



PRESERVATION NEWS

November 3rd 2016

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LXXVII

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Wichita County Archives

720 Indiana Avenue

Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

Telephone 940-763-0020

Hours of Operation: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10:00am - 12:00pm & 1:00pm - 4:00pm

E-mail Address - archives@co.wichita.tx.us

http://www.wichitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/

AGENDA FOR MEETING

Lunch at 11:30am Meeting 12:00 Noon - 1:00pm

- | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1. Call to Order | 2. Introduction of Guests | 3. Business | 4. Program | 5. Adjourn |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|

Monthly Meeting: Location: Luby's. Price for the luncheon is **\$10.00** each which includes: one meat, salad, vegetables, drink & dessert. Please bring the correct change. **RESERVATIONS NO LONGER NEEDED**

PROGRAM

Bryce Blair - Researching the History of The
Wichita Falls Fire Department

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

Veteran's Day recognizes men and women who have served their country by military service. Many times their lives were changed forever.

Al was born December 20, 1923 somewhere in Southern Oklahoma. He really didn't know where. Times were tough in rural Oklahoma in the 1920s. It got worse after the Depression hit in 1929. Al's parents finally had to make a decision that no parent should ever have to make. They left their two children, Al and his younger sister, at the Tipton's Children's Home in Tipton, Oklahoma. Al's Dad told him to watch after his sister. Al promised he would. Al was a good boy.

Times were tough at the Home. Al remembered that many meals were boiled wheat, donated by farmers, with a little milk and sugar on it. One night Al snuck out and got two watermelons from a neighboring field. He put them on the front steps. The next day the headmaster told the children to wave and smile at all the farmers who drove by because one of them had left them some watermelons. Al had taken care of his friends. Al was a good boy.

At age 13, Al was sent to Matador, Texas. He attended school in the daytime, played athletics, and worked at night. His job was at The Fish Boarding House. He washed dishes, did laundry, and cleaned rooms. They liked him. Al was a good boy.

When war broke out, Al joined the Navy. He felt an obligation to serve a country that had given him opportunity. Al was a good man. He was trained as a side door man on a PBY Rescue Plane. His plane and crew ended up off the shore at Iwo Jima. Many men ended up in the sea. Al and his crew picked them up out of the water. One day, while Al and his crew were picking up men, a Japanese Zero appeared and began strafing the men. Al knew what his job was. As the Zero began a new run of shooting, Al manned the side door machine gun. The plane approached, shooting at the

plane, Al in the side door, and the men in the water. Al waited and, when the Zero moved to fly by, Al jacked a shell into the Browning machine gun. When the plane was alongside, Al got a good look at the pilot. He was young, probably about Al's age. Al had no choice. He placed the circular sight on the plane, pulled the trigger, and sent the young pilot into eternity. Al had done his job. Al was a good man.

After the war Al enrolled in college on the G.I. Bill. One day a letter arrived from the Navy. Al had been awarded the Navy Cross. He was to be in New Orleans on a certain date. Al wrote back that he had no money and could not afford to miss classes. They mailed him his Medal.

After the war, Al served as High School Principal in Balmorhea and Meadows. In 1960, Al moved to Electra where he served as Elementary Principal for 25 years. He loved the children and they loved him. Al had his priorities right. He served his God, his family, his country, and his job. Al was a good man.

He attended the Iwo Jima reunions a few times, but said he always felt out of place. There were lots of heroes there, but Al was a simple man who had simply done his job. Al was a good man.

Al ended up in a care facility for many years, his body ravaged by Parkinson's disease. When he was confined to a wheelchair and could not talk, he would lift apples from the little ladies trays, wink at them and smile. They liked Al. Al was a good man. Al Durbin passed away eight years ago. Heaven got a good man.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Name the Veterans Day "11"s.

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Texas Historical Marker Application Period: September 1st to November 15th.

Museum of North Texas History News

November 19th - City Lights; opening of Christmas Exhibit "Toys and Trains"

November 5th
2016 Veterans Day Parade
Downtown Wichita Falls

2017
100th Anniversary of United States
Entrance into WWI

