

# Kerrville Genealogical Society Messenger

Newsletter of the Kerrville Genealogical Society, Kerrville, Texas

## President's Message

Will winter EVER be over? Whenever I saw the buzzards in our area, that was a sure sign that there would be one more cold snap and then winter was over! That has turned out not to be true. I even saw a mesquite tree leafing out but then the cold weather came back! It froze the tender little buds. And mesquite trees are not supposed to lie. The drabness of the days was and the grey of the skies was the gloominess that got to me and there was day after day of that. Isn't the sun supposed to shine every three days in Texas? Each time I open my front door and hope to see the sun, I am disappointed. But maybe SOON.

I am so sorry that we had to cancel last month's meeting. It was a disappointment to us also! The speaker that we so enthusiastically looked forward to hearing, Lisa McCormick, took ill the day before. Unable to find a replacement and with bad weather coming in, we thought it best to cancel. We will have her back at a different time and will let you know when that will be. If any member feels that they could speak at a minute's notice at any time, please let us know. We always are looking for a replacement who can fill in when that occurs.

We are still looking to fill our Outreach position. If you think you would like to take that position on the board, let us know. We know that some of you are new and hesitate because you think you do not know the duties of these offices, but let me assure you that we will train you and help you throughout the year. Please call me (210-313-4576) and talk to me about this. You CAN do this job! It is truly fun to be a part of this great society.

We also are looking for help before the meeting and after the meeting. If some of you would like to help us before the meeting with setting up chairs for social time, please let us know. We would greatly appreciate it. Especially some of the men!! Just come on in and join us with this chore. We need some of those strong folks to help. Barbara French does an outstanding job with the decorations but cannot do everything. Come and help her!

Volunteer for something with this society! Each organization needs volunteers and your talent could be just the one we so badly need. It takes a lot of good people to keep an organization running smoothly so look around and find one of our duties that sounds like you. See the benefits you get in your life!! Contact me!



**JOIN \* ATTEND \* VOLUNTEER**

See you at the meeting and bring a friend!

Your KGS President,

*Nancy McLarry*



### **Research Center & Library**

125 Lehmann, Suite 102  
Kerrville, TX 78028

### **2025 Kerrville Genealogical Society Board**

#### **President**

Nancy McLarry

#### **1st Vice President**

Jean Nunnally

#### **2nd Vice President**

Lora Stevens

#### **Secretary**

Carol Halley

#### **Treasurer**

Kathy Turley

#### **Grants & Fundraising**

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#### **Hospitality**

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#### **Membership Chair**

Janet Dugart

#### **Newsletter Editor & Website**

Leslie VanDrasek

#### **Outreach**

Open

#### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Sharon Ashby

#### **Connect with us:**

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## Upcoming Meetings

Meetings are held at 2:00 p.m.

Guadalupe Basin Natural  
Resource Center,  
Upper Guadalupe River Authority  
Auditorium  
125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville, TX  
78028

**April 16**

**Lanza Teague**

Digging Into History: Research in  
Action

Join Lanza Teague, Executive Director of the Kerr Arts & Cultural Center, as she reveals the fascinating process behind her history columns for the Kerrville Daily Times. Learn her creative methods for uncovering intriguing stories from newspapers, archives, and unconventional sources. Her research tips will benefit history enthusiasts and curious minds alike!

**May 21**

**Scott Atkinson**  
WikiTree

This is an opportunity to learn about a free online website that is building a world-wide family tree. What it represents, how to participate, privacy concerns, and how to build a tree.

## Preview to Fall Speakers

**September 17**

**Cari Taplin**  
Genealogy Grit

**October 15**

**Paula Rieker**  
711 Ranch

**November 19**

**Lisa McCormick**  
Schreiner Logan Library  
Resources

## Membership News

Janet Dugart, Membership Chair

We currently have 75 members. If members did not renew before March 31, their membership was dropped and they no longer will receive this newsletter informing them of upcoming meetings and informational articles. Contact Janet Dugart about renewing.

**Please welcome our new members:**

Scott Atkinson, Stephanie Castro, Becky Gilliland, Gloria Louk, Lloyd Shenberger.

## On the Shelves at KGS Research Center & Library



Lora Stevens, 2nd Vice President  
New Books on the Bookshelves

*Digging Up Bones - The Village of Middletown Volume I* by Gregory James Pasley (Illinois)

*Water Under The Bridge – Third Edition – A History of Van Buren Township* by Cathy S. Horste and Diane F. Wilson (Michigan)

*Bruton Parish Churchyard – A guide with map* (Virginia)

*Hemphill County History 1887-1985* (Texas)

*Descendants of John Bixler (1823-1903)* by Orville Bixler Hoy

*Toward the Setting Sun – A journey into the American Past* by Douglas Whitney Ward

We also received about 30 resource books to aid in research. These included two books to aid in German research and a book of Russian maps.

We would like to give our appreciation to all the donors who help expand our library.

**Next KGS Messenger Issue:**  
July 1, 2025

**Deadline for submissions:**  
June 15, 2025  
Send to: [lmvandrasek@gmail.com](mailto:lmvandrasek@gmail.com)

**Address changes:**  
If you need to make a change to your e-mail or postal address, let us know by e-mail or phone.

## Treasurer's Report

Kathy Turley, Treasurer

The month of January 2025 our checking account had a starting balance of \$4,413.39. Income for January and February was \$1,825.37 which includes membership dues, personal donations and interest.

Our expenses for January and February were \$1,738.38 which includes rent for both the Research Center &

Library and Auditorium, Internet/Telephone, Printer Ink/Toner, Texas State Genealogical Society Membership, and Website Subscriptions, leaving a balance in our checking account at the end of February of \$4,500.38.

## Finding Your Ancestor in an Old Soldiers Home

By Sharon Ashby

Are you looking for an ancestor who served as a soldier or sailor but don't know what happened to him or her? Have you considered looking for records in Old Soldiers or Sailors homes?

Congress first approved construction of a national home for disabled Navy veterans at the Philadelphia Naval Yard and began accepting residents in 1834. The first U.S. military old soldiers' home was established in 1851 located in Washington, D.C. and originally known as the Military Asylum. The government increased the number of National Military Homes in 1865 after the Civil War. Veterans were eligible for admittance if they were honorably discharged, had served in regular, volunteer, or militia forces, and were disabled or unable to earn a living. In the 1920s the federal government ran 17 veterans homes that in the 1930s became part of the Department of Veteran Affairs. Some of the national homes have alphabetical rosters of soldiers providing name, rank, company, length of service, which war, pension rate, birthplace, age when admitted, and status which may include death date. Find some resources at: [www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/National\\_Homes\\_for\\_Disabled\\_Soldiers](http://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/National_Homes_for_Disabled_Soldiers).

But, most old soldier homes were run by state governments with 43 states operating 55 homes between 1865 and 1933. They accommodated military veterans or their widows or orphans. The registers for these state soldiers homes have an abundance of valuable genealogical information about the residents. These ledgers give military

background such as enlistment, rank, company, regiment, and discharge. The domestic section includes the veteran's birthplace, age, height, religion, occupation, residence, marital status, and name and address of nearest relative. Also included may be rate of pension, date admitted, discharge or death date, and burial information. Most of the homes had a cemetery on the grounds. To find links to records digitized by FamilySearch or on the internet in archives, other registers, or cemeteries, etc., go to: [www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United\\_States\\_Military\\_Old\\_Soldiers\\_Home\\_Records](http://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Military_Old_Soldiers_Home_Records).

Scroll down to the table titled Locating Old Soldiers Home Records Prior to WWII. You can also find this wiki page by choosing Research Wiki under the Search tab on the home page of familysearch.org. Then, in the search box on the wiki page type "United States Military Old Soldiers Home Records". Many other military related links are listed in the left column and scrolling down below the table are links to topics related to Soldier and Sailor Homes, Union Veterans Homes, Confederate Homes, and more.

Additionally, the U.S. Sanitary Commission provided 18 homes, 11 lodges, and one "rest" during the Civil War for Union soldiers discharged, disabled, or furloughed as temporary protection providing food, lodging, and care. See [www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United\\_States\\_Sanitary\\_Commission](http://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Sanitary_Commission).

## A Thank-You for a Generous Donation

By Jeannie Berger

It's that time of year when hummingbirds begin to make their annual appearance in the Hill Country and many of you will be getting ready to hang out your feeders for our hungry little visitors. On that note, here are a couple of questions for you:

Question 1: Did you know it was a World War I veteran and patient at Kerrville's VA Hospital, often known then as "Legion," who may have been the first to invent the type of hanging hummingbird feeder you're probably familiar with?

Question 2: Did you know that another World War I veteran and patient at Legion purchased an eleven-acre tract of land near the hospital grounds on which he built a studio and stone fountain and designated ten of those acres as a bird sanctuary?

KGS recently received a very generous donation from some new friends, Marion and Harriet Lewis.

The Lewises are hummingbird feeder history enthusiasts and are serving as fact-finders to assist with the publication of a book on that very subject. They hoped to discover the identity of the patient who donated the land on which the bird sanctuary was located. Among the folks he reached out to was KGS, and we were able to locate information on the person in question: Paul John Kelly, artist, World War I veteran, patient at Legion and citizen of Kerrville.

Paul's biography is now available in the family files at the KGS Research Center & Library.

Our friend and fellow historian Joe Herring, Jr., compiled the story of the inventor of the hummingbird feeder, William R. Sullivan, which you can find on his blog from May 30, 2024: [Kerr History 101: What's the Link Between Kerrville and Hummingbird Feeders?](#)

More information about the Lewises' project is on their website, [www.tejashummer.com](http://www.tejashummer.com).

Thank you, Marion and Harriet, for your support of KGS. We're glad we were able to assist you in your research. We're looking forward to the final product!

## **The Damnboat**

By Nancy Polk McLarry

I have just stopped crying for about 30 minutes after reading my brother-in-law's book about his time served in Viet Nam during the war. He never talked about it and even my Dad could not pull him into it while spending time alone with him. He just came back from that terrible war and picked up his life and went on. Dick Dutnell was my sister's husband. We both met him when the boys from the Naval Academy and West Point graduated and joined the different services. These boys would be stationed at Moore Air Field in the Rio Grande Valley, outside of McAllen, Texas to learn to fly. At the time, my family lived there.

Moore Air Field was the base for soldiers during World War II. The Army Air Corp became the U.S. Air Force and these young men became the first to be enlisted and just before the Viet Nam War started. It was a training place for new pilots. To welcome them, the city invited them to an open house to meet some of the young ladies of the community. Janey and I met several of them that evening and, of course, several of the girls began to date them.

At the time, I was attending college in Edinburg and met Dick along with another man in his class. I had invited them to a dance at the college that Saturday night and he ask me to see if I could get him a date for his buddy. I introduced him to Janey that night. We all had a great time and Janey and Dick started dating.

As it turned out, she married Dick about 6 months after I was married. My husband was in the Army and hers was in the Air Force. We would never be

stationed together so we went our separate ways but saw each other whenever we could...usually it was when we could all go down to McAllen to see our family.

When we learned that Dick had gotten orders for Viet Nam, we were packing to move to Japan. My husband was to work at the Hospital Headquarters in Zama, Japan where the wounded soldiers from Viet Nam were sent. Fate had it so that we would not be together again for many years. Of course we kept in close touch and knew the news from each house as it was happening.

Dick was sent to Viet Nam as a pilot. My sister went back to McAllen to live while he was gone. We knew that Janey had a young lady living with her who helped her with the kids and keeping the house. She also had help from my parents when she needed them.

All this time, Dick was in Viet Nam with life threatening ordeals that none of the family knew about. Not until I read his book were we aware of all the terrible things that went on in that part of the world. I knew it was not a good thing since, by then, we were stationed in Japan and I worked as a volunteer in the hospital for a time...bringing coffee and magazines and just talking to the wounded. It was very heart-breaking and was very sad! We all knew war was a terrible thing.

One day the news came on about a man who had been rescued in the jungle and was coming to the hospital there in Japan where we were stationed. He was a neighbor boy whom I had grown up with and

lived behind us. They did not let anyone in and I could not welcome him home. His name was James N. Rowe (Nicky; we always knew him as Nicky.) He had been in a cage all those years, we learned later. They had kept him there for 5 years. When he escaped, he had to kill his captor whom he had made friends. He even had helped him a little. When the helicopter scooped down to pick him up the men inside nearly shot him thinking he was Viet Cong but the pilot said, "Don't shoot that man. The commander wants a prisoner." (He had a thick black beard and the Vietnamese don't have beards.) "This man is an American." His beard had saved his life. He was pulled into the helicopter rattling off his name, rank, and serial number. War is hell!

(Note: Nicky was assassinated several years later in the Philippines; yes, he went back to serve his country!)

Back in the states, my sister, Janey was in bad trouble. She had asthma all her life and this time her lung collapsed. They notified her husband and he was sent home. She nearly lost her life so Dick was allowed to stay home and take care of their three very young children. He was not sent back to war. After several months of care, she was back but suffered from asthma the rest of her life.

All our kids grew up and we all went our separate ways, moving around the world, and living life like others. I picked up Dick's book that he wrote many years ago and many years after the War. I spent

the day reading it again! Yes, I remember the "damnboat" that they traded her car for and that they took to Florida, Dick's assignment for training to fly missions in Viet Nam. He drove it to work there to save gas and leave the car for Janey and the kids. The "damnboat" gave them trouble whenever they traveled, when they vacationed, and any time they used it. The whole family always called it the "damnboat".

That's the thing that I started to cry about...the "damnboat". We had a lot of fun in that thing. All my kids learned to water ski with it. We were always happy and laughing and watching the kids who enjoyed their cousins around that "damnboat". And then I thought about the people I was writing about in this story: my Mother and Father are both gone now; Dick died in McAllen several years ago with Alzheimer's (we all think it was Agent Orange), and my sister, Janey was laid to rest next to him at the Air Force Academy after several years of Alzheimer's. I am the last to remember this part of history that I write about...except our kids. Our kids live everywhere: Colorado...Oklahoma...Seattle...Bandera...Boerne...Kerrville...and we all have our happy memories! BUT I sometimes wonder what ever happened to the "damnboat".

Note: One week after Dick was sent back to the states, his plane, Puff, the Magic Dragon, was shot down by the Viet Cong and all aboard were killed. Dick always felt that if he had been there, he could have saved them. He carried that guilt with him always.

## **Kerrville Genealogy Society Proves To Be Big Help In Family Search**

from Kerrville Daily Times Letter to the Editor

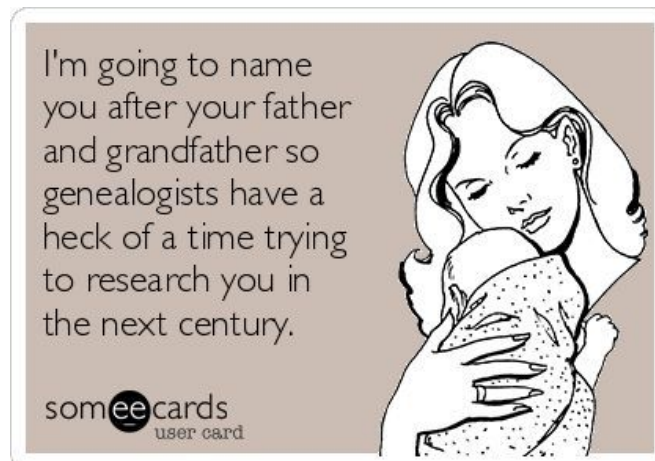
*We are fortunate and thankful for Mr. Sinderson's kind words recently sent to the Kerrville Daily Times!*

"I would like to offer my kudos to Kerrville's Genealogy Society whose library is conveniently located on Lehmann Street. Our small town is fortunate in having such a viable organization with knowledgeable and friendly volunteers to aid in one's free family-search.

"In changing times, it is socially assuring to know one's family roots. I recently searched for my

family's maternal history at the local facility and found they had been pioneers in Houston's development in the early 1900s, coming from Germany and Prussia. Our region has many German heritage families as well as French ones."

Richard Sinderson, Kerrville



# KERRVILLE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## Membership Application

New     Renewal

**Membership Year: January 1 - December 31, 2025**

Membership is open to all individuals 18 years and older, libraries, and societies and is pro-rated based on date of application.

**Primary Member Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zipcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (home):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (cell):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary Member Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zipcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (home):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (cell):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

I consider myself:     Beginner     Intermediate     Advanced

I would be willing to:     Contribute to newsletter     Serve on a committee     Bring refreshments  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Type of membership:     Student    \$10.00    New members and former members (if more than a full year) may join at a pro-rated fee:  
 Individual    \$25.00  
 Family    \$30.00    January 1 - June 30 full-price membership  
 Patron    \$75.00    July 1 - December 31 half-price Individual and Family memberships  
 Benefactor    \$500.00  
 Donation    \$\_\_\_\_\_ If you can, please consider a higher level of support.

Kerrville Genealogical Society is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization under the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). The Society relies on donations and membership support.

### SEND COMPLETED FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO:

Kerrville Genealogical Society  
125 Lehmann Drive, Suite 102  
Kerrville, TX 78028

**For KGS use**    Date: \_\_\_\_\_    Check #: \_\_\_\_\_    Cash: \_\_\_\_\_    ( Send receipt for cash)

Kerrville Genealogical Society  
125 Lehmann Drive, Suite 102  
Kerrville, TX 78028

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE