

## The Fielder Flash

Arlington Historical Society  
December 2024 Newsletter



### Our Venues

**Fielder Museum** | 1616 W. Abram Street  
**Knapp Heritage Park** | 201 W. Front Street  
**Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds** | 600 W. Arkansas Lane

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### A note from the editor



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Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that another year has come and gone. This month's newsletter features a few holiday photos from Knapp and information about AHMG getting adopted. Plus, we have an article about Pearl Harbor, a look back at the Arlington Colts becoming high school football champions in 1951, and a tribute to Arlington Police Officer Jillian Smith. Our Upcoming Events feature the Texas Author Book Club, which resumes on January 16.

### Upcoming Events

- **January 16**—Texas Author Book Club resumes with "The Gates of the Alamo" by Stephen Harrigan; Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM
- **February 20**—Texas Author Book Club continues with "Forget the Alamo" by Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlinson, and Jason Stanford; Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM
- **March 20**—Texas Author Book Club continues with "Tears of the Truffle Pig" by Fernando A. Flores; Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM

## **Arlington Historical Society News**

### **Happy Holidays from Knapp Heritage Park**

Knapp Heritage Park looked festive for the holiday season! Did you get a chance to see it? Knapp also hosted some holiday events, including the Kringle Village and Front Street Christmas Market.



### **AHMG adopted by sorority**

The DFW chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority recently adopted the Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds as one of their community service projects. The group began by placing holiday wreaths on graves at the cemetery. We're looking forward to their partnership!



*Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority at Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds*

## **Local History news**

### **Pearl Harbor attacks felt in Arlington**

Few dates in world history are more significant than December 7, 1941. In his famous speech, President Franklin D. Roosevelt referred to it as "*a date which will live in infamy.*" Indeed, the bombing of Pearl Harbor changed history and the trajectory of countless lives.

Even though Pearl Harbor is over 3,000 miles from Arlington, our small town of about 4,200 immediately felt the effects.

Francis C. Heath and George A. Coke, Jr. were young men from Arlington who died in the Pearl Harbor attacks on December 7, 1941. Ultimately, Arlington lost 48 young men in World War II, a significant amount for a small town. Of course, small towns across the country had similar stats.

### Francis C. Heath (1919-1941)



Francis Colston Heath was born in Arlington on October 1, 1919. He graduated from Arlington High School, where he played football. He later enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, desiring steady employment and wanting to learn a trade.

Private First Class Francis C. Heath was aboard the USS Nevada when the attack started. Although the ship was able to get underway, a torpedo and a barrage of bombs forced the vessel aground to avoid sinking. Fifty men died in the attack, including Heath, age 22. He was the first confirmed World War II casualty of Tarrant County. Burial occurred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, with Heath posthumously receiving the Purple Heart Medal.

### George A. Coke, Jr. (1923-1941)

George Anderson Coke, Jr. was born in Arlington on August 6, 1923. He was a Boy Scout and graduated from Arlington High School, where he was a boxer and played football. He joined the Navy right out of school.



Seaman 1st Class George A. Coke, Jr. was aboard the USS Oklahoma when torpedoes struck her. The ship capsized, killing 429 crew members, including Coke, age 18. While officials initially recovered his remains, they were unidentifiable at the time. Burial occurred alongside other persons unknown in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

Decades later, though, through advances in forensics, Cook's remains were able to be positively identified. Family members decided to bring him home. In 2017, over 75 years after his death, a public memorial was held for Coke at the First United Methodist Church of Arlington. His remains were reinterred at Parkdale Cemetery with full military honors.

### Arlington Colts | High School Football Champions in 1951



On December 22, 1951, the Arlington Colts won the 2A High School Football Championship.

The championship game featured the Arlington Colts against Waco's La Vega Pirates, with 7,168 fans watching at Baylor Stadium. Both teams hoped for an early Christmas gift in the form of a victory.

The teams were tough and comparatively matched. La Vega was coming off a season where they averaged over 35 points a game and had 13 straight



wins. Arlington also had an impressive year, averaging nearly 25 points a game. Their only loss occurred mid-season against the Terrell Tigers.

While many anticipated a high-scoring shootout, the defense (and the strong, late-December wind) proved to be a deciding factor. Neither team could complete a pass, with both having to rely on the running game.

The game's only score occurred in the 2nd quarter. The underdog Colts marched down the field, led by rushes from all-state fullback Rusty Gunn. Their efforts led to Gunn plowing through the defense for a 3-yard touchdown run. Not only did he score the game's only touchdown—and kick the extra point—but he also rushed for 80 of the team's 181 yards and was a menace on defense.



Although La Vega threatened to score several times, the Colts' defense held on. The final score was 7-0, with Arlington defeating La Vega for their first and only High School Football Championship. What a moment that must have been for those young men.

The championship roster included Fred Cook, Harold Hill, Leon Duffey, Larry Hufford, Grover Cribbs, Billy Joe Walker, Jim Harris, Kent Cherry, Pete Murray, Raymond Glasgow, Bob Kirby, Larry Davault, and Rusty Gunn, coached by Mayfield Workman and Larry Mildren.



*Page 3 photo: Fielder Museum Colt exhibit*

*Page 4 photos: Rusty Gunn scoring the touchdown, several Colts celebrating the victory in the locker room, and other parts of the Fielder Museum Colt exhibit*

**Officer Jillian Smith | End of Watch: December 28, 2010**



Jillian Michelle Smith was born on December 18, 1986, in Arlington. From a young age, she wanted to be a police officer.

Jillian graduated from Arlington's Seguin High School in 2005. She received her bachelor's degree in criminology and criminal justice from UTA in August 2009. Jillian joined the Arlington Police Department in February 2010 and graduated from the academy later that year. She had recently completed her field training when tragedy struck.

Officer Smith responded to a call from a woman who wanted to report an earlier domestic violence incident. The suspect, the woman's estranged ex-boyfriend, had left the premises. He returned while Officer Smith interviewed the victim, later identified as Kimberly

Deshay Carter, age 29. The man shot both women before turning the gun on himself. All three died. Carter's 11-year-old daughter was also present, but Officer Smith heroically shielded her from harm and enabled her to escape.

The community held a candlelight vigil in Jillian's honor. Her funeral was held at Mount Olive Baptist Church and filled with mourners—family, friends, church members, area police officers, and elected officials. Many more were present who couldn't fit inside the church's sanctuary. She was buried at Moore Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Arlington.

Throughout the police academy, Smith worked hard and impressed her training officers. She dreamed of becoming a police officer to protect and serve her community. The Arlington native was an all-American girl remembered for her bright and beautiful smile, cheery attitude, and determination to serve her community.

Officer Smith, age 24, was the eighth Arlington Police Officer lost in the line of duty—also the first and only woman. Tragically, she was the second lost in 2010, as Officer Craig Story died in a traffic accident in January. We remember their service to Arlington with gratitude.