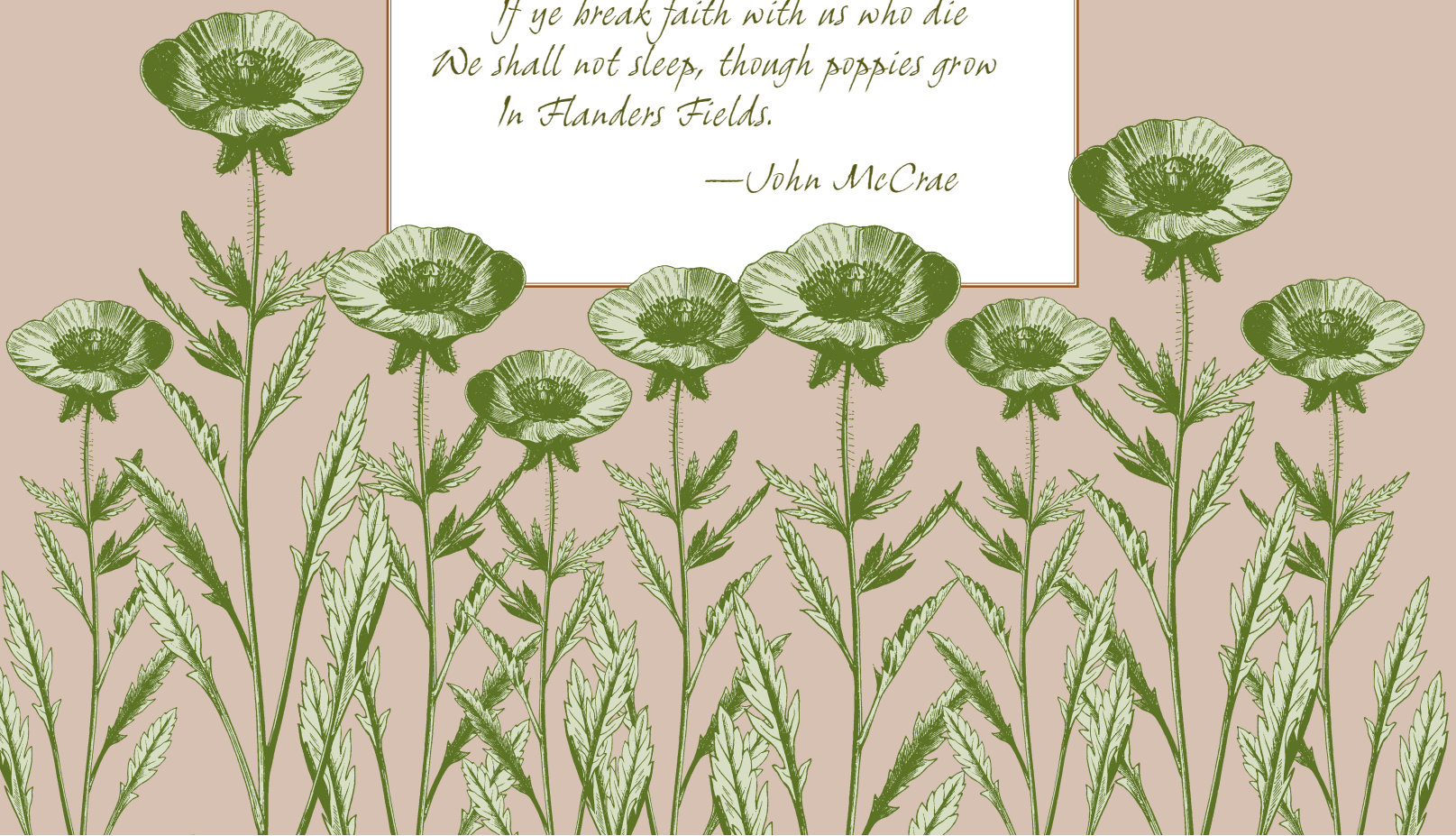
In Flanders Fields

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

—John McCrae



AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Oh beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain, For purple mountain majesties Above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed His grace on thee, And crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea! O beautiful for pilgrim feet Whose stern impassion'd stress A thoroughfare for freedom beat Across the wilderness. America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law. O beautiful for heroes prov'd In liberating strife, Who more than self their country loved, And mercy more than life. America! America! May God thy gold refine Till all success be nobleness, And ev'ry gain divine.

O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years

Thine alabaster cities gleam Undimmed by human tears. America! America! God shed His grace on thee, And crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea.

America the Beautiful, the patriotic song of choice here in Westlake, sung at Westlake Historical Preservation Society's annual meeting and sometimes on Memorial Day, also identified as Decoration Day and often led by our own Stephen Thornton, gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our allegiance to our nation. The last verse is rarely sung but the words charge us to think about the dreams of those first patriots who saw beyond the years of that first conflict that paid for our freedom, through Civil War, and all the global conflicts that embroil us today.

With such stirring musical reminders of America's past, it seems to me we ought to know a lot about Memorial Day, but, truth to tell, we do not. It isn't that we aren't reminded with a national holiday; it isn't that we don't have ceremonials everywhere from the national cemetery in Arlington, Virginia to the little cemeteries like our own in the Odd Fellows Cemetery. But ask anyone on the street and maybe a few can tell you something. In Westlake there are some who know first hand what Memorial Day means and paid their patriotic dues in military service during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq. There are those buried here that include veterans from the Civil War and World War I and their families who remember live in the vicinity.

We are inheritors of that patriot dream that saw beyond the years, and this column offers not only explanations and origins of Memorial Day, but personal writings detailing personal attachments to the day—even photographs that attest to the occasion. Some words are taken from an early issue of *The PathFinder*, Westlake's historical journal, some from printed sources, and some newly written for the occasion.

And, if you care to add some remembrances of your own, email to ksutter@westlake-tx.org

Joyce Gibson Roach

HISTORY OF AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

“The lyrics to this beautiful song were written by Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929) an instructor at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, after an inspiring trip to the top of Pikes Peak, Colorado, in 1893. Her poem, America the Beautiful first appeared in print in *The Congregationalist*, a weekly journal, on July 4, 1895. Ms. Bates revised the lyrics in 1904 and again in 1913. In addition to those changes in the words, it is notable that the poem was not always sung to the tune, “Materna,” as sung today, a tune composed by composed by Samuel A. Ward in 1882, nearly a decade before the poem was written. In fact, for two years after it was written it was sung to just about any popular or folk tune that would fit with the lyrics, with "Auld Lang Syne" being the most notable of those. The words were not published together with "Materna" until 1910, and even after that time, the tune to be used was challenged to some degree. For example, in 1926 the National Federation of Music Clubs held a contest to put the poem to new, reportedly "less somber," music, but no other entry was determined to be more acceptable. Before her death in 1929, Ms. Bates never indicated publicly which music she liked best, but it now appears likely that *America the Beautiful* will forever be associated with the tune we sing today.” (source: http://kids.nieh,nih,gov/lyrics/america.htm)

Reprinted from

The Pathfinder, Volume 2, Number 1, Summer 2003

Just after the invasion of Iraq.

The view from the Timbers ...

EDITOR'S PAGE

Arthur McWhirter

When I began to write, the redbud trees were in full bloom, wisteria swaged from the arbor, "armies clashed by night" and some were "lost in the hills away, far off from the gates of gold," as the old hymn, "The Ninety and Nine," notes. Now, as I finish, the Cross Timbers is green, the victory is as won as it can be, we bury some and rejoice to reclaim others. Life and death, loss and recovery, winter followed by springtime in Texas – life, on earth as it is, rolls on. This issue reflects that same continuation, moving on.

The beginning piece of this summer journal, marking the second year of publication, is about a cemetery, the Roanoke I.O.O.F. – Independent Order of Odd Fellows – from which no one moved on, literally at least. Figuratively, it was the last move to "higher ground," to the "great getting' up morning" and "the unclouded day." What lay beyond the grave was reunion and renewal – the highest notions of continuation on the highest level.

To those of you new to rural places and the customs associated with the past, let me acquaint you with information that cemeteries were the communal gathering places, the heart of communities, even more than church, dry goods store, mill or gin – about the only other places folks gathered. These centers catered to specialized crowds, but the graveyard, as it was also called, provided reason and place to come together as the family of man regardless of class. Class was a term without much meaning anyway – the pioneering experience was a great leveler.

Granted in times past, there were cemetery restrictions, some real, some hinted at. Blacks were not allowed burial privileges in some cemeteries of the Southern persuasion. Occasionally denominations got all tangled up in cemetery politics, but not often. Plots were nearly always family dominated where the clan could all be together, some containing ten or twelve gravesites. Family plots were known to be political – that is, who was laid next to whom and who was at somebody else's head or foot. But these were concerns for the living, not the dead.

At some point, in many communities, Memorial Day, sometimes referred to as Decoration Day, and Cemetery Work Day became entwined, occurring on the same Saturday or Sunday.

In an article from *Celebrations of Death* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), Anne Schiller noted that the "dead play a role in the continuity of communities;" that the "living need the dead if the culture is going to survive, so that to destroy its dead, deny its ancestors, sentences the culture itself to death." I doubt that early settlers entertained such sophisticated and thoughtful ideas about the deceased, but they did often create cemeteries as the first "place" even before a church or school.

A number of cemeteries began as burial sites for family members on family land. Bourland Cemetery, adjacent to Westlake but within the city limits of Keller, is such a site. Aurelius Delphus Bourland was a preacher and often away from home. After one trip,

he returned to find that the baby had died. Mrs. Bourland remembered that her husband had said when his time came he wanted to be buried on the hill beneath a certain cedar tree. Therefore, she buried the baby in that location. From that time on the spot became the burial site for others of the family as well as friends, some of whom had served in the Civil War – on both sides, North and South. In 1899 the site became a public burial place.

Frontier families living on acreage separated from others, sometimes by several miles, gathered according to their personal religious convictions, first in their own homes, but then to buildings designated as churches which they constructed themselves in concert with others of like mind. Often those churches marked the beginnings of settlements and villages. The church house, as it was sometimes called, was no more important than the cemetery close to the building. Being able to bury their loved ones in a central location must have offered a measure of comfort to strangers in a strange land. One of the most poignant passages in the Jonathan Blevins family saga, when they came to our vicinity along Bear Creek in 1873, is in recounting how the child of William and Louisa Tuttle Blevins died along the way and was buried beside the trail. A stranger who lived nearby shared the family's grief and comforted the parents with her promise to care for the tiny grave *(Blevins family history; Lyda White Collection)*

Tombstone of Elijah Homer Lay, alleged horse thief; photo by JGR.

A yearly event known as Cemetery Work Day, a time when the grounds were maintained by the families of those buried, was much the same at many local cemeteries all over America – certainly here. It was a time when the entire community became involved. Men brought the necessary tools to clean all the

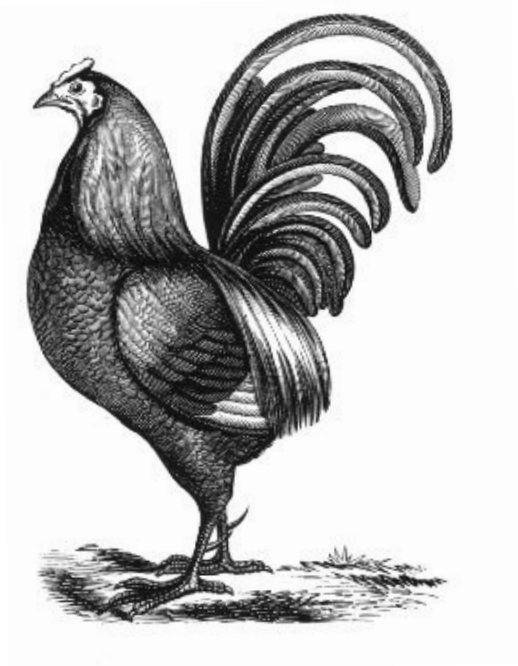
gravesites. Unused parts of the cemetery were plowed and the ground cleared of grass and low growth. Women brought baskets of food. An informal program of sorts was presented, giving rise to the phrase, "all day singing and dinner on the grounds." It was not, as you might suppose, a sad day, but a social occasion for the purpose of remembrance and renewal – moving on.

In the Civil War South, solemn recognition of military dead eventually came to be known as Memorial Day.

At some point, in many communities, Memorial Day, sometimes referred to as Decoration Day, and Cemetery Work Day became entwined, occurring on the same Saturday or Sunday. The date was, and still is, set by church groups according to their planning needs and may even include Reunion Day when church members who have moved away are notified and gather for food, fellowship and remembrance.

Such coming together may not even occur in the spring but rather in the summer or fall of the year in late October or November when Veterans Day used to be commemorated.

Most, but not all, such meetings happen at churches or cemeteries. Regardless of location you may be sure that there will be a program of some kind organized around a meal, sometimes a picnic or "covered dish" affair. There will certainly be singing, including old hymns, patriotic numbers or songs that recall the past. Words, whether grand oratory, speeches or remembrances from the crowd, also recall old times and old ways. There may be games for the children and the grown-ups, too. These occasions, no matter how they are arranged, have family, patriotism and acts of community citizenship at their core.



The Meaning of Memorial Day

by Frances Vick

Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. Originally known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves, it was first widely observed on May 30,1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers. By proclamation of General John A. Logan, Decoration Day was "designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit."

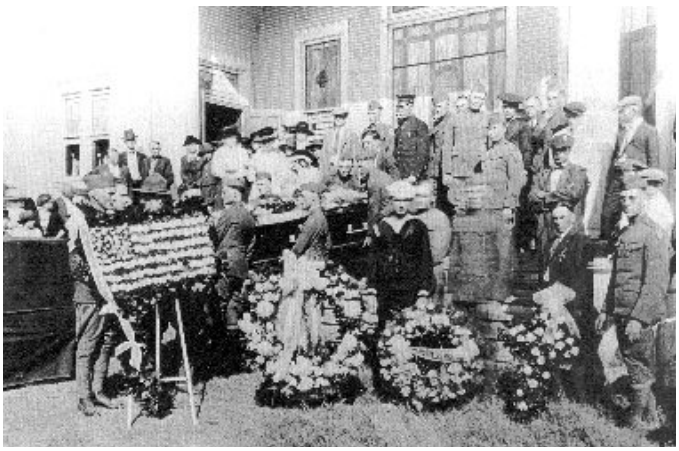


Photo of World War I funeral courtesy of Ruby Held. Her father, Robert Lee Palmer, is the soldier facing the casket just to the right of the American flag, which is made of flowers.

Women of the South had been honoring their dead by decorating graves before the end of the Civil War. By the late 1800s, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate Memorial Day. This tradition changed after World War I to honor all those who died in any of America's wars.

In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May. Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave by the 3d U.S. Infantry. It is customary for the president or vice-president to give a speech honoring the contributions of the dead and lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In 1968 Congress also changed the commemoration of Veterans Day, a day set aside to honor all veterans living and dead, from November 11 to the fourth Monday in October. November 11 was originally known as Armistice Day, the day the fighting stopped in World War I. In 1921 an unknown World War I American was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on a hillside overlooking Washington, D. C. After other wars were fought, Armistice Day was changed in 1954 to honor all veterans in all wars. Unknown Americans from World War II, Korean and Vietnam Wars joined their unknown brother from World War I. To honor these men, an Army honor guard, the 3d U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) keep vigil day and night.

Veterans in Roanoke I.O.O.F. Cemetery

Civil War: Frank "Poo" Stump

World War I: Claude W. "Buster" Fanning

World War II: James V. "Hymie" Carpenter, Kenneth Mitchell, Willie M. Mitchell, Beecher L. Roberts, Frank Lee Thompson, Jack York

Vietnam: Jimmie Jack Daniel, Al Lee Steele

My Memorial Days

by Frances Vick

There are three graves that lie together in Lake Jackson Restwood Cemetery that always carry two flags on Memorial Day. One belongs to my brother's grave and one belongs to my father's grave. There should be one on my mother's grave, too. Her sacrifice was as great.

I have my mother's copy of *Best Loved Poems of the American People*. It is both painful and uplifting to read through it and look at the notes she left on some of the poems. One of the most painful to read is "I Have A Rendezvous with Death," by Alan Seeger, where she has written, "The last poem I heard my son give, December 11, 1944." And she has added what my brother said after reciting it: "Woman, you didn't know I was an Alan Seeger man, did you?" He apparently was trying to prepare her for whatever might come when he went overseas and into action. And it did come, on May 9, 1945, in a bombing raid on a supposed kamikaze base, when ground fire brought down Crew 17, Patrol Bombing Squadron 102 in their PB4YI, with my brother Andy on board. He lies out there somewhere in the deep.

In *Bingen on the Rhine*, by Caroline Norton, "where the soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers," my mother has bracketed the following lines:

> *Tell my sister not to weep for me, and sob with drooping head,*
> *When the troops are marching home again with glad and gallant tread,*
> *But to look upon them proudly, with a calm and steadfast eye,*
> *For her brother was a soldier too, and not afraid to die.*

I have always assumed she meant for me to read that and act accordingly, which I have tried to do down through the years, but I find it harder to do so in my older years than in my younger. The tears come much easier now.

My mother died in 1958, at age fifty-three, thirteen years after my brother was shot down over Marcus Island in the South Pacific. She battled cancer from 1953 until her death, which my brother Pat says was really caused by a broken heart. I can't argue with him. However, it left the task to me to be the one who represented the family at different monument raisings and such in later years. True to the admonition to *not weep for me*, I carried out those functions to the best of my ability in my mother's stead.

When my father was approaching his death in 1977, he asked Pat to arrange a military funeral and said he wanted it to be a joint funeral since there had

Seaman First Class, Andy Brannen, Patrol Bombing Squadron 102.

never been one for Andy. My father had been a Marine in World War I and World War II, and although he was a school man through and through, having taught and been an administrator for over thirty-five years, he felt deeply about the Marine Corps. It also apparently bothered him that no funeral had ever been held for Andy although the tombstone had been erected which gave all the appropriate information.

There had been no funeral because the telegram that came said Andy was missing in action, although my mother knew from the beginning that he was gone. My father held out hope until the war was over in August that Andy had been captured and was a Japanese prisoner of war. I guess that by the time the final telegram came they thought it was too long after the fact to hold a service.

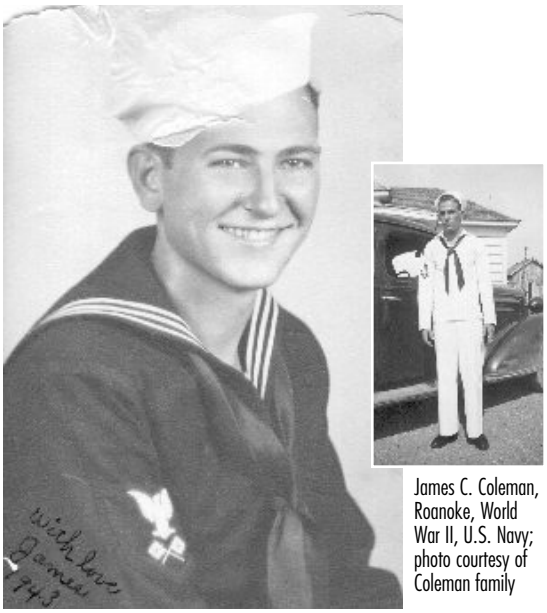
The funeral was to be arranged through the local American Legion Post, the one named for Andy. My brother made the mistake of asking our father if he wanted Marines to be the honor guard, which our father said yes to with alacrity. As Pat said, from then on our father told everyone to be sure to come to his funeral because it was going to be a real show, complete with Marines. As Pat later said, it took some doing getting the Marines there but after he told the colonel that our father always said that the Marines took care of their own, it wasn't long before he agreed to be there with an honor guard. As Pat writes: "The Marines showed up on time and, true to Dad's promise, they put on an outstanding show. The captain joined Mother and Andy in style, with a half-dozen sharp Marines as sideboys."

My father had received four beautifully printed commendations from the French government for service during World War I which I had had framed and displayed in our home where Dad was living during his last illness. We took those to the funeral and displayed them beside his casket. The honor guard was duly impressed that they were doing duty for a Marine who had served in five major battles during

Aleta McClendon Peterson, Roanoke, World War II, WAVES, U.S. Navy; photo courtesy of Conway Peterson

World War I and in Pershing's Honor Guard afterwards. I am impressed, too, after going to the sites of those battles and reading about them and seeing what he had to do. Blanc Mont was particularly hard to visit. That is where he had been wounded, and looking up at the chalk white hill and the distance between where the Marines jumped off and the top, it was nothing short of a miracle that Pat and I were standing there together looking at the ground over which our father had dodged bullets, years before we were born. He should never have lived through it at all. So many didn't.

His lieutenant, John Overton, a Yale track star he admired tremendously, had not made it. He had been killed at Soissons. My father wrote that the last he saw of Lieutenant Overton in the charge across the sugar beet field, "he was walking backward and trying to shout something back to us. He carried his cane in the left hand and a .45 pistol in the right. The din and roar was so terrific that I didn't have any idea what he was saying, but interpreted it from his expression to be some words of encouragement. He was soon down, killed." My father himself spent that day in a sunken road, far out in front of the other troops, unable to move without getting shot at by German guns. Late in the evening he was able to find some



James C. Coleman, Roanoke, World War II, U.S. Navy; photo courtesy of Coleman family

Marines in a ditch and crawled over to them. They were relieved sometime after midnight, so he again escaped death. John Overton is one of the ones he remembered on Memorial Day. I was always told that had I been a boy my name would have been John Overton, so he became a hero to me, too.

I remember my father wearing red poppies in his lapel in the old Memorial Days when those poppies were sold with the funds going to the disabled veterans, as I remember. The history says the poppy money was for the orphaned children and widows of the veterans, so perhaps that was so. In any case, the red poppies were prominent around the house during those years. I do not see them now and assume they are still around, but I am not sure where they are being sold.

My own personal memorial day, and my mother's, is May 9. On the Sunday closest to that date my mother always had red roses put on the church altar in honor of her son who had fallen in battle. I do, too, although I have added my father's and my mother's names to the remembrance along with Andy's. I expect my children will do the same as well. Although we lost Andy fifty-eight years ago he has never been forgotten, even by nieces and nephews who never knew him or their grandmother, who they never knew either. None of them have ever been forgotten nor the sacrifices they made. And particularly not on Memorial Day.

Frances Vick: Frances Brannen Vick, PhD, is a sixth generation Texan, retired Director of UNT Press, President of Texas State Historical Association, immediate past president of Texas Institute of Letters, Board Member of Texas Folklore Society and of Philosophical Society of Texas (organized in 1837), and in April 2009 recipient of the *Pro Bene Meritis* Award from the College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas at Austin.