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The One and Only Rattlesnake Bomber Base: Pyote Army
Airfield in World War II (review)

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The reality is that Blanche's memoir cannot stand on its own. Phillips relied on 407 footnotes covering seventy-three pages of annotations to supplement and correct Blanche's story. Additionally, he had a twenty-page editor's introduction and chronology, a fifty-page conclusion, numerous pages of explanations, maps, sketches, photos, and period background.

The reality also is that the memoir is filled with lamentations about Buck and Blanche's innocence and drooling about Blanche's love for her man. But most of Blanche's points do not hold up when examined against the objective record. While every other page includes an expression of Blanche's love for Buck, months after his death she was already involved with a romantic interest while in prison. At one point, Blanche describes what she was wearing when Buck was killed. "We had used my skirt for bandages. Everything was covered in blood" (p. 132). A photo of her capture (p. 134) showed her wearing pants instead of a skirt and no blood was visible on her. One thing Blanche did get right was her assessment of her brother-in-law Clyde Barrow; "Clyde was too much of a dirty rat" (p. 109).

Pflugerville

ALFREDO E. CARDENAS

The One and Only Rattlesnake Bomber Base: Pyote Army Airfield in World War II. By Thomas E. Alexander. (Abilene: State House Press, 2005. Pp. 216. Acknowledgments, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1880510901. \$18.95, paper.)

After enjoying the author's two *The Stars Were Big and Bright* books (2000, 2001: Eakin Press), about Army airfields in Texas during World War II, and his *The Wings of Change*, looking at the broad impact of military aviation on the state (2003), I looked forward to this book about Pyote. I was not disappointed. After introducing us to the Rattlesnake bomber base in Volume I of *The Stars Were Big and Bright*, the current study first reviews the boom and bust cycles of the city of Pyote. As was the experience of many small towns throughout the United States, locating a military installation nearby brought significant change, and this book is as much a sociological study as it is a military history. While the base had an important training mission during World War II, the story of the larger impact on the life and fortunes of the town and its people is even more important to the author.

The book takes an in-depth look at the politics and intrigue involved at locating the base in Pyote, the base's contributions during World War II as a training center for B-17 and B-29 bomber crews, and the post-war life of the base. Unlike many bases that sprang up during the war only to close shortly after the peace had been won, Pyote served as an aircraft storage facility and then as home to a radar surveillance site before its final closure in 1963. Alexander also chronicles the demolition of the base, plans for its reuse, and closes his account by taking us on a personal tour of the now long-abandoned site. The documentation for this study includes official base histories and the base newspapers, as well as the traditional mix of books and articles. The personal accounts of life on and around the base, however, are what make this story so intimate.

Life on a flying training base during the war was not easy for either military or civilian workers, and the threat of sudden death from an aircraft accident loomed large. The reader can feel the frustrations of Capt. Charles TenHouten, the post medical officer, who found himself with 620,000 pounds of medical supplies but no place to put them and no hospital in which to use them. The author is equally adept at making the story of base construction hum like the engines of the bombers assigned to Pyote as he is in making the intricate procedures involved in "cocooning" airplanes (p. 165), keeping them safely wrapped for possible future use, interesting for the layperson. Alexander also explores the myths and realities surrounding the most famous of Pyote's residents, the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 used to drop the first atomic bomb on Japan in August 1945. Late in the plane's life, it was stored at the base before being flown to Washington, D.C., for display at a Smithsonian Institution facility. And, of course, there are the rattlesnakes, for which the base got its nickname.

With *The One and Only Rattlesnake Bomber Base* under his belt, I hope the author will begin a series of studies enlarging the chapter-length histories of air force bases in his first two books. Histories that encompass all aspects of base and community life, such as this, are much needed.

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When the News Went Live: Dallas 1963. By Bob Huffaker, Bill Mercer, George Phenix, and Wes Wise. Foreword by Dan Rather. (Lanham, Md.: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004. Pp. 224. Dedication, acknowledgments, foreword, preface, photographs, afterword, index. ISBN 1589791398. \$24.95, cloth.)

When the News Went Live: Dallas 1963 retells the story of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the chaos that still surrounds that event. The book is a series of recollections by four men—Bob Huffaker, Bill Mercer, George Phenix, and Wes Wise—who as employees of KRLD, the Dallas CBS television and radio affiliate witnessed first hand the troubling minutes, hours, and days immediately after Kennedy's murder. To a generation of Americans accustomed to accessing the news via radio, on November 22, 1963, the news literally went live, as television bonded the nation as witness to its own history.

Bob Huffaker broadcast live from the parking lot of Parkland Hospital, where Kennedy was taken. In exacting detail he analyzes the route that Oswald used to flee the now infamous sixth-story window in the Book Depository Building, focusing on Oswald's brutal execution of Dallas police officer J. D. Tippett and his subsequent apprehension in a downtown theatre by Dallas detectives. Huffaker describes the police's attempt to satisfy the news media, even granting reporters access to the basement of the police building when Oswald was to be transferred to the Tarrant County Jail the following morning. It was there that local nightclub owner Jack Ruby, overwhelmed with grief over the Kennedy assassination and fueled by a diet of Preludin and Benzedrine, shot and killed Oswald on live television (p. 51). Huffaker also reported on the trial and subsequent January 1, 1967, death of Jack Ruby from cancer.