

**G H  
P O**

# Making History in the Prairie

**Grand Prairie Historical  
Organization**

Bingham Volume III  
February 2006

## Next Meeting is Monday 2-20-06

**The next meeting of the GP Historical Organization is scheduled for February 20th at 11:30.** Please call Angela Giessner for reservations at 972-262-5151. When you call, if you have not already done so, please

provide Angela with an update on your address, phone number, email address and your birthday. The thought is to put together a GPHO Directory. In this meeting Ruthe Jackson will give us a history of Grand Prairie.



### **Cub Scout PACK 202 Garner Elementary**

Cub Scout Pack 202 at Garner Elementary in Grand Prairie is planning a Flag Retirement ceremony the first week in April. This process properly disposes of old flags that are no longer in the proper shape to display.

If anyone has an old flag they would like to retire in the proper manner, we would appreciate you donating it. We will come by and pick it up, or you can bring it to the GPHO meeting in February.

The Boy Scouts of America and the United States Military are the only two organizations authorized to officially retire the United States Flag. This is a solemn ceremony that gives the proper dignity and respect to our great flag.

This ceremony shows the boys how important the flag is. They leave with a new respect for our National Symbol.

Please call me, and I'll make arrangements to get your flag.

Brian Bingham  
214-808-1913

## **CPT Robert C. Shanks Memorial U.S. Army Reserve Center**

On December 18<sup>th</sup> the Army Reserve Center was renamed in honor of CPT Robert C. Shanks. CPT Shanks was nominated for this honor by his Daughter, Debbie A. Shanks (Grand Prairie), for his accomplishments and dedicated service to our country during WWII.

CPT Shanks was born on Christmas day in 1919 in Bells, Tx. He was a resident of Grand Prairie since 1923, a member of the First United Methodist Church and a 1938 graduate of Grand Prairie High School where he was a fullback for

the Gopher Football Team.

CPT Shanks served his country during World War II with the U.S. Army Air Corps where he attained the rank of captain. He piloted 33 B-29 Missions and flew the first B-29 mission over Japan. CPT Shanks received many medals and citations while in service including the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, Asiatic-Pacific with four Battle Stars, Philippine Liberation Medal with Battle Star and the Allied Ribbon.

On December 14, 1944 CPT Shanks piloted "Memphis Minnie" on a mission expected to be a "milk run" that was planned to bomb a bridge in Bangkok with a mixed load of 12 1000-pound and 6 500-pound demolition bombs. This was a controversial mission because of the mixed load and has left some of the surviving crew members bitter to this day. Lt. Col. J.I.

Continued on page 2

## **GPHO Family News—one of our own is running for State Representative**

One of our GPHO members, Kirk England, is running for State Representative in District 106.

Kirk has no opponent in the Primary election in March. In February, his Democratic Party opponent for the special election is Katy Hubener.

Kirk is a member of the GPHO, lifelong resident of Grand Prairie, business owner and raised two outstanding young men in the Grand Prairie School District. One of whom is a sophomore at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and the youngest will report there in July.

The health and performance of the public schools is a major priority for Kirk. He is actively involved in his Church serving in several capacities over the years. He has served as Facilities Chairman on two successful school bond elections, and is currently on the YMCA Board.

### **Regardless of how you vote, be sure to vote.**

There is a special election February 28, 2006 to fill the remaining term of our current Representative who recently resigned. Early Voting starts February 13th. The Primary election is March 7th.



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Republican for State Representative  
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## Stars Shine on Grand Prairie—Local Law Enforcement Heroes Recognized

June 18, 2004 will be remembered as the darkest day in the history of the Grand Prairie Police Department. Sgt. Greg Hunter, the second black police officer in Grand Prairie (the first with modern day arrest powers), was shot and killed by a deranged gunman on the parking lot of the Wal Mart on I-20. Officer Bruce Seix was shot and seriously wounded while attempting to aid Sgt. Hunter. In the brief but intense gun battle Officer Seix returned fire, killing the gunman and ending his violent rampage.

For their actions on that day, Sgt. Hunter was posthumously awarded the Star of Texas

Award. Officer Seix also received the award, as did 44 other peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel who were killed or seriously injured in the line of duty from September 1, 2003 through June 30, 2005. The awards were presented by Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams on behalf of Governor Rick Perry during a ceremony at the State Capitol on October 28<sup>th</sup>. An entourage of Grand Prairie police officers was in attendance as the awards were presented to Officer Seix and to Sgt. Hunter's family.

Detective John Brimmer, the Grand Prairie Police Department's public information officer, said Sgt. Hunter and Officer Seix represent

"what every police officer should be, not only in their public lives, but in their personal lives, too. As much as we regret losing Sgt. Hunter, we're left with a standard of what every officer should strive for," Detective Brimmer said. "Officer Seix continues to perform at a high level and also serves as a great example." The lobby of the Grand Prairie Police Department Headquarters at 801 Conover Drive is open to the public. A large photograph of Sgt. Hunter is prominently displayed alongside a photograph of Officer Lyndon F. King, the first Grand Prairie police officer killed in the line of duty. A brief history of these officers and their sacrifice in protecting the citizens of Grand Prairie is written below their photographs and can be viewed by the public

Sgt. Eric Hansen

*"You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him"*

Gen. Wayne Downing

## LifeLine Shelter

For those of you that are unaware, our lovely President, Angela Giessner, is also the President of LifeLine Shelter for Families.

LifeLine Shelter is a non-profit organization dedicated to intervening with families who are displaced due to hardship.

February 24th

On Friday February 24th at 7pm, Evangel Temple is hosting the annual STAINED GLASS JUBILEE Gospel Concert. All proceeds benefit LifeLine. J.D. Kaps and other gifted singers & musicians will be providing the entertainment.

Come help support a great cause.

## REUNION—Grand Prairie High School Class of 1936

On Saturday January 28th, five of the 7 living member of the GP High School Class of 1936 got together for their 70th class reunion. Those who attended (left to right, top to bottom) were, Joyce Smith Johnston, William S. Bean, Margaret Waggoner Darling, Evelyn England Carroll, Mary Frances Spikes Kingrea. Mr. Bean arranged this reunion. The last time they met was 5 years ago, but Mr. Bean says they will do so again every year from now on.



## Continued—Robert C. "Bob" Shanks

Cornett, commander of the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron, protested the mission saying the mixed bomb load was an unnecessary risk with little payoff.

After take off, one plane had to abort and bomb a tertiary target. The rest made two runs on Bangkok without dropping bombs. 9/10 cloud cover prevented visual sighting of the target. As ordered, the formation proceeded to the secondary target—rail yards in Rangoon, Burma.

After bombs away over Rangoon, there was a tremendous explosion underneath the low element of the 11-plane formation. All surviv-

ing crew members and staff officers are convinced that the explosion resulted from mid-air collisions of bombs in the mixed bomb load.

One of our own bombs blew the formation apart, causing the four planes of the low element to crash in the target area and damaging all planes in the formation.

Two complete crews bailed out successfully, and 6 members of another crew bailed out. One plane went down with its entire crew. One plane returned to



home base and 6 limped to emergency bases. In all, 17 men were killed and 29 were imprisoned by the Japanese for 5 months until liberated in May 1945. CPT Shanks was one of those captured and held as a Japanese prisoner of war where he was beaten, starved and tortured.

When the Japanese abandoned the POW camp, the prisoners were left behind to survive as they could. CPT Shanks survived the ordeal coming home weighing less than

100 pounds.

CPT Shank's father was one of the first doctors to practice in Grand Prairie and at one time was in the rear of Dewey Miller's Drug Store. His mother was a nurse for Dr. Shanks as well as for LTV during the war. CPT Shanks married Letha Bell Wilson, also of Grand Prairie, and served on the Grand Prairie City Council from 1959 to 1961. He was a custom home builder in Grand Prairie for over 40 years.

CPT Robert C. Shanks passed away Friday, December 7, 2001 following knee replacement surgery and is buried at the Dallas/FtWorth National Cemetery.

Thanks to the 40th Bomb Group Association and Debbie A Shanks for this information.

## Grand Prairie's Kar Company

The Little Motor Kar Company (LMKC) was the first automobile factory in Texas and began in Grand Prairie near what is now SE 28th Street. The company was formed in August 1919 and purchased the factory site on the interurban line just outside of the original Grand Prairie town site.

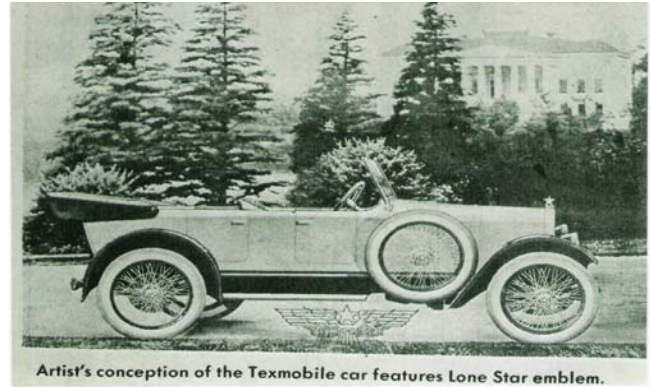
The Company said Grand Prairie was the most ideal site in the state because it has access to both a railroad and the interurban which ran between Dallas and Fort Worth.

If you stopped there, this would be an interesting bit of trivia. But there is much more to this story. The Little Motor Kar Company went bankrupt in 1920.

The company's flagship (only one built) was the TEXMOBILE, which is shown in the pictures. The TEXMOBILE was to be a powerful 4 cylinder 27 hp family vehicle built with "the highest grade of upholstery, Firestone tires with demountable rims".

The President of LMKC was W.S. Livezey, who was said to have invested hundreds of thousands of his personal dollars, and was to build all the engines himself. These same advertisements state there were over a million dollars of inventory and in-hand orders for over one hundred thousand cars. Charles Powers went through the building in the 1930's when the American Body and Equipment was located in this building making buses, and he said there was no way they could get a million dollars of equipment in the building unless it was gold..

Advertisements for LMKC further tout the strength of the company. Quoting a 3-1920 GP Texan article: "The office furniture is practically all fire-proof and fire-proof safes, etc.. Then we go to the residence section of the company's site, where we find they have nice buildings for their employees, economically built, but healthy. The homes are furnished with natural gas, electricity, water, sewers, etc. Then we go back to the factory again, where we find one of the finest equipment machine shops in the state; it is said that the machinery in this shop alone cost close to seven hundred thousand dollars, and only the very best machines to be found in the country are used, and only first class me-



Artist's conception of the Texmobile car features Lone Star emblem.

chanics are employed"

In this same GP Texan article for the LMKC they state: "Day by day we see the Little Motor Kar Company progressing, not as fast probably as some would have liked, but it has been built surely and slowly, yet fastly, much to the very great gratification of those who want their money invested in something that is here to stay, to build them a handsome business that will bring big returns on their investment, both this year and next year, and on and on in the future".

The LMKC turned out to be nothing but a scam. Some other important dates in 1920 were:

April 10: Judge Whitehurst appoints receiver for LMKC.

June 10: Hearing of arguments in receivership.

June 16: LMKC official held on large bond.

June 30: Indictments returned against LMKC official.

After the LMKC bankruptcy, this building is where the American Body and Equipment was located for many years. American Body is where Tom Powers (Charles Power's father) worked for 18 years.

The LMKC is a bit of Grand Prairie History, but not necessarily the kind that is best to remember. The first Automobile factory in the state of Texas may have also been one of the shortest lived.

**Thank you to Charles Powers to did some extensive research to locate this information. Charles also supplied most of the pictures. Some of the quotes and information were taken from the March 5, 1920 edition of the Grand Prairie Texan.**



Texmobile truck is tested for weight with a 3,508 pound load.







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## Preserving the History of Grand Prairie



**Grand Prairie Historical  
Friends and Members**

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The Grand Prairie Historical Organization's purpose is to search out, record, collate, preserve, and pass on to the next generation, the history of Grand Prairie, Texas, and its Southwest Dallas County environs, including the appropriate marking of authentic historical sites.

The dues year of the Organization shall be from January 1 in each year through Dec. 31 of the same year. The following classes of membership apply:

Regular Membership: The annual dues for single members shall be fifteen dollars (\$15.00) and twenty-five (\$25.00) for couples .

Life Membership: Any person 45 years or older who contributes \$200 shall be a member for life without further payment of dues.

Gold Star Membership: Payment of 10 years in advance, \$150 (no age limit).

Patron Membership: Any person who contributes five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or more to the Organization shall be a Life Member thereof and shall, in addition thereof be appropriately recognized as a Patron of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization.

Corporate Membership: Any small business that contributes \$250.00 shall be classified as a corporate member.

Dues should be mailed to Mrs. Giessner. Her information is listed to the left.



**Grand Prairie High School.** This is from a postcard that is not dated. Our best estimate of a date is sometime between 1926 and 1929. The First GP High school was built around 1912, with the view of the fire hydrant, which tells us it was after 1926.