



Making History in the Prairie

Grand Prairie Historical Organization

GPHO Volume XII

February 2008

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the GP Historical Organization is

February 20, 11:30 am at the **The Ruthe Jackson Center.**

Please call Angela Giessner for reservations, 972-262-5151

Back by popular demand, the Speaker for our meeting will be :

Jim Gatewood

A biography of Sheriff Bill Decker of Dallas County

DECKER'S LAW

Speak softly and carry a Thompson Sub-Machinegun.

While Elliot Ness and his "Untouchables" were fighting Al Capone in Chicago, Bill Decker was fighting crime in the city of Dallas. He (unlike Ness) had no federal funds or shotgun squads to back him up.

Sheriff Bill Decker was a "Modern Knight", alone without any armor in a dangerous land. He was armed only with his ironclad morals, courage, determination, and his favorite weapon: the **Thompson Sub-machinegun.**

Despite the smug, pious, self-righteous image that Dallas has courted for the last century, there has always been a lascivious twinkle in the old girl's eye. Dallas was a wide-open town

with its secrets a story that needed to be told.

Jim is a child of the depression, born 11 days before the market crash in 1929. His father, a Chicago stockbroker, like so many others, was wiped out in that crash. Jim's mother put him in a laundry basket and placed him in the back seat of their 1929 Hudson automobile, and the family left for California, where the banks had not closed.

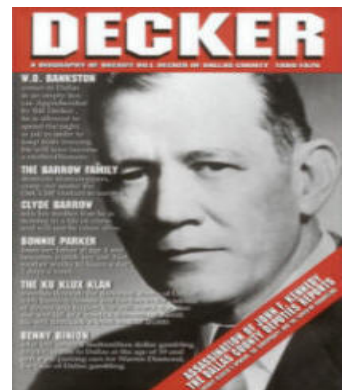
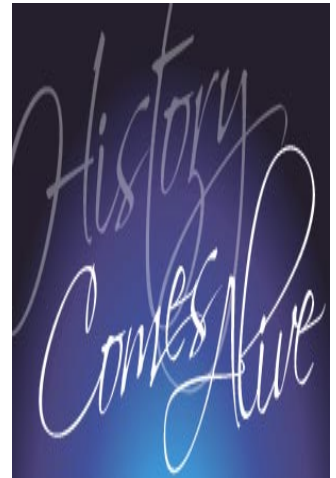
A rear axle on the Hudson broke in McKinney, Texas. Unable to pay for repairs, the auto mechanic told Mr. Gatewood of a bank in Dallas that would loan him money if he had the papers showing his car was paid for. Mr. Gatewood caught the inter-urban to Dallas in search

of the tallest building downtown, the Magnolia building. Located on the ground floor of the building was the Mercantile & Securities Bank.

A young banker by the name of Robert Thornton made the loan to Jim's father and introduced him to John Rauscher and Charlie Pierce who ran the securities department of the bank. Mr. Pierce offered Mr. Gatewood a job, and Jim and his family remained in Dallas.

Jim Gatewood has written four books, "Decker, a Biography of Sheriff Bill Decker of Dallas County," "The Legend of Benny Binion, Dallas Gambler & Mob Boss", "Captain Will Fritz, and the Dallas Mafia," and a book about "J. Frank Norris, Top O' Hill Casino - Lew Jenkins and the Texas Oil Rich".

Mr. Gatewood is also the Founder of the Dallas County Assassination Review Board that closed the JFK Murder Case.



HISTORIC COPELAND HOME

Free First Saturday Tours

Noon-4pm

125 SW Dallas St, GP

March 1	Aug 2
April 5	Sept 6
May 3	Oct 4
June 7	Nov 1
July 5	Dec 6



Grand Prairie's 100th ANNIVERSARY

January 2nd is the Celebration of Dechman Day in Grand Prairie and on 1-2-08 there was a meeting at City Hall to celebrate. Pictured here from left to right are Kelly Giessner, Angela Giessner, Paulette Cambron Reid, Cheryl Dover, Amy Sprinkles, Brian Bingham, Lynn Motley and Ruthe Jackson. 1-2-2009 will be the 100th Anniversary of Grand Prairie. The GPHO is going to need volunteers for various events during that time. We are several months out from having to supply those names, but we wanted you to be aware of the need. There will be more in our next issue.



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 Gospel Concert  
 benefiting  
 LifeLine Shelter for  
 Families  
 Friday March 7th  
 7:00 pm  
 Calvary Baptist Church  
 401 W. Church  
 Grand Prairie  
 For more information contact An-  
 gela Giessner at  
 972-264-5151  
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 ★ Thanks to Lynn Motley, Shane Thornton and Larry Sarratt ★
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the web site is up and running



www.GPHISTORICAL.com

 Helen Chennault has donated a bronze bust of Pete Emmons to the Grand Prairie Historical Organization. The bust is titled "Feathers N' Spurs" bronze sculpture by Jack Wilson, There is also another card attached that says, "Jack Bryant, Jr. Art Foundry, artist and foundryman Sculpture of western art & wildlife". Thank you Mrs. Chennault for your generosity.

As you may know, Mr. Chennault recently passed away. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Chennault family. Mr. Chennault was a long time client of my Father's, (Barley Bingham) and I always considered him to be my first customer back in 1988 when I took over Barley's Agency. Brian W. Bingham

DURWOOD A. SUTTON

28 Dec 1917 – 7 Mar 1998

33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason

Foreman of the Grand Jury that returned the indictment against Jack Ruby

Director of the Texas Turnpike Authority

Founding Trustee– Dallas County Community College

Member Red Cross of Constantine

One of the original trustees of the Dallas County Community College

Trustee for Scottish Rite Hospital for 25 years

Trustee Lena & Harry Turner Foundation

Mr. Sutton also was know in the area for rocking many babies during his 40 years working in the nursery at the First Baptist Church, Grand Prairie



Durwood A. Sutton

First Sergeant , US Army Medi-
 cal Training Battalion, US Army
 Service Forces out of Ft Lewis
 Washington

★ Life Members of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization ★

Judy Armstrong, Billy Joe Armstrong, Carol Bell, Grant Bell, Brian W. Bingham, L.R. Cannon, Ouida Chapman Lewis, Lisa Chennault Brown, Helen Chennault, Thomas Chennault, Thomas B Chennault, City of Grand Prairie Marketing, Marge Copeland, H. Victor Copeland, Jerry Corley, Cheryl Friman Dover, Charles and Janice England, Kirk England, Olive Galloway, Norma Hale, Marvin J (Jack) Hays, Lee D. Herring, Thomas Hight, Jorja Jackson Clemson, Marie Kerr Stufflebeme, Blythe Kizziar, Duane McGuffey, Lynn Motley, Betty Phillips, Charles Powers, Bob Roberts, Susan Shuffler, Fynlon and Eugenia Simpson, Ouida Daughtery Smith, Amy Sprinkles, Angela Sutton Giessner, Donald Taylor, Ruthe Thompson Jackson, Laura Thompson Potter, Paul and Madie Vernon

Sutton Family History

Durwood Anderson Sutton (28 Dec 1917 – 7 Mar 1998) was a long-time banker and civic leader in Grand Prairie until his death in 1998. He and Josephine (23 Dec 1922 – 3 Dec 2006) raised five children, three of whom live in the community today, Angela Sutton Giessner, Marshall Sutton and Virginia Sutton Dell. The other two, Craig Sutton and Larry Sutton, do not live far away in Dallas and Arlington, respectively. This is a brief story of the Sutton family history.

Durwood Sutton was raised on a farm in Ellis County and was the first in his family to leave the farm. Sutton's formal education was at Rockett High School, a Dallas Commercial College, Byrne College, and what he liked to call "the school of hard knocks", before moving to Grand Prairie in 1938. Grand Prairie had a rural population of just 1,600 (people, that is). In October 1938 at 20 years old, he joined the Grand Prairie State Bank, owned primarily by G.W. Bingham, grandfather of Brian Bingham. The Grand Prairie State Bank was later sold to G.H. Turner and W. Norman Gilbert. At that time the bank had only three employees, so he became the chief cook and bottle washer and jack of all trades.

In April 1941 Durwood Sutton enlisted in the Army as a private and quickly rose to the rank of Master Sergeant in the Army Medical Corps. While stationed at Camp Grant in Illinois, he met a beautiful Italian girl, Josephine Louise Barbera, from Beloit, Wisconsin and married her in Rockford, Illinois in February 1942. After being discharged from the Army in 1945, he brought Josephine and his first born Craig back to Grand Prairie from Ft. Lewis, Washington, and resumed his career at Grand Prairie State Bank, where he retired over 50 years later, after working his way up to President & CEO.

His willingness to give his time and talents has contributed greatly to the quality of life in Grand Prairie, and his community has recognized his contributions with the Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award, and the Zeus Award for civic service. This service included heading the local campaigns for the American Cancer Society, Kidney Foundation, chairman of the YMCA Board of Management, supporting scouting at all levels, serving as President and Director of the Rotary Club, Trustee of the American Legion Post, just to name a few.

Durwood Anderson Sutton was the son of Samuel Anderson Sutton (27 Aug 1891 – 30 Jan 1983) and Willie Everett Eatman (22 June 1894 – 25 Feb 1934), both raised near Rockett, Texas, between Ferris and Waxahachie in Ellis County. Sam and Willie had three sons, a small family by historical family standards. As so many boomer children, we often heard the stories of his three mile walk to and from school each day, working the family farm after school and studying by kerosene light. The four room farm house he grew up in had no indoor plumbing, and we remember visiting the outhouse next to the chicken coup after waiting as long as we could. The whole family took baths in a wash tub on Saturday night, whether they needed one or not. The family has always remembered the peach tree next to the house, since the homemade peach pies were such a delight.

Durwood's father, Samuel Anderson Sutton, was the son of Samuel Franklin Sutton (23 Dec 1866 – 12 Dec 1936) and Viola Hunsucker (8 Apr 1875 – 29 Jan 1956). Both were born in Tennessee and moved to Texas as children.

Durwood's mother, Willie Eatman Sutton, was one of ten children, nine of whom were daughters of a prominent farmer in Palmer, Texas just south of Rockett and Ferris. Durwood's grandfather, Joseph Seth Eatman (1849 – 1912), was the son of William Labon Eatman and Temperance Hogg, both of North Carolina. Temperance Hogg may be the only famous family name in the Sutton family tree, since her relative James Stephen Hogg became the first Texas born Governor in 1890.

Craig Sutton was the first Child of Durwood and Josephine.

He graduated from GPHS in 1962 and later received his MBA from Texas Tech University in 1967. He has been a banking and financial executive in Dallas for many years and is now with Northern Trust, a Private Bank and Trust Company. He has three children and two grandchildren.

Angela Sutton Giessner was the 2nd child of Durwood and Jo Sutton, born in 1946, after their return to Grand Prairie from Ft Lewis, Washington. Angela Sutton Giessner and Ralph Giessner have been married 43 years and are the proud parents of Greg Giessner and Janyth Giessner Evans.

Greg is married to Kelly Roberts Giessner. They have twin sons, Jake and Will Giessner. Janyth Giessner Evans is married to Dr Von L. Evans, Jr. They have 3 children, Chad, Bailey and Andrew Evans. Janyth and Von and their children live very active lives and reside in Ft Worth, TX.

Angela, Ralph and Greg Giessner are involved in the running of their family owned insurance agency, Giessner Insurance Agency at 2509 S Carrier Pkwy., Grand Prairie TX. They are agents with Farmers Insurance Group of Companies.

Angela Sutton Giessner and son Greg Giessner carry on Durwood and Jo Sutton's legacy of service to others by giving back to their community. Angela has also been recognized by the Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce with the Athena Award, Citizen of the Year, Small Business of the Year. She was also recognized for her community service by the Sam R Hamilton Masonic Lodge with the Community Builder Award and received the Jerry Fischer Community Service Award given by the Grand Prairie Council of PTA. Angela is past chairman of the Planning and Zoning and is currently a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals Commission. Angela has been president of many organizations, however, she has a heart for LifeLine Shelter For Families, Inc where she is Past President and Founder. The Giessners are members of First Baptist Church of Grand Prairie.

Angela and Ralph are very proud of Greg's contributions to our community as well. Greg was recently named Director of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce, named Man of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce, Past President Metro Rotary, Member of Parks and Recreation Commission, and Mt Lake District Chair of the Boy Scouts of America.

Angela will always appreciate her parents teaching her and her siblings to be responsible citizens and taking them to church where they could learn to love the Lord.

Marshall Sutton is the 3rd child of Durwood and Jo Sutton. He graduated from GPHS in 1966 and is a graduate of Texas Tech University. Later he received his MBA from SMU.

Marshall is President and CEO of Grand Bank of Texas, Trustee for the Lena and Harry Turner Foundation, Board Member of the Quality of Life Foundation and a recipient of the Sam Winstead Award from the YMCA. Marshall Sutton has 3 children, Niki, Morgan and Whitney Sutton.

Larry S. Sutton has been in senior management with Texas Instruments Defense (Raytheon Defense) for 35 years. He has held a wide range of responsibilities in engineering and operations to include tactical intelligence, advanced radar, missile systems, and soldier weapon systems. Larry graduated from GPHS in 1968, graduated from Georgia Tech in 1972 and later earned an MBA from SMU. Larry's wife, Linda Brown Sutton works with the VP Controllers Office at SMU. Linda graduated from GPHS in 1969 and then in 1973 graduated from TCU and later earned an MBA from SMU. Their son Sam was born in November of 1981. He attended the Episcopal School of Dallas and later graduated from SMU with an MS in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Continued on page 4

GP HO

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Historical
Organization**

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Officers

Lynn Motley—President

Brian W. Bingham—VP

Carol Bell—Treasurer



Linda's parents are Howard and Alta Brown and are very active members of the GP community. Sam is now an engineer with Bell Helicopter.

Virginia "Ginny" Valentine Sutton Dell was born on Valentine's Day in 1952 and is the fifth child of Durwood and Josephine. She graduated from Grand Prairie High School in 1970 and attended Mountain View Jr. College the first semester it opened. She was working at Grand Prairie State Bank during high school when Durwood, who was on the Dallas Co. Community College Board, showed her the beautifully designed model of the Mountain View Campus that he had displayed in the bank lobby. That's when she decided that the friendly campus of Mountain View was right for her.

Ginny attended UTA, then later married her high school "Gopher" sweetheart, Charles Ross Dell, in 1972. Chuck sped through SMU and Southwestern Medical School in Dallas where he graduated in 1975 with his M.D.. He completed his medical training at Methodist Hospital in Dallas and began his family medical practice with Dr. Wm. Colip in Grand Prairie, in 1976 who at the time was his own family physician. They remained in practice together until Dr. Colip's retirement in 1986. In late 1986, Chuck and Ginny purchased his current office from descendants of the original owners, the Liggetts. The house was turned into a boarding house and, coincidentally, this is where Durwood rented a room when he first came to Grand Prairie.

When Durwood retired from banking, Chuck gave him his former room back. This is where he ran his Sutton Investment Co. until his death in 1998. The house is a historical landmark and Durwood's office remains just as he left it. Ginny has "volunteered" in Chuck's medical practice for ten years. In 1982 Ginny and Chuck were blessed with their first son, Hunter Ross Dell. Hunter was also a "Gopher" and graduated from GPHS in 2000. He then attended UTA where he graduated with honors in 2004. He continued his studies and graduated with a master's degree in criminal justice. He graduated valedictorian from the police academy in 2007. He now proudly wears the uniform of the Grand Prairie Police Department where he proudly serves in his hometown, Grand Prairie. In 1987 Chuck and Ginny were blessed with their second son, Chase Ross Dell, who at three months old, was diagnosed with Stickler's syndrome, a rare connective tissue disease. Chase was enrolled in many early childhood intervention programs beginning at age 5 months. He attended Dallas Services for Visually Impaired Children until his vision improved. He became a student in the GPSISD at age three at what is now Daniel's Elementary. He is a "people person", has a wonderful personality, and loves school! He too is a proud "Gopher" and will graduate in 2010 at age 22.

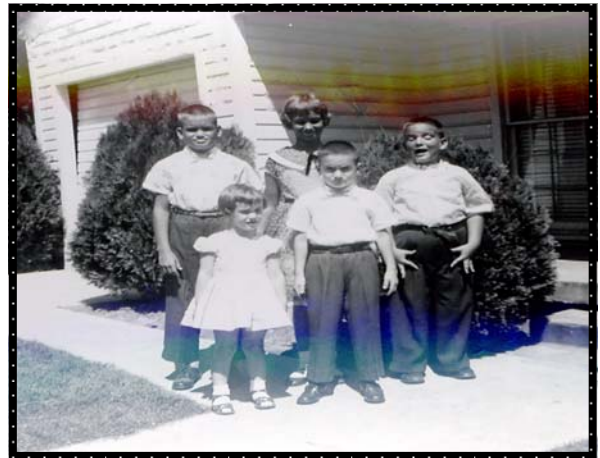
Past and Future generations will always look upon the Sutton Family as people of character, and people that have made our world a better place.

For more information on Sutton Family Tree

<http://www.suttonco.com/familytree>



**The Sutton Family
Durwood, Josephine, Craig and Angela**



**The Sutton Children : from left to Right,
Craig, Ginny, Angela, Larry and Marshall**