a pilot's license because she had no legs. Judd Yonkers advised her to hire a lawyer and to also take flight checks with prestigious pilots in aviation. She obtained a notarized letter of recommendation from 24 different instructors while accumulating 25 hours of flying. She still was denied the license and sued the Civil Aeronautics Board (forerunner to the Federal Aviation Administration). After several months, the CAB decided to settle out of court rather than have the publicity. On September 19, 1944 the CAB amended its rules to allow handicapped persons to fly. This amendment reads:

29.12 (c) General physical condition. No applicant shall have an organic or functional disease which would interfere with the safe piloting of aircraft, or other duties of his airman certificate. Any structural defect or limitations shall be noted on his medical certificate.

Alverna had little time for flying, however, because her husband Lou was constantly planning more and more acts for her. She did manage to find time to fly her first long solo flight from Moultrie, Georgia to Jacksonville, Florida (160 miles). She attended ground school and on March 9, 1945 obtained her

Private Pilot Certificate which allowed her to have passengers with her. Three days later she flew to Atlanta, Georgia, to make a short film for Paramount Pictures. Alverna wrote in her autobiography: "The three days I spent in Atlanta were grand. The consensus: I was the ideal American youth. I didn't drink or smoke and blushed at compliments, who needed legs?" After this experience she christened her plane "Seventh Heaven" and this name was painted on its body.

Alverna's goal was to fly solo cross country, which she did in May 1945, flying from Jacksonville, Florida to Los Angeles, California. During this flight, due to heavy head winds, she ran out of fuel just as she was approaching El Paso Airport. She made a stick landing and, after refueling, flew on to Los Angeles.

Alverna was invited to attend the Cleveland National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio where she was the guest of honor at the women Flyers of America Banquet on September 1, 1945. Her escort for the evening was Glen L. Martin, owner of Martin Aircraft. Mr. Martin had been one of the pilots who checked Alverna as a student pilot.

Around 1947, Alverna divorced Lou Babbs, leaving her plane behind. She continued in show business as a trapeze performer, managed a motordrome act, and helped her mother in her business. A newer plane, the Ercoupe, which was also controlled entirely by stick, became popular in flying circles and Alverna would rent one when she could in order to keep up her flying.

Two years after her divorce, on January 14, 1948, Alverna married Albert Williams, a motordrome rider from Gary, Indiana. Their

son, David, was born a year later and daughter, Scarlett, was born in 1952. Alverna and Al had already decided they would quit show business and stay in one place when David was old enough for school. The season ended at the Fort Worth Livestock Show in Fort Worth, Texas. Al Williams went to work in the space program at Chance Vought Aircraft in Grand Prairie, Texas. Alverna stayed home to take care of the family.

Grand Prairie did not have a motorcycle shop, so Al decided to open one while still working at the aircraft company. He and Alverna actually built the building that housed the Indian Motorcycle Shop in the 1950s.

Alverna experienced a whole new life: PTA, room mothers, Boy Scouts. The family became members of First Methodist Church and David became a Boy Scout from Troop 195, sponsored by the Church. He eventually became an Eagle Scout.

The family's new-found happiness ended when Al suffered serious injuries in a motorcycle accident while riding to work. He was hospitalized for months and medical bills mounted during 13 surgeries to save his leg. Alverna tells of the support from Grand Prairie families during this time. Her children had been taking music and dance lessons. When she told the instructors the lessons would have to be discontinued, piano teacher Lois Flynn and dance instructor Doris Walters insisted that the children continue lessons at no charge. David had built himself a harp and learned to play it. An opportunity arose for David to purchase a harp used by the Dallas Symphony for \$1,000. Alverna went to the President of Grand Prairie State Bank, Durwood Sutton, and he gave her a loan for \$1,000.

First Methodist Church members provided nearly 50 gifts and food for the family at

Christmas that year. Another act of generosity came from the Principal of Florence Hill Elementary School, where Scarlett was enrolled. He called Alverna and told her he wanted to pay for the orthodontic braces Scarlett needed—on the condition that she never reveal his name. For four years he paid Scarlett’s dental bills. Alverna’s grateful comment was: “Where...but Grand Prairie!”

Alverna now needed employment, but no company would hire her because of insurance issues. She finally got a job in the catalogue department of Sears, Roebuck in Arlington, Texas—at \$1 per hour. Once Al returned to work, Alverna went to night school in Dallas to learn office work. But still, no one would hire her. She even began working at Chance Vought, but the job lasted one day because of insurance concerns. She relates this story:

“I returned home to Scarlett, who was at home with a cold. I burst into tears. I looked at the ceiling and expressed my frustrations. ‘I’m sick of you and this miserable handicap. How long does it take, Lord? How long?’ I shook my fist at Him in contempt. Just as I ran out of steam, a piece of ceiling fell and hit me on the head. I jumped from the chair, raised my hands to the Lord and said, ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry!’” Alverna eventually found a job at the *Dallas Times Herald*.

Alverna attended an air show at the Great Southwest Airport one Labor Day weekend. It rekindled her love of flying. Some of the pilots knew her and asked why she wasn’t flying. She decided she wanted to fly again. However, no Ercoupe planes were available for her to fly. She went up with pilots who allowed her to help with the hand controls. Alverna learned that an Ercoupe was for sale for \$2,400. She decided to try and buy it.

With a loan from the local Credit Union, Alverna bought the plane. After registering with the Federal Aviation Office, she received the following notice: “There is a discrepancy in your pilot report. It says that you are 32 inches tall and weigh only 80 pounds. How is this possible?” Alverna replied, “Please check Waiver #33W57435.” She heard no more from them.

Alverna again became involved in flying. She joined the Silver Wings, an organization for pilots who had soloed twenty-five years earlier. They also restored antique airplanes and Alverna became interested in this hobby. She joined the Ninety-Nines, the international organization of women pilots. The Ninety-Nines had been the sponsors of the Powder Puff Derbies. The last Derby was flown in 1976, but did not allow antique planes such as the Ercoupe. This was a bitter disappointment for Alverna. However, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. suggested to the Nine-Nines that one more race be held in 1977 to round off thirty years of the Powder Puff Derby. This final race allowed any airplane, regardless of age, to fly. So Alverna got her wish to fly in the Powder Puff Derby after all. She painted the name “Someday” on her plane and set about to seek financing for the race. She finally secured Sarah Coventry Jewelry of New York as a sponsor and was encouraged by her children to enter. After flying to California to begin the race, Alverna’s plane encountered mechanical difficulties and she became co-pilot with another entrant.

In July 1977, Alverna received a request from Jerrie Cobb, the first woman to qualify for the Space Program but was kept from going into space at that time because of her gender. Jerrie began missionary work in South America, performing humanitarian flying by delivering needed medical supplies to remote jungle areas. Jerrie wanted Alverna to accompany one

of the trips in order to show the natives that persons with a handicap could be productive humans. Jerrie had often seen maimed natives ostracized and driven from their villages. Alverna flew with Jerrie on a month-long trip that included stops in Mexico, San Andreas Island, and several areas of Colombia.

Immediately upon returning to Grand Prairie in September 1977, Alverna was honored by the City of Grand Prairie and the local Soroptimist Club with Alverna Williams Day and a banquet held at the Woman's Club Building. She was introduced by her pastor, the Rev. Robert E. Young. Alverna wrote that Rev. Young "gave me an introduction that nobody could live up to." After her introduction, Alverna gave a short speech in which she said she had felt the hand of God upon her, and in spite of having lived life without legs, she felt she was truly blessed.

The next year, Alverna received the ultimate honor of her life when she was invited to the grand opening of the General Aviation Section of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. on March 31, 1978. A photograph of her posing on the wing of her plane was placed in the museum and hung there for several years. She had come all the way from circus side-show freak to a nationally-renowned pilot.

by Mary Ann Hartsell with special thanks to Alverna's children who supplied a copy of her autobiography, SOMEDAY © 1979

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Grand Prairie Genealogical Society
A Partner Society of the
Texas State Genealogical Society

Executive Board Members

Member Profile

I was born in Chicago, Ill. to Charles & Mary Garland on April 15th, 1939 and was given the name of Owen Eugene Garland. I was born Placenta preva and weighed in a 3 lbs, 4 oz. I was only given a 10% chance of survival, and my mother 50/50 chance of survival. Well...I'm here!!! & so was mom.

As a child my sister said I was always asking about family things. Who, who, who & what, what, what??

My father's family was from Earlville, Ill. and were farmers. From time to time we would visit my Grandmother, aunts & uncles. My favorite was Aunt Mary and I could tell Grandma was the boss. My dad was her only son and he had 3 sisters. Have you ever been around people and feel uncomfortable? My sister and I both had this feeling when in Earlville.

My mother's family was all from the southside of Chicago and my Uncle Matt was the favorite there. I loved to hear his wife, Dorothy, talk as she was from the South.

Through genealogy I have uncovered lots of so called family secrets. Why didn't Mom & Dad have any wedding photos, where were they married, was dad married before and who to?????

In 1950 we moved to Cabry, IL. My dad's Uncle Jim lived there and I found out 11 of grandma's brothers & sisters were born there. What a surprise, I thought there was only Grandma and Uncle Jim. It was a cool place to live & grow up; I even had my own room. I learned to play basketball, and had my 1st two jobs, paperboy and cutting the grade school lawn.

In 1953 we moved back to Chicago. I attended Fenger High and was a good basketball player and a so so student.

I didn't finish high school and in 1957 I got married to Carolyn and had 2 daughters within 4 yrs. Way to young. During our 11 yrs. together I worked in shipping for a high end jewelry store, worked at U.S. Steel, Reliable Packing Co. loading trucks, and on to S.A. Healy on a tunnel job. Lost 40 lbs. doing that job in 3wks time. But I loved it there, we were 150 ft. below the ground and sometimes 3 to 5 miles back.

In 1964 I got my GED diploma.

In 1968 I met & married Becky. I got into Dental technology and loved it; I worked with many Dentists in the Chicago area. Anytime you can improve someone's smile and see them open up is fantastic. This line of work brought me to Texas. I opened up a dental lab with a friend from here in Arlington TX, but it didn't last long. I then met someone going into Pest Control business and brought me along with him, within 3 yrs. we were going strong and after 26 yrs. now it has been great to our family.

Now at 71, I'm still learning. I have taken some courses at T.C.C. and plan to take many more.

My advice to the youth of today is, be positive, set long and short range goals and stay focused.

My ancestors didn't come over on the Mayflower, but they were there to meet the boat.

**Will Rogers
1879-1935, American Humorist, and Actor**

Financial Report

The Grand Prairie Genealogical Society Finance Report that will be presented at our May meeting is as follows:

Balance on 04-1-10	\$1,562.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	50.00
Balance on 04-30-10	\$1512.52

*John **Cockrum**
Treasurer*

Volunteer Opportunities

Your chance to volunteer to help with society projects is at hand. Contact Regina Shumaker, Cemetery Project Chairperson. Contact Jan Barrett, Scrapbook Project Chairperson. You may also contact John Wylie about organizing a project of your own.

Our Library

The Grand Prairie Genealogical Society exists to support family history research and the Genealogical Collection of the Grand Prairie Memorial Library. The genealogical collection is located at the Main Branch, 901 Conover Drive. The library may be contacted at 972-237-5700. The libraries hours of operation are listed below:

Monday	10am to 9pm
Tuesday	10am to 9pm
Wednesday	10am to 6pm
Thursday	10am to 9pm
Friday	Closed
Saturday	9am to 6pm
Sunday	1pm to 5pm

Visit GP libraries online at:
www.gptx.org/library

Workshops/Conferences

Federation of Genealogical Society
August 18-21, 2010
Rediscovering America's First Frontier
Knoxville, Tennessee

<http://www.fgs.org/2010conference/index.php>

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Texas State Genealogical Society
November 4-6, 2010
50th Birthday Celebration
Bridging Generations
Waco, Texas

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txsgs/>

Dear Uncle Leon

Dear Uncle Leon,

My sister, a cousin, and I were talking yesterday about our genealogy for the Sterling side of our family. My cousin said he could not find anything beyond our grandfather, Etheridge Steve Sterling. DOB: 12-25-? What type of info would you need for further research? Thanks, Pennie

Dear Pennie,

First I would try to determine his approximate year of birth. You may use his date of death and possibly the ages of his children to help determine an approximate date of birth. You will need to determine an area where you believe he lived to begin a search for documents and census records.

Happy Searching, Uncle Leon

Extractions

The Grand Prairie Genealogical Society expresses its sincere thanks to society member Ruth Goodman, for her continued extractions from the "Grand Prairie Texan". The following pages are from the March 4, 1910 issue.

**GRAND PRAIRIE TEXAN
FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 1910**

FOR TAX COLLECTOR

In this issue will be found the announcement of Chas. I. EVANS, Jr. of Dallas, as a candidate for Tax Collector of Dallas County, subject to the Democratic primaries July 23, 1910. Mr. EVANS was born in Brazos County, Texas, in 1869. About that time he moved to Abilene, where he lived until 1886, when his family moved to Dallas, at which place he has resided continuously. He received his education in the public schools and is also a graduate of the State University at Austin. For nine years he was a printer at Abilene, Dallas and other cities in the western part of the United States. (Tramp printers will please not smile.) As soon as he served his apprenticeship, he became a member of Dallas Typographical Union No. 173, and still retains his membership.

Mr. EVANS has been a professional shorthand reporter in the courts of Dallas county and North Texas for twenty years, and is considered by a great many friends to be one of the most competent in his profession of any in the South.

Seven years ago a law was passed requiring and providing for official shorthand reporters in the courts and Mr. EVANS was appointed as Court Stenographer in the 44th District Court by the late Judge Richard MORGAN, and has held the position continuously in the 44th and Criminal District Courts, being now with the Criminal District Court.

Mr. EVANS seeks the nomination to this office upon his merits and with the promise

in case of his election that he will discharge the duties of that office to the very best of his knowledge and belief. He asks that the voters of this section give his claims due and favorable consideration.

NEGRO HANGED

Allen BROOKS, the negro who committed criminal assault upon the two and one-half year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. BEVENS, in Dallas, last week, was taken from the officers and hanged to the Elk's Arch, corner Main and Akard Sts., in Dallas about nine o'clock yesterday (Thursday) morning.

The case was set for trial yesterday and public sentiment was so strong against BROOKS till a mob of 6,000 or 8,000 people quickly formed who, by force, took the negro from the officers in the court house and immediately proceeded to deal with him as stated above.

POINDEXTER TO SPEAK HERE

The POINDEXTER CLUB is in receipt of a letter from Judge POINDEXTER's campaign manager stating that Judge POINDEXTER can be here Monday night, March 14th, which date is satisfactory to the Club, and all necessary arrangements for the speaking are now consummated. The BURGHER building has been secured for the occasion, and ample lights and seats will be provided. The reception committee and a brass band will meet Judge POINDEXTER at some point on the Interurban and accompany him here.

The POINDEXTER CLUB is by far the largest political club in Grand Prairie, and it is constantly increasing in membership. It is generally conceded that POINDEXTER will carry this precinct by a large majority.

A meeting of the POINDEXTER CLUB is called for Monday night, March 7th, at the BURGHER BUILDING, to transact some important business and arrange details.

W. E. COWAN FOR COUNTY JUDGE

We take pleasure this week in announcing W. E. COWAN, for Judge of the County Court of Dallas County at Law. Will COWAN, as he is generally known, was raised in this county, on a farm near Garland and his early education was obtained in the public school in his community, and later on in the Garland High School. Still later he attended Henry College and after graduation there, he entered the law department of the University of Texas, graduating in law in 1902. Upon his graduation, he located in Dallas, and his ability, within a short time, because so well recognized that County Attorney Walter S. LEMMON, in the latter part of 1902, appointed him Assistant County Attorney, which position he held until the expiration of Mr. LEMMON's term. He then re-entered private practice in Dallas until 1908, when he was tendered, and accepted a position by County Attorney Dwight L. LEWELLING, as Assistant County Attorney, which position he held until February 1st this year when he decided to make the race for Judge of the County Court at Law, and thereupon voluntarily resigned from the County Attorney's office. Mr. COWAN, true to his ideals, felt that he could not do his duty by Mr. LEWELLING, the people, and himself, in making the race and still remain in office, as he felt that an office holder's time belonged to the people. He is, and always has been, a sterling Democrat. The past sixteen months the greater part of Mr. COWAN's duties in the County Attorney's office were with the Grand Jury, a very important position

requiring special skill and ability, and each and every Grand Jury with whom he has been associated has commended him in the highest terms, and expressed their appreciation of his energy, his courtesy and his ability as a lawyer. He is a candidate of no clique or special interests, and promises that if elected he will do his whole duty, and that in the administration of his official position, he will show no favorites. We ask our readers to remember Mr. COWAN when they go to vote, and we beg to say that if he is elected to the important position to which he aspires, and which he is so well qualified to fill, he will perform with conscientious impartiality its responsible duties with credit to himself and to the people.

COUNTY BONDS ARE BOUGHT

In two weeks \$875,000 will be available by the sale, effected Monday, of Dallas County's road, viaduct and bridge bonds, and by that time, it is expected, work will have begun on the Dallas-Oak Cliff viaduct, which is to be the largest reinforced concrete highway viaduct in the world; on the Millers Ferry bridge and on the county roads. All improvements contemplated under the bond issues will be in progress, or arranged for, by the time the money is available, it is expected.

The City National Bank of Dallas, on its bid of par and accrued interest, with three conditions set forth, one of which was the designation of the Bank as the county depository, was awarded the entire issue, and was also made the county depository.

Extractions from the March 4, 1910 issue of the "Grand Prairie Texan" will continue in the January 2010 issue of Roots 'n Branches.