

TEXAS INFORMER

February 2022

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Walter and Maxine Session
Co-Publishers of the
Texas Infomrer

Onward online,
see page 2

The Texas Informer Undergoes Change

Welcome to the first issue of the *Texas Informer Online new secure and mobile friendly website*. To keep up with the electronic age, the **Texas Informer** has undergone a change. At this time the plan is to print for online only with no hard copies. You may find us at www.texasinformer.com on your phone, ipad, computer tablet or any electronic device that has a search engine and internet.

You may also find archived issues from May 1995, which is the first issue printed, through April 2020. These issues contain articles about African American history obtained through interviews, obituaries, weddings, events and activities of people all over East Texas. Our mission remains the same, to **"Bring you positive news about local people"**.

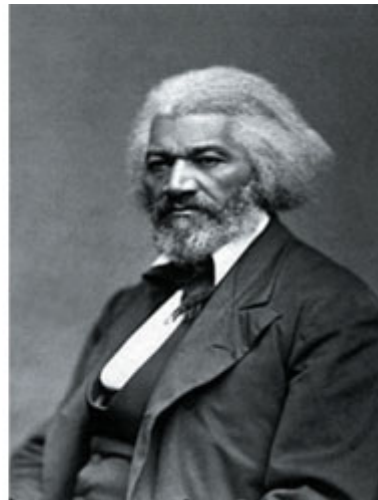
We began printing monthly as **The Cherokee County Monthly Informer** but soon realized through phone calls and letters that we had readers from all around Texas and other states. This influenced us to do business as (dba) the **Texas Informer**. Issues have always been provided to you the reader at no cost, except subscriptions that were mailed. The website is under construction, but issues can still be read at this time with the click of a few buttons.

News from your family, church or community can be e-mailed to us electronically at info@texasinformer.com or mailed to us at P. O. Box 332, Rusk, Texas 75785.

In November 1994 Walter and I were visiting "Black Images" bookstore in Dallas' Oakcliff community. We found three African American published newspapers. The articles in all three were just great! They were filled with interesting positive news about local people, news that while building self-esteem was also providing useful information about self-help, education, and community improvement. After many phone calls, letters and prayers, six months later with the help of Dr. Joseph Glover and Joe Garner, publishers of the *South Longview Monthly*, we published the first issue with Coach Larry Walker on the cover. The first three months Joe did the layout and carried the *Informer* to the press. Since the fourth publication my family and I have been on our own.

Since 2007 Michael Ousley, d/b/a **Online Directory of Texas**, www.odot.us has made sure each issue was placed online for the public. Now, we ask you to tell friends and family through Facebook, text, e-mail, and oh yes, put on your traveling shoes and spread the news, the **Texas Informer** has undergone a change!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH – FEBRUARY 2022



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Fredrick Douglass, Abolitionist,
Newspaper Publisher

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”
Fredrick Douglass, Orator, Abolitionist, Newspaper Publisher

George Martin and Linda Martin Skinner Keepers of Martin Family Legacy



Alto, TX. – The first one hundred years following slavery was filled with struggles for Black farmers due to discrimination. Much history and wealth has been lost to families and communities due to other factors, also. Among these are failure to leave a will specifying who is the responsible person(s) to carry forth what has been gained. Emery and Mae Belle Martin appeared to have been wise and very aware of the importance of this fact. They were keepers of the legacy left to them by their parents then passed the torch to their children. They raised their daughter Linda and son George keeping them

informed and involved in the family business of farming & ranching.

Members of the Martin family contributed greatly to the Alto Community. Grandfather George Martin gave his daughter Brunet (George and Linda's aunt) and her husband Alford Willis five acres of land about 1946. The land was located on highway 69 north, Alto. They opened a barbeque restaurant, back then called a cafe, around 1948 and kept it open into the eighties. Brunette Willis was also a teacher who taught at G. W. Bradford School, Sweet Union Forest and Alto ISD.

Jacob Martin, Paternal great-grandfather, began a long legacy of pride of land ownership and farming for the Martin family in 1883. His grandson Emery being raised on a farm, raised his son George and daughter Linda on the family farm. He taught them the business and allowed them to work beside him learning firsthand the day-to-day operations of their farm. By the time Linda was eleven and George not much older, Emery had purchased a new tractor and hay baler and all that goes with it. He grew and baled hay for himself and other farmers in the Alto area. George Stated, " We learned management on the job on our own farm.

Joe Williams was Mae Belle Martin's dad. Everybody called him Uncle Joe. He started Williams Chapel AME Church in 1937 next to Willis BBQ, on land George's grandfather gave for the church.

Emery & Mae Belle Martin owned Martin's Grocery & Feed; they purchased this store from his brother Booker T. Martin in 1948. The family ran the store until 1957.

Joe Williams, their mother's dad went to Farmers Home administration, around the time early loans were given to Black farmers, got a loan and purchased 180 acres, some of which he farmed. He was a very generous and caring person. He sold small acreage to people that he hired to work on his farm. They would come to him for help in finding land to purchase for their family. This allowed them to become landowners and to farm for themselves. Linda said the farm paid for his children's college.

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Martin Family Legacy *Continued from Page 3*

As a young boy, George remembers there was an old guy by the name of Elbert York who hung around Willis's barbeque. He loved the Houston Post, so every day he bought one. Every day he gave the paper to George and had George read it him. For a long time, George thought he couldn't read, but he could read. He had seen many Black men cheated because they couldn't read, so he just wanted to make sure George got started on the right foot.



Pictured above the Martin Family.



Pictured left Martins and tractor used on farm and to serve neighbors.

Booker T. Washington High School impacted George's life in a meaningful way. It was a place of involvement for the students. There were no specific counselors, but a place where teachers cared enough to give students guidance. His agriculture teacher was Valentine Waddleton. One day he told

George about a trip he was about to take to Prairie View College and ask him to go. He took George, William Morrison, Alford Wade, Bouche Mickey, Henry Thacker, and Larry Christopher. George toured the campus that day, but little did he know he would return in a few years to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture. He also remembered well what Mr. Waddleton told him, "Get a degree in a field that you know a little about, and you will enjoy your work."

Linda Martin Skinner was very involved in School from cooking and sewing in 4-H to high school home economics classes to plays to fashion shows and proms. While many local people in small East Texas towns chose to leave the area for higher education and better jobs, Linda choose to get her education at Stephen F. Austin State University and return to Alto. She began her career at Alto High School as a Head Start teacher and taught for forty-one years. She married the late Rollie Skinner. They purchased three farms where they grew cattle and hay and did commercial farming about thirty years. The Linda Skinners has three sons who helped run the farms, Crispin Skinner now an Agricultural teacher, Byron Skinner a DPS agent and Craig Skinner an athletic trainer for an NBA G-League. Linda's time today is spent volunteering in different community activities. She is on the board of trustees at St. Thomas Chapel AME church and played a very active part in the Booker T. Washington Alumni Association as well as helping establish The Booker T. Washington Community Center. The Center is one of a kind that has been built by an alumni association in the East Texas area.

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Martin Family Legacy *Continued from Page 4*



They did row cropping and purchased a pea sheller which their boys ran for years. They shelled their own peas and for other farmers in the area. She fondly remembers the many trips they made to the Dallas Farmer's Market.

George has been married to Bernice Brantley Martin for more than fifty years. They have three daughters who are all college graduates, Angela Terry, Hope Andrews, and Cicely Henderson and four grandsons. He attended Booker T. Washington High through the 11th grade and graduated Alto High School in 1967.

George graduated Prairie view A & M University. He is now retired and moved back to Alto after working for the United States Department of Agriculture NRCS conservationist, Nacogdoches and San Augustine, Texas and NRCS District Conservationist San Augustine, Texas. In 2009 George was inducted into the Prairie View A&M Sports Hall of Fame for Track and Field. He is currently a member of the Alto Booker T. Washington Alumni Association, Alto Area Christian Brotherhood, New Hope Community Cemetery Board, Cherokee County Historical Commission, Cherokee county Genealogy Society, and New Hope Baptist Church.

Linda and George are very deeply committed to their community of Alto and surrounding communities and will serve anywhere they are needed. He recently took the lead in establishing a Wall of History Mural in the Cherokee County Courthouse, did a Black History presentation at the Cherokee County Courthouse Annex, the Museum in Rusk and the History of Black Education at the Alto High School Black History Program. Linda was right there working with the awesome production crew for that program. It's seemingly just natural that they carry on the Martin family legacy.

George said he was asked why he serves so much. He shared a great quote from the late Willie Lee Campbell Glass, "Service is the rent we pay for living on God's green earth." *Story by Maxine Session*



America's True News

By Billy "Hollywood" Groves, GSN CEO

When I see, read, and hear about people who don't want to see America telling the truth about negative things that happened to Black people, I understand, that some racists don't want the new generations and future Americans to know what really happened to Black People in America (during slavery and since). This negativism demonstrated by some are often and easily extended to other Americans that are not black but are intelligent, God respecting Americans who reject the "racists' agenda.



Billy "Hollywood" Groves, GSN CEO

America's true news which includes the history of this nation, validating the accomplished work of African Americans helping America become the world's leader has become a lacking element in some news reporting. The lack of true news and knowledge is a problem that is dividing Americans, especially politically, more than bringing them together. My role as a true American is to always tell the truth. The truth has true power because it represents reality, and it is what God wants us to do.

Subsequently, if the true news is not known, then fake news and knowledge will be presented to the people. Since the ending of slavery, lies about black people have been used to divide this nation. We are seeing some "fake educators and politicians" now wanting information about slavery and other of America's past to be recognized in our public schools. Those same fake racists are spreading their lies out to the public through American schools in place of the truth. Sadly today, they don't want a careful study and truthful investigation of how African Americans helped America to become the World's leader that it is. However, because the majority of Americans have a true belief in God, true news will always get to America's new generations of young people, young Americans of all colors, races, religions, ages, economic status and any other difference.

People have heard me say many times," I don't know some people, but I do know God"! I've seen some people act one way one day and switch to another position the next day, just to promote a new issue they believe will provide them with some form of monetary or physical gifts given to benefit their lifestyle.

My great late Mother, Sis. Earlie Marshall Groves taught me and my sisters to forgive and not forget but learn from your experience. She was a woman of God who knew how some people could do some crazy, evil things, but she also knew that if they accepted God, He could change their hearts and their lives. She knew and taught us that God was the answer to any problems we may face on this earth. I will end this article by saying, "The truth will always defeat a lie and evil". God Bless America.

(Research and read about "The Critical Race Theory" and the order Gregg Abbott, Texas Governor signed recently and learn how it will affect Texas educators and your children.)



Rusk High School 2022 Valedictorian Trinity Linae Ashberry

Trinity Linae Ashberry of Rusk, Texas, daughter of the late Shelonda Kennedy and George Ashberry, became the first black valedictorian of Rusk High School. Trinity has lived in Rusk her entire life and wanted to graduate from Rusk High School because it's where her mother graduated.

She gets her motivation from the fact that she lost her mother at the age of 8. Trinity has always wanted her mother to be proud of her. She is a humble, kind-hearted person who works hard and has good character. This is how Trinity wants people to remember her.

While attending Rusk High School, Trinity ranked #1 throughout her high school years and maintained a 4.0 GPA. She was a National Merit Scholar semi-finalist; a member of the National Honor Society and she received the Congress of Future Medical Leaders Award of Excellence.

Trinity is a natural leader. She was selected the National Honor Society Vice President (2018-2021), Student Council Chairman (2019-2020), Varsity Basketball Captain (2020-2022), and she is also the Spirit Club founder and president (2019-2022).

Trinity was very active in sports as well. She participated in track (2018-2019), softball (2018-2020), basketball (2018-2022), Band (2018-2020), and cheerleader (2018-2019) (2020-2022). Outside of school, Trinity volunteers as a coach for Little Dribblers.

Trinity graduates on May 20, 2022, she has earned 26 college credits and plans to attend Texas Southern University in the Fall, majoring in Nursing. Trinity's goal is to own and run her own practice in Cosmetics Nursing so that she can help others.

Congratulations 2022 Graduates!

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Mildred Thompson Brown

Mildred was born in New Summerfield, Texas to parents Berry and Lillian Thompson. She passed away at home Monday, January 24, 2022, surrounded by her husband and daughters.

She attended public school in Cherokee County (New Summerfield), Texas and George W. Bradford, Rusk, Texas., graduating with the class of 1962). She went on to receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business from Bishop College. It was at Bishop College where she met her husband Kennard (Ken) Brown, and they were married in September 1966. That marriage lasted until her death.

Mildred was preceded in death by her father, Berry Thompson, brother Harrell Thompson. She leaves to honor her memory her husband Ken of 55 years, daughters Kennaria Brown of Berea, KY, Kyria Brown Lemke (Steve), and grandson Ken J. Lemke all of Plano, TX., mother, Lillian Thompson Duffie, sister Wynella Guice Pierce (Michael, deceased), brother Eric Thompson (Gladys) all of Jacksonville, TX., brother Alfred (Carrie) Houston, TX., and a host of nieces and nephews.

Mildred put her career on hold for a number of years while she raised their two daughters and moved around the country in support of her husband's career. They moved back to Dallas in 1990. She and Ken reconnected with St. Luke Community United Methodist Church Mildred went to work at E-Systems Corp. That Company was later purchased by Raytheon Systems from which she retired in May 2013.

During her tenure with Raytheon Mildred was the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. Most of all she made a host of lifelong friends. Since retirement and until the pandemic, Mildred was very active with meeting ex-coworkers, family members or friends for lunch or some other social event. A very special time for her was to have a long lunch with her sister-in-law Glenna Martin. She loved her involvement in events with her book club "BeSure" and working with the Keenagers group St. Luke.

Mildred enjoyed reading, visiting museums and attending the guest lecture series at Southern Methodist University. She was a special aunt to many of her nieces and nephews. Most of all she loved traveling. After Ken's retirement they travelled globally together.

Services were held February 8, 2022, at Restland Funeral Chapel, Greenland Avenue Dallas, TX., with Rev. Douglas (Dusty) Fuller, Eulogist.

Glenda McGowan Black

Glenda McGowan Black was born on September 25, 1952, to Jesse H. and Novaline McGowan in Ponta, Texas. She passed away January 12, 2022, in Tyler, Texas. Glenda lived in the Elm Grove Community of Rusk, Texas where she grew-up, until her passing. She graduated Rusk High School in 1970.

Glenda was preceded in death by her parents; two sisters Brenda McGowan and Linda Greenwood; brother Darryl McGowan and nephew Justin McGowan.



Keeping her memory and legacy alive are her devoted husband Travis Black, and children Brandi Black, Mario (Wyvonne) McGowan, all of Rusk, Tara (Lon) Hinton of Bullard, Crystal Black Humble, Texas., Brandon Black of Tyler, and Novaline (Felix) Lane of Jacksonville. Her cherished grandchildren: Tristen, Da'Marion, Joseph, Cambruien, Amari'ay, Drew, and A. J.; her beloved granddogs Papito and Reba. She is also survived by her sister Melba Joyce (Willie) Bradley, brothers: Jesse Travis (Carolyn) McGowan, Floyd (Celestine) McGowan and Reginald all of Rusk, Texas and Floyd (Vivian) McGowan of Jacksonville; a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and neighbors. She will forever be missed and never forgotten.

The service was held at Elm Grove Baptist Church on Saturday January 15, 2022. Final resting place is Plainview Cemetery under directions of McGowan Funeral Home.



MANDY FOREMAN SNEED

Mandy Foreman Sneed was born on Friday, May 4, 1934, in Rusk, Texas to the late Vira Mckissic Foreman and Charlie Foreman.

Mandy Sneed, age 87, passed away Wednesday morning January 19, 2022, comfortably at her Rusk, Texas residence.

She attended G. W. Bradford School with the class of 1952 and was employed at Rusk State Hospital for 23 years. She was preceded in death by her husband Clearance Sneed; sister Shirley Ann Foreman Nays, brothers James Rivers, Charles Foreman, Hubert Foreman, and George Foreman; daughters: Eunice Ann Foreman and grandson Carl Dews.

Mrs. Sneed is survived by her brother Eldridge Foreman, three daughters: Myra Sneed, Virginia Faye Foreman and Lillie Marie Harrell; one son Johnny Lee Earl; ten grandchildren, several great grandchildren, one great-great grandchild, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.



The service was held Saturday January 19, 2022, at Mount Olive Baptist Church, 215 Collins Street, Rusk, Texas with the Rev. Jerry Leviston Eulogist. Final resting place is Rusk Memorial Cemetery, under direction of Williams Funeral Home.

BACON AND CHEDDAR CHEESE CORNBREAD MUFFINS

- 6 Bacon slices
- 2 Cups self-rising cornbread mix
- 1 Tblsp. sugar
- 1½ Cup buttermilk
- 1 Large egg
- 4 Teasp. butter melted
- 1 Cup (4oz.) Shredded sharp cheese
- Vegetable Cooking Spray



Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cook bacon in skillet over medium heat 12 to 14 minutes, or until crisp.

Remove from heat and drain on paper towel. Crumble bacon.

Heat a 12- space muffin pan in the oven for five minutes.

Combine cornmeal mix and sugar in a medium bowl; make a well center of mixture.

Stir together buttermilk and egg; add cornmeal mix just until ingredients are wet.

Stir in melted butter, cheese, and bacon.

Remove pan from oven and coat with cooking spray. Spoon batter into muffin pan, filling almost completely full.

Bake at 425 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown.


Remove from oven and let cool.

"Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

--Dr. Martin Luther King

Saluting Dr. King and the dedicated men and women who carry forward his legacy and continue to fight for civil rights for all people.

Voting is the foundation of democracy and justice. Those who would restrict it care not for either.



AFRICAN AMERICAN WALL OF HISTORY MURAL



Pictured left, Javan Franklin of Jacksonville, Texas views the mural at the Cherokee County, TX Courthouse.

Rusk, Texas - One year ago, this month the African American Mural of History was completed on the wall of the Cherokee County Courthouse basement. In celebration of African American History Month, the public is invited to visit the courthouse and take a look at this historical mural which contains a great

amount of history of Cherokee County schools: Fred Douglass, Booker T. Washington, George W. Bradford, Forest and Rosenwald schools; churches, laborers, athletes, veterans and much more.

The mural began as a discussion between Cherokee County Judge Chris Davis and George Martin who was then Cherokee County Historical Commission Vice Chair. Following the discussion, the two began collecting information. George enlisted the help of then Commission Chairperson Debra Burkett, put together a committee consisting of Dr. Richard Hackney of Bullard, Charlie Esco of Jacksonville, Maxine Session of Rusk, Linda Skinner and Charles Ann Mickey of Alto. Each began collecting history from his or her area and Cherokee County in general.

“The history mural is just the beginning we hope”, George stated. It is a collection of documented and undocumented history of the life and contributions of African Americans that should be known by all.

George is currently Cherokee County Historical Commission Chair. Please share copies of family and community history with George and the commission. You may contact him or Debra Burkett, Vice Chair at the commission office located in Rusk, Texas, 138 West Fifth Street, across from the Rusk Post Office, or 903 683-9680, e-mail: cchc@cocherokee.org.

The Cherokee County Courthouse is open from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. The mural is located on the wall of the basement which is easy access to this ground floor from the 5th Street side of the courthouse. Again, the public is invited to view this history.

NOMINATED TO SERVE ON U.S. SUPREME COURT

KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

On February 25, 2022, President Joe Biden nominated Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to become the 116th Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Judge Jackson was born in Washington, DC and grew up in Miami, Florida. Her parents attended segregated primary schools, then attended historically black colleges and universities. Both started their careers as public-school teachers and became leaders and administrators in the Miami-Dade Public School System. When Judge Jackson was in preschool, her father attended law school. In a 2017 lecture, Judge Jackson traced her love of the law back to sitting next to her father in their apartment as he tackled his law school homework—reading cases and preparing for Socratic questioning—while she undertook her preschool homework—coloring books.



Judge Jackson stood out as a high achiever throughout her childhood. She was a speech and debate star who was elected “mayor” of Palmetto Junior High and student body president of Miami Palmetto Senior High School. But like many Black women, Judge Jackson still faced naysayers. When Judge Jackson told her high school guidance counselor, she wanted to attend Harvard, the guidance counselor warned that Judge Jackson should not set her “sights so high.”

That did not stop Judge Jackson. She graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University, then attended Harvard Law School, where she graduated cum laude and was an editor of the Harvard Law Review.

Judge Jackson lives with her husband, Patrick, and their two daughters, in Washington, DC.

Judge Jackson experience includes Judge Jackson was one of President Biden’s first judicial nominees. She was confirmed with bipartisan support to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 2021.

President Obama nominated Judge Jackson to be a district court judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in 2012. She was confirmed with bipartisan support in 2013.

President Obama nominated Judge Jackson to serve as the Vice Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission in 2009, and she was confirmed with bipartisan support in 2010. Prior to serving as a judge, Judge Jackson followed in the footsteps of her mentor Justice Breyer by working on the U.S. Sentencing Commission. The Commission, which President Biden fought to create as a member of the U.S. Senate, is bipartisan by design. Her work there focused on reducing unwarranted sentencing disparities and ensuring that federal sentences were just and proportionate.

Judge Jackson represented defendants who did not have the means to pay for a lawyer. She would be the first former federal public defender to serve on the Supreme Court.

Judge Jackson served as Justice Breyer’s law clerk and learned up close how important it is for a Supreme Court Justice to build consensus and speak to a mainstream understanding of the Constitution. Because of her diverse and broad public service, Judge Jackson has a unique appreciation of how critical it is for the justice system to be fair and impartial. With multiple law enforcement officials in her family, she also has a personal understanding of the stakes of the legal system. After serving in the U.S. Army and being deployed to Iraq and Egypt, Jackson’s brother served as a police officer in Baltimore and two of her uncles were police officers in Miami. *Source Whitehouse*