

# LOOKING BACK...

THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE MONITOR

## • 1963 •

**Sam Hicks** and **Jack Coker** were elected to the Naples City Council and **Rex Allen** was the mayor ... A senate public works subcommittee approved a \$182,400 post office building for Naples ... **Jeanette Hanes** of Naples and other Phi Theta Kappa sorority members of Texarkana College attended the national PTK convention in Miami ... Twenty-four employees at Lone Star Steel were laid off due to realignment of division responsibilities.

## • 1968 •

**Rev. J. R. Pearce**, Naples Baptist pastor, was to take part in the Encounter Crusade in California ... A Cotton Belt train smashed into a White's Auto tractor-trailer rig shearing the trailer in half and scattering CB radios and other goods at the scene ... A total of 30,360 boxes of Girl Scout cookies were sold in the Red River Girl Scout Council area that included Naples and Omaha ... The Naples Business Women's Club was studying the possibility of building a tennis court at the Naples Community Center site ... Ranch Style beans were 15¢ a can at Foster's Grocery in Naples.

## • 1973 •

**Don Couch** was serving as the new pastor of the Naples First Assembly of God Church ... Supporters of political candidate **George Wallace** were to meet at the courthouse in south Morris County ... Coffee was 79¢ a pound at **Jimmy Endsley's** Omaha Food Store ... **Edd Hargett**, a Linden-Kildare football player, who gained honors as a Texas A&M quarterback and played for the New Orleans Saints, was to be the guest speaker at the **Pewitt School** sports banquet ... Large eggs were 59¢ a dozen at Foster's Grocery.

## • 1978 •

**Q. B. Wommack** was named mayor pro-tem by the Naples city council ... Morris County's museum, in the old county courthouse building, was to be open on week ends for visitors ... Frozen dinners were 59¢ each at **Vingo Foods** in Naples ... Naples Girl Scouts **Mickey Page**, **Tonda Roberts**, **Melissa Caraway**, **Angela Wommack**, **LaTonya Nickleberry**, **Yulonda Knox** and **Wendie Hawkins** toured Red River Army Depot with leader **Ronnie Page** and daughter, **Kristi**.

## • 1983 •

**Hardy Griffin** was hired as a policeman by the Naples city council to take the place of **Pat West** ... "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was showing at the **Morris Theater** in Daingerfield ... **Shriners** and other Masons were to collect donations for the benefit of the **Shrine Hospital** in Galveston ... **Ron Cowan**, Morris County judge, was the guest speaker for the **Morris County Peace Officers' Wives Association**.

## • 1988 •

**Scottie Warren** graduated from a vehicle repair course at the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground site in Maryland ... "Moonstruck" was showing at **Cinema IV** in Mt. Pleasant ... A dramatic still life portrayal of "The Last Supper" was to come to life during a presentation at the **First Baptist Church** in Naples ... Increased demands for blood in the local area had caused shortages of all blood types ... A quart jar of mayonnaise was 99¢ at **Northeast Texas Foods** in Omaha ... **Thomas Higgins** was named the outstanding soloist at the **Queen City solo and ensemble band contest** ... **Anissa Campbell** had been accepted for admission to **Harding University**.

## • 1993 •

**Barbara Ann Thigpen Meadows** had been elected to serve as president of the East Texas Justices of the Peace and Constables Association ... A "spring-fling" event was planned to raise funds for the **Naples-Omaha Recreation Association** ... Candidates for the school board trustee election included **Lillian Johnson**, **Damon Hodges**, **Mike Beasley** and **Ronnie Thomas** ... **Thomas James Barron** was honored with a going-away party at **Catfish Village** on his departure to the U.S. Air Force ... **Pewitt Junior High** students racked up 363 points placing in 25 of 32 events and won the top trophy in the **UIL literary contests** ... "Sommersby", with **Jodie Foster** and **Richard Gere**, was showing at the **Morris Theater** in Daingerfield.

## • 1998 •

**Precious Hervey** was the subject of an article about caring teachers ... **Michael Kelley** and **Jimmy Wilkerson** took top honors in the pole and high jump at a **DeKalb track meet** ... Eggs for Easter were \$1 for three dozen at **Brahma Foods** in Omaha and a 10-pound pack of ground beef was \$9.99 ... A 1993 **Pontiac**, priced at \$6,995, was the **John Paul Jones Motors** special of the week ... "Titanic" and "The Odd Couple 2" were showing at **Cinema V** in Mt. Pleasant and "Titanic" and "Man in the Iron Mask" were features at the **Morris Twin-Cinema** ... An open house was planned for the new **Naples Public Library** ... Three persons had filed as mayor candidates at Naples.

## • 2003 •

**Kenny Clubb** had his photo made as he installed a very short urinal at the school weight room. He said it was for **Bit Merritt** ... Members of the **Naples Fire Department** were to serve as waiters for a fund-raising dinner at **Barrington's** on Main ... "Jungle Book 2" and "Dare-Devil" were features at the **Morris Twin-Cinema** and showing at **Cinema V** were "Phone Booth", "Basic", "The Core" and "What A Girl Wants" ... **Pewitt's** one-act play cast won the district championship. Honors went to **Anna Seybert**, **Holly Keeling**, **Amanda Munn**, **Emily Seybert** and **Adam Johnson**.

## • 2008 •

**Michael Clair** won the Democratic Primary runoff for **Morris County** commissioner and **Kim Thomasson** was elected tax assessor-collector ... "10,000 BC" and "College Road Trip" were playing at the **Morris Twin-Cinema** and features at **Cinema V** included "Prom Night", "Never Back Down", "Nim's Island" and "Leatherheads" ... **Elizabeth** and **Bill Beasley** announced the birth of their granddaughter, **Abigail Maria Blais** in Florida ... An annual rabies clinic was planned for mid-April at **Pewitt School** ... **Chuck Ham** was the owner and operator of the **Longhorn Mowing Service** at **Marietta**.

## • 2013 •

**Keitha Nilsson** and **Kay Stewart** posed for an award-winning photo for **NETCU's** Texas Monthly award ... **Bryans Mill** had planned its annual **Spring Fling** for April 30 in the **Cass County** community ... **Chuck Ham** was making plans for the yearly helicopter landing zone event at **Marietta** ... "The Great and Powerful Oz" and "Jack, the Giant Slayer" were features at the **Morris Twin-Cinema** and shows at **Cinema V** included "Olympus Has Fallen", "The Croods", "The Host" and "Evil Dead" ... **Billy Williams**, **Bobby Alford**, **Jerry Williams** and **A. D. Banks** were presented with membership awards from the **David Elliott Masonic Lodge** ... **Pewitt's** **Lady Brahmas** won the **Hooks track meet** championship ... **Hunter Ramsey** and his grandfather, **Ronnie Hicks**, wandered off to **Queen's Town**, **South Africa** and were featured in **The Monitor**.



### A whole 'nother world

This was the newspaper office and print shop of *The Naples Monitor* sometime back about 1923-24 and the equipment back then was considerably different from today's computer operation that produces the weekly newspaper. On June 10, 1886, the first issue of *The Belden Herald* appeared with J. M. Connor, editor. That plant was purchased later by B. R. Watts, father of W. R. Watts, former editor and publisher of *The Naples Monitor*. An article in a 1942 issue of *The Naples Monitor* noted that the newspaper stayed under B. R. Watts' ownership for about 22 years. The *Belden Herald* became *The Naples Monitor* sometime around 1895 when the town changed its name to Naples. A 1910 issue showed the paper under the management of **Kesseler and Son, Prop.**, C. W. Kesseler, editor. W. R. Watts became the owner in 1922 and continued as editor and publisher until 1942 when it was sold to **Tom L. Price Sr.** The photo showed W. R. Watts and a young **Miss Bess Gibson** who helped set the type, one letter at a time, for the paper. She later became **Mrs. E. H. Tuck** and continued as a typesetter and linotype operator until the early 1950s. She left the operation after **Lee Narramore** assumed the business and he tutored a young **Gerald Hampton** in the art of setting type on the old clanky, cranky linotype machine. **Narramore** and **Hampton** served as teachers for another student, **Morris Craig**, and he became owner and editor of *The Monitor* in 1972. *O&Y-B&W photo*

## This Week In Texas History

By **Bartee Haile**

### Fitting end for West Texas gunfighter

The surprising thing about the April 3, 1902 death of **Barney Riggs** was not the violent nature of his demise but that the **West Texas** gunfighter managed to live so long.

There is no telling how many notches **Riggs** had on his six-gun before moving to **Arizona** in the early 1880's. Not that he was a professional killer, but just an amateur with a fast draw and a very bad temper.

The fact that **Riggs** somehow seemed to have "reasonable doubt" on his side kept him out of jail until Sep. 29, 1886. That was the day he shot a friend in the head for fooling around with his unfaithful wife.

This time there was no doubt as to **Riggs'** guilt, and the judge saw no reason for leniency. The Texan started serving a life sentence for murder on New Year's Eve 1886 in the notorious **Territorial Prison** at **Yuma**.

Ten months later, **Riggs** was stretching his legs in the prison yard when five inmates, all Mexican, made a bid for freedom. A convict named **Puebla** buried a blade in the shoulder of **Superintendent Thomas Gate** while two accomplices were busy being shot down, one by a guard in a watchtower and the other by the secretary of the prison board.

Attracted by the screams and the familiar sound of gunfire, **Riggs** jumped in the middle of the mad melee. He grabbed a pistol from a mortally wounded Mexican, rammied the barrel into the chest of the superintendent's assailant and pulled the trigger. The convict staggered back, and the fearless rescuer finished him off with a second shot.

Stepping over the dead bodies of the five would-be escapees, the convicted killer helped his chief keeper to the prison infirmary. **Riggs** was the talk of the territory. A **Tucson** newspaper praised his heroism in a glowing report that took pains to point out that no one was "more brave and took more desperate chances than **Barney Riggs**" to prevent the escape and further loss of life.

In record time, **Riggs** was rewarded with a full pardon. For the rest of his days, his favorite wisecrack was, "I had to kill a man to get into **Yuma** and killed another to get out."

**Riggs** returned to **West Texas** with his young son but not his adulterous wife. She left town the moment she heard her foul-tempered husband was a free man.

After four lean years in the private sector, **Riggs** landed a job on the public payroll. **Andy Royal**, the corrupt and hated sheriff of **Pecos County**, always had a badge for anybody handy with a gun.

The ex-convict had been a deputy for a year or so, when his boss was voted out of office in **November 1894**. While working at his desk late one night a couple of weeks after the election, the

lame-duck sheriff was given a shotgun send-off by an unknown assassin.

The word on the dirt streets of **Fort Stockton** was that **Deputy Riggs** was next, but he succeeded in dodging that particular bullet. However, try as he may, he could not avoid getting caught up in a classic **West Texas** feud.

**Reeves County Sheriff G.A. "Bud" Frazer** and "Deacon" **Jim Miller**, the Old West's original killer-for-hire, already had two shootouts under their gun belts by the time **Riggs** relocated to **Pecos**. Neutrality made the most sense, but their marriages to each other's sisters forced him to side with the lawman in the private war.

**Riggs'** brother-in-law was no match, of course, for a killing machine like **Miller**. **Frazer** was playing cards in a **Toyah** saloon in **September 1896**, when "Deacon **Jim**" ended the feud with a fatal one-two punch from a double-barreled shotgun.

Once again **Riggs** was on a hit list with a single name — his. He knew it was only a matter of time until **Miller** or his surrogates came gunning for him.

**Riggs** did not have long to wait. Three weeks after **Bud Frazer's** murder, **John Denson** and **Bill Earhart** showed up in **Pecos**. The pair spent the day hunting their prey and the courage to take him on but found neither.

The next morning, **Denson** and **Earhart** burst into the watering hole where **Riggs** was tending bar for a buddy. **Earhart** got off the first round but merely grazed **Riggs**, who returned fire in a heart-beat hitting him right between the eyes.

With the odds suddenly even, **Denson** turned and ran. **Riggs** missed him on this way out the door, followed him into the street, calmly drew a bead on the shrinking target and put a bullet in the back of his head.

Following his acquittal in the double homicide, **Riggs** stayed out of serious trouble for several years. Then in 1901 his wife divorced him and was awarded a cash settlement of \$2,000 payable to her son-in-law **Buck Chadborn**.

On **Apr. 3, 1902**, 46 year old **Barney Riggs'** temper got the best of him one last time. He confronted **Chadborn** and, according to three different witnesses, either (a) threatened to strike him with a walking cane, (b) reached in his back pocket for "a handkerchief or something" or (c) cursed the youth less than half his age.

No one claimed the over-the-hill gunfighter was armed. But **Chadborn** shot him dead anyway, and a jury agreed it was an open-and-shut case of self-defense.

*Bartee speaks at Dallas Historical Society's "Brown Bag" series at noon April 10 in the Hall of State on the Texas State Fair grounds.*



## The Monitor

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### MEN'S CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Meetings are at 6:45 a.m., on Wednesdays at the fellowship hall of the First United Methodist Church in Naples. All area men are invited to attend. Guest speakers are featured each week