



Arlington Historical Society

NEWSLETTER
APRIL / MAY 2020

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Arlington, TX 76013-1709 817-460-4001

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Facebook: "Fielder House Museum"

Hours

Fielder House: Tue - Sat 10 am - 4 pm or by appt.

Knapp Heritage Park: Sat & Sun 1 pm - 4 pm

**TEXAS WRITERS' BOOK
CLUB**

The Arlington Historical Society and the Arlington Public Library are pleased to announce a new program, the Texas Writers' Book Club, to introduce the community to classic works of Texas literature. The club is the brainchild of well-known local historian and journalist O.K. Carter (author of *Caddos, Cotton and Cowboys: Essays on Arlington*); Carter has selected the titles and will lead the discussions. Please note that used inexpensive copies of all books are available for purchase from online sources; some may also be borrowed from the Arlington Public Library.

We had intended to launch the club on April 21, with monthly meetings to take place on the third Tuesday of every month except July, August and December. Given current circumstances, we are not announcing the schedule until we can be sure that it is safe to meet. However, we want to provide you with the initial five books on the reading list, in the order they will be discussed, so that you can get started reading.

1. J. Frank Dobie's *The Longhorns* (nonfiction) – Dobie is considered the dean (continued on p. 4)

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From the Editor
Denise Youngblood

Three weeks ago, COVID-19 arrived in Texas, and "social distancing" entered our vocabulary. Eagerly anticipated events like the dedication of the WWII memorial in downtown Arlington had to be postponed, with other events, like the April 14 "Arlington on Tap" presentation, cancelled altogether. The AHS is delaying the launch of a new program, the Texas Writers' Book Club, which we had planned to start in April; the Arlington Garden Club Plant Sale on the Fielder House grounds is "TBA"; the list goes on. Fielder House is temporarily closed to comply with health guidelines; we'll let you know when we reopen.

I hope the April/May issue of the newsletter provides a welcome distraction from the crisis. O.K. Carter (continued on p.5)



THIS MONTH IN TEXAS HISTORY

THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO

APRIL 21, 1836

BY JANNETTE WORKMAN

The Battle of San Jacinto was the final military event of the Texas Revolution. The Commander of the Texas Army, Sam Houston, was in Gonzales when he heard on March 11, 1836, that the Alamo had fallen into the hands of the Mexicans. He believed that he had no other choice but to retreat eastward with his army because Santa Anna was moving swiftly from San Antonio.

Santa Anna's purpose was to capture the Texas government, destroy any Texan in his path, and capture Sam Houston and the Texas Army. As Houston retreated, his army was growing rapidly, and it bought time for the army to gain experience and to learn military tactics. While Houston was retreating, Colonel James Fannin and his troops were defending Goliad. On March 20, 1836, Colonel Fannin surrendered with the understanding that he and his men would be released to return to the United States, but Santa Anna ordered the execution of these prisoners on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836.

Sam Houston did not reveal his strategy for the battle to his men but in his speech he said, "Remember the Alamo!" "Remember Goliad!" which became the battle cry for the Texas Army. The Texas Army arrived at the San Jacinto Battlefield on the morning of April 20, 1836.

The topography of the San Jacinto Battlefield played a big part in Texas's victory. The field was bounded on three sides by water and consisted of open prairie with tall grasses, two miles wide. Houston selected a grove of live oaks for his soldiers so that the trees could provide ideal cover for them.

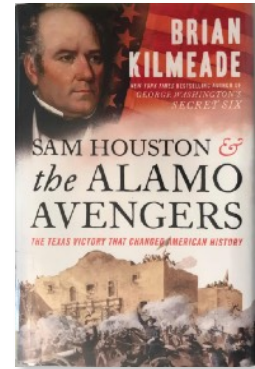
Santa Anna made camp under the high ground overlooking a marsh about three-fourths of a mile from the Texas camp. There was a low rise that divided the prairie. On Thursday afternoon, April 21, 1836, both sides prepared for the battle. The Texas Army was eager to avenge the deaths at the Alamo and at Goliad. Santa Anna and his men were taking a siesta, and it seemed that no Mexicans were standing sentinel. The rise between the armies helped mask Houston's army. Houston had a simple battle plan. At four o'clock Houston raised his sword and ordered, "Forward!" Most of the Mexicans were completely surprised. Behind the Mexican lines, chaos and confusion reigned. Houston's war cries were, "Remember the Alamo!" "Remember Goliad!" as the Mexican soldiers were crying, "Me no Alamo! Me no Goliad!" claiming they were not at the Alamo or at Goliad. It was a one-sided rout and the Texans had won the battle in just eighteen minutes. The Texans had avenged the deaths at the Alamo and at Goliad and had won freedom from Mexico.

Santa Anna disappeared during the battle and search parties were sent out to find him. They discovered him hiding in the grass, dirty and wet and dressed as a common soldier. Santa Anna had taken the clothing from one of his own dead soldiers and put these clothes on top of his military uniform. The search party did not recognize him until his own soldiers addressed him as "El Presidenté!" "El Presidenté!" Santa Anna was taken prisoner and on May 14, 1836, he and (continued on p. 7)

BOOK REVIEWS ON TEXAS HISTORY

by Denise Youngblood

Brian Kilmeade, *Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers: The Texas Victory That Changed American History* (New York: Sentinel, 2019).



Television and radio personality Brian Kilmeade, host of “Fox and Friends” and “The Brian Kilmeade Show,” would not seem a likely author of a new history on the Texas Revolution, as he is neither a historian nor a Texan. He has, however, written three previous works of popular history (on George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson), co-authored with Don Yaeger. *Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers*, a fast-paced, solidly researched tribute to the Texas founders, is his first solo effort.

Kilmeade’s goal in this book is not to provide new information about the events of 1836; he’s read (and synthesized) the most important published sources but hasn’t done any original research. Rather, he seeks to make the case that Sam Houston was a remarkable historical figure whose exploits and achievements deserve to be much more widely known than they are in the country at large. In Kilmeade’s view, although the Alamo and its martyrs still resonate most strongly in the popular imagination, Sam Houston was the true hero of the Texas Revolution and therefore, a man who should be remembered for more than the city named in his honor (however important that city has become). Kilmeade makes this point very effectively through his clear and compelling narrative account of the military engagements of 1836.

Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers has four main strengths. First, Kilmeade is really good at describing what actually happened at the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto with just

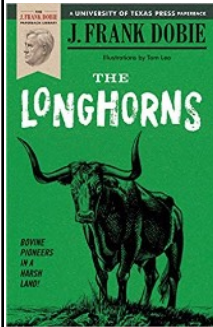
the right amount of detail, accounts supported by simple, but very useful maps that set out the positions of the two armies. Second, he skillfully highlights the bickering and divided loyalties among the “Texians” that threatened the very survival of the revolution. Third, he demonstrates that demythologizing the characters and motivations of “larger-than-life” politicians and soldiers doesn’t make them less heroic; in my view, understanding what drove William B. Travis, James Bowie, and David Crockett, not to mention Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin, makes them *more* heroic, not less. It’s a reminder that they were real people with complex (often troubled) lives who aspired to change the course of history at a time when honor meant something. Fourth, Kilmeade makes it clear that the Anglo settlers were not alone in opposing Santa Anna’s despotic and cruel rule; some Hispanics also joined the Texan forces and as importantly, there were Mexican officers who rebelled against Santa Anna’s savage reprisals against POWs, especially at Goliad, but also the Alamo.

I came away from this book with a much better understanding of Sam Houston as an iconic figure in Texas history. As Kilmeade shows, Houston was being pressured from all sides to engage the Mexican forces before he was ready even though he alone among the rebel leaders had significant military experience (in the War of 1812). Houston was “commanding” a makeshift army of men who

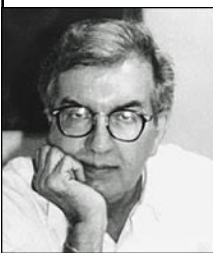
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(Book Club, from p.1)

of Texas nonfiction literature. He was born on a ranch in Live Oak County in 1888, the



ranching heritage being a major influence on his character and writing. He joined the University of Texas faculty in 1914 and quickly became a prolific writer of things Texan. His first book, *Vaquero of the Brush Country* (the book's real-life protagonist sees his world changed by barbed wire), published in 1929, was the first of more than 30 books and established him as a spokesman of Texas and southwestern culture. *The Longhorns* is typical of Dobie's work. The Texas Longhorn made more history than any other breed of cattle the world has known. These wiry, intractable beasts were themselves pioneers in a harsh land, moving elementally with drouth, grass, Arctic blizzards, and burning winds. Their story is the bedrock on which the history of the cow country of America is founded. The book is inexpensive and can be purchased used via Amazon for as little as \$5.

2. Larry McMurtry's *Horseman Pass By*

(fiction) -- Larry Jeff McMurtry (born 1936 in Archer City) is a novelist, essayist, bookseller, and screenwriter whose work is predominantly set in either the Old West or in contemporary Texas. His novels include *Horseman, Pass By, The Last Picture*

Show, and *Terms of Endearment*, which were adapted into films earning 26 Oscar nominations. He's won a Pulitzer for fiction (*Lonesome Dove*), and an Academy Award for screen writing (*Brokeback Mountain*). He's written 33 fictional novels and 14 nonfiction

books. Our selection, *Horseman, Pass By*, was one of his first successful novels. Its movie version, *Hud*, won an Academy Award.

Horseman, Pass By tells the story of Homer Bannon, an old-time cattleman who epitomizes the frontier values of honesty and decency, and Hud, his unscrupulous stepson. Caught in the middle is the narrator, Homer's young grandson Lonnie, who is as much drawn to his grandfather's strength of character as he is to Hud's hedonism and materialism. Used versions of the book can be purchased for as little as \$3.

3. John Graves' *Goodbye to a River*

(nonfiction) – Born in 1920 in Fort Worth, Graves attended Rice and Columbia

University. When he read that five additional dams would be constructed on the Brazos River between Possum Kingdom and Whitney reservoirs, Graves knew this would irrevocably



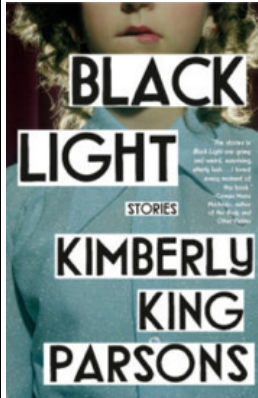
change the nature of the river, which runs through what was once wild Comanche country. He took a canoe trip down that stretch of river with his small dog, *Goodbye to a River* resulting – the book weaving in and out of the tumultuous, violent and colorful history along the Brazos banks with the narrative ease of a born story teller. Years later (Graves died in 2012) the book is still selling, though there's this: Only one of the five dams – that for Lake Granbury – ended up being built, so much of that stretch of the river is today as it was for Graves in 1957. The book can be purchased used for as little as \$4.

4. Kimberly King Parsons' *Black Light* (fiction)

– Born in Lubbock and raised near Dallas, Parsons is both a contemporary writer of book reviews and herself the author of a
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(Book Club, from previous page)

collection of Texas-oriented short stories that is *Black Light* (published last year), a book full of the gas stations, highways and bowling

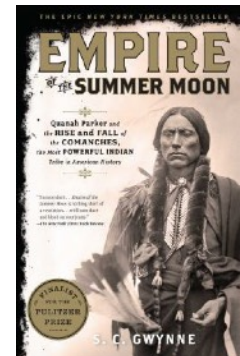


alleys of her youth and – of course – also our youth if our youth was spent in Texas. Fair warning: Topics include the ache of first love, the banality of self-loathing, the scourge of addiction, the myth of marriage, and the magic and inevitable disillusionment of childhood. She holds

degrees from UT-Dallas and Columbia. Her fiction has been published in *The Paris Review*, *Best Small Fictions 2017*, *Black Warrior Review*, *No Tokens*, *Kenyon Review*, and elsewhere. She is completing a novel (forthcoming from Knopf) about Texas, motherhood, and LSD. Used copies of the book are listed on Amazon for as little as \$4.

5. S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Southern Moon* (nonfiction) – The full name of the book gives you a clue to its contents: *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah*

Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History (it was a finalist for the 2010 Pulitzer Prize). Author S.C. Gwynne is a Princeton and Hopkins graduate, a former *Times Magazine* writer and the current senior editor at *Texas Monthly*. Gwynne uses the



tragic story of Cynthia Ann Parker – captured by Comanches as a young girl -- and her mixed blood son Quanah as a framework for the greater tale of the epic and violent clash of cultures that occurred when the inexorable westward tide of white settlers crashed on the shores of the Comanche domain. When the whites arrived, the Comanches had subdued twenty other tribes to hold sway as the unquestioned rulers of the vast plains of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The battle between Comanches and oncoming settlement would wage for 40 years. Used copies are listed on Amazon for as little as \$8.

(From the Editor, from p.1)

has selected some great Texas books for your reading pleasure; Wanda Marshall recalls growing up in Dalworthington Gardens in the latest “Member Spotlight”; and Jannette Workman offers another inspiring lesson in Texas history, this time on the Battle of San Jacinto.

Your comments and suggestions for the newsletter are always welcome; contact me at denise.youngblood@uvm.edu.





AHS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Wanda Marshall



The February/March issue of the newsletter inaugurated interviews with long-time AHS members. This issue focuses on AHS treasurer Wanda Marshall.

How long has your family lived in Texas? Where did they come from?

My family arrived in Texas around the time of the Civil War. My father's family, the Robersons, came from the Deep South: Alabama and Mississippi, and were probably farmers. My mother's family, the Snelsons, arrived from Tennessee and settled around Granbury and also farmed.

I remember as a child that in May we would travel back to Granbury and participate in graveyard working. People would come from all over who had kin buried in Nubbin Ridge Cemetery to clean around the graves. It was an event with lots of food for picnic lunches. We had a fun time telling and listening to family stories of past relatives and friends.

I have always been interested in my family's history and when DNA testing became popular, I wanted to know more. I learned that I'm 72% from England, Wales & Northwestern Europe, 25% Ireland & Scotland, and 3% Sweden.

Tell us about your childhood. You were raised in Dalworthington Gardens, which was a homesteading project inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt during the Great Depression. What are a few of your favorite memories of this time?

I was born in Fort Worth but moved to Arlington as a baby, around one year old. We lived first in a rented house on Randol Mill Rd, where part of the deal was to take care of the owner's animals. My father was a deliveryman for a commercial laundry in Fort Worth; he owned his own truck and later bought another truck and hired a man to work with him on the deliveries. When my brother returned from World War II, he bought a dry cleaning business that my father later bought from him. My mother waited on customers at the dry cleaners for a while but was mainly a housewife and mother.



I have three siblings all older than me. The oldest, Christine, was 12 years older than me and treated me like I was her child. Next was my brother James, who I looked up to when he served in the Navy during WWII. Anita was the closest in age to me and is the only one still living; we are still close.

We moved to Dalworthington Gardens in 1936 or 1937. It was the first house my family owned. My mother wasn't too excited, saying that the little white houses looked like tombstones. There were not many trees and the roads were gravel; later they "hot topped" them with tar. We had five rooms, one bathroom, and a garage. There was electricity and indoor plumbing, and we used butane gas for heating and cooking. We were lucky to have a 4 party-line telephone; some people had 8!

(continued on p.8)

(Book review, from p. 3)

were getting bored with the retreat—and burning to avenge their brothers who had perished at the Alamo and Goliad. Houston, however, held out until he had maneuvered his army—and Santa Anna’s—into positions that enabled the vastly outnumbered Texans to defeat the Mexicans at San Jacinto in record time. San Jacinto is likely the shortest major battle in modern military history. **(For details, see Jannette Workman’s article on the Battle of San Jacinto on p. 2).**

I was prepared not to like *Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers*, concerned that Kilmeade, as a professional political pundit, might seek to reframe the story for

contemporary political purposes. That fear was unwarranted; this is popular history at its best, interesting and informative in equal measure. The publisher deserves kudos for its reader-friendly design and high-quality illustrations, some in color.

To Be Reviewed in the Next Issue:

Richard E. Selcer, *Photographing Texas: The Swartz Brothers, 1880-1918* (Texas A&M University Press, 2019), the fascinating story of the pioneering frontier photographers of Fort Worth, most famous for their celebrated photo of the Wild Bunch (aka the Fort Worth Five), whose most infamous members were Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Women’s Suffrage Centennial Exhibit

Organized by

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County & the Arlington Historical Society
Fielder House Museum, 2nd Floor, through August 2020

The United States Congress approved the 19th Amendment to the Constitution on June 4, 1919. Texas became the first southern state to ratify it on June 28, 1919. The 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, was officially adopted into law on August 28, 1920, having been ratified by the required 36 states as of August 18, 1920, when Tennessee voted to approve it.

(San Jacinto, from p. 2)

the Texas government signed the Treaty of Velasco that stated Santa Anna would be released and returned to Mexico. Santa Anna was never to fight Texas again, but the Mexican government never ratified the treaty because Santa Anna had signed the agreement as a prisoner.

The events of spring 1836 were a defining moment in its formation of the United States. Measured by its results, San Jacinto was one of the decisive battles in world history. The freedom Texas won from Mexico at San Jacinto led eventually to its annexation by the United States. The annexation led to the Mexican-American War, resulting in the acquisition

by the United States of the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Almost one-third of the present area of the American nation, nearly a million square miles of territory, changed sovereignty.

From time to time, the newsletter will feature a short essay under the rubric “This Month in Texas History.” See Jannette Workman’s companion article, “March 2, 1836: The Texas Declaration of Independence,” in the February/March 2020 issue, p. 7. All back issues are available online at www.historicalarlington.org.

(Member Spotlight, from p.6)

I rode the school bus to the Johnson Station School, a county school with grades 1-8. There were four large rooms, two grades to a room, usually only one teacher per room but sometimes two. We had to use an outhouse, and in the winter we heated the classroom with a furnace that used coal, which got us really dirty. There was a huge swing set and a seesaw in the yard; we also played "pop the whip" and "red rover, red rover" and of course, baseball. We brought our lunches from home, although later there was a cafeteria.

What was your life like during the war and right after?

I heard about Pearl Harbor on the radio. My brother enlisted in the Navy right away and spent the war in the Pacific on a submarine. All the boys on our street went into the Navy. We had enough food because we lived in the country; we raised cows, chickens, and hogs and had a garden. Because of my father's work, we got a larger gas ration. I remember buying stamps to support the war.

Life went on as usual at home. I went to Arlington High School, attended school dances, football and basketball games and went to the movies. Dalworthington Gardens had a community house that residents could use for dances and parties. In the summer we had outdoor movies. Church at Woods Chapel had activities that was also an important part of our lives.

What about after you graduated from high school?

In 1949 I entered Arlington State College, which is now the University of Texas at Arlington. It was a two-year college then. I studied business and then worked as a secretary in Fort Worth and Dallas. I met my husband, Charles, in high school; we got married in 1954. He joined the military and served until 1956, but this was after Korea, so he didn't have to go to war. At this time, Arlington was growing rapidly, starting with the GM plant, and historic downtown Arlington was razed in the 1950s.

When my husband left the military, he joined Stratoflex, and we moved first to Michigan, where I tried working for a while as a Kelly Girl [temp] in downtown Detroit, taking the train there. I had to turn down a job as a switchboard operator because the long Polish names with all those consonants were so hard to pronounce! Being from Texas, I was not ready for the harsh Michigan winters. I shivered my way through until my first paycheck and went and bought winter boots, a wool scarf, and a real heavy winter coat!

We added our son, Alan, and then our daughter, Laura, to our family in Michigan. Then in 1961 my husband received a promotion to Fort Wayne, Indiana. There we had our third and last daughter, Jennifer. Fort Wayne was a good place for our children to grow up and we all enjoyed living there. We lived up North for 22 years, when another promotion brought us back home to Arlington in 1979.

How did you become interested in history? Why have you devoted so much time and energy to supporting local history through the Arlington Historical Society?

I always loved history. In the late 1990s, I was invited to join the AHS board around the
(continued on the next page)

(Member Spotlight, from previous page)

same time as Geraldine [Mills]. I became interested in researching World War II; it was “my” war, after all. The more research I did, the more interested I was. I was hooked.

It’s safe to say that no one knows more about Arlington in WWII than you do; your signature projects at the AHS have been curating the WWII collection at Fielder House and conducting videotaped interviews with Arlington WWII veterans. What does WWII mean to you?

By 2007, I had done all this paper and microfilm research. An old man, a veteran, came to Fielder House to look at our collection, and started crying. I began asking every veteran to talk about their memories; they were anxious to talk and donated their keepsakes from the war. There were lots of pent up stories; during the war, they couldn’t write honestly in their letters home, even coming up with codes to let their families know where they were. This led to our project to videotape interviews with some Arlington veterans in 2008 (*see the obituary of one of those interviewees, Fred Bondurant, on p.10*).

Why should WWII be remembered? Everyone was involved, everyone was patriotic. Boys rushed to join the military; they dropped out of school and sometimes lied about their age. Everyone sacrificed; there wasn’t much to buy. You need coupons or stamps to buy gas, coffee, sugar and many things, even a pair of shoes. Girl Scouts collected bacon grease and rolled bandages. (A girl that rolled those bandages said she wondered how sanitary those bandages were.) A pack of Beemans chewing gum was a treat.

What else would you like readers to know about you?

I grew up a small-town country girl and never dreamed that I would leave Arlington to go up North. But going North was not my or my husband’s biggest adventure. We were lucky to be able to travel all over the world, Australia, Asia, Europe and Japan. While in Hong Kong, I was peering out our hotel window and realized I was looking over the South China Sea. I told my husband, “ We are a long way from Dalworthington Gardens”.

Arlington on Tap

Arlington on Tap is co-sponsored by Downtown Arlington Management, the Arlington Historical Society, and Arlington Today magazine.

Tuesday, May 12, 6-8 pm, Maverick’s Bar and Grill, 601 E. Main Street

“The Budster Knows”: *Star-Telegram* columnist and editorial board member Bud Kennedy, who writes on variety of local topics, including restaurants, politics, economics, eccentric people, and strange events, will share more of his insider knowledge.

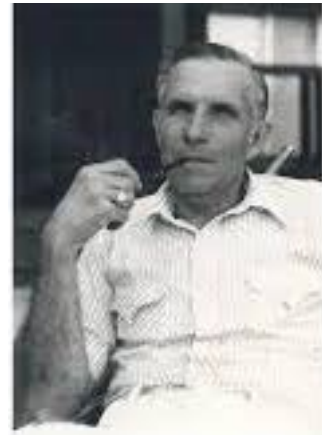
Please note: As this issue goes to press, this event is still on, but given the current circumstances, the date should be considered tentative.



Fred Warren Bondurant, Jr.
(1922-2020)
Arlington World War II Hero

In Memoriam

Fred Warren Bondurant, Jr., one of the last surviving members of Arlington's "Greatest Generation," died at his home on January 12, 2020, surrounded by his loving family. He was 98 years old. The son of Fred and Jennie Bondurant, Fred Jr. was born on January 7, 1922 in his grandparents' house in Ripley, Tennessee. Fred grew up in Arlington, became an Eagle Scout, and graduated from Arlington High School in 1940. Part of the Class of 1944 at Texas A&M University, he received his Army commission on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and was assigned to H-Company of the 63rd Combat Division, arriving in France in December 1944. He received numerous citations for his heroism in combat in France and Germany, including the Bronze Star, and was promoted to captain by war's end.



Captain Bondurant met his future wife, Lieutenant Martha Barron, as part of the Allied occupation forces in France, where she was serving as a surgical nurse. He followed her to Baltimore after they were demobilized, and they were married on June 30, 1946 after a short courtship. Fred and Marty returned to Arlington, where Fred joined his father at Bondurant Bros. Insurance Agency, then the second oldest continuous business in the city. Fred belonged to Arlington's Downtown Rotary Club for 69 years, achieving perfect attendance for 65 of those years. He also was a member of the Arlington Mason Lodge #438 for 73 years, reaching the rank of Master Mason.

Fred was predeceased by his parents, brother, grandson—and on December 1, 2011, by his dear wife of 65 years, Marty. He is survived by his 7 children, 27 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren. He is buried in the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery in tribute to his military service. Memorial contributions in Fred Bondurant's name may be sent to the Downtown Arlington Rotary Club or the Arlington Rotary Foundation Scholarship Fund.

You can hear Fred talk about his WWII adventures in a 90-minute videotaped interview conducted by Wanda Marshall in 2008; the DVD is available at the Fielder House. Fred was also featured in a two-part article that ran last year in the AHS Newsletter: "Arlington's Greatest Generation: Arlington Veterans Remember World War II" (December 2018/January 2019 and February/March/2019), available online at our website www.historicalarlington.org.

Arlington Garden Club Annual Plant Sale

Originally planned for April 25, the plant sale will be rescheduled as soon as COVID 19 restrictions are ended.

This popular event is a great way to support the Garden Club and the AHS.