

 **DECEMBER 2022** 

### **From our Graduates and friends:**

**Tommye Ruth Blair Toler:** ‘ I reminisced about the 25th Street Theater and neighborhood around it. My family went to the movies there. We lived in the 2500 block of Sanger and I roamed that area on foot and on bicycle often. Daddy worked at Sam Bale’s garage on 25th. The DQ on 25th was the first one I ever saw. Loved the dipped cones. At the drive-in convenience store at 25th and Morrow an employee would come out to the car to get your order and then bring it out to you. “

**Anne Bateman Myers ( whs’62):** “Just thought I’d send you the link to the making of the musical about *Gander* - it’s worth watching as it gives the background of the writers and what they were thinking:”

[Full Documentary: Gander's Ripple Effect: How a Small Town's Kindness Opened on Broadway - YouTube](#)

**Dana Sauer Keifer:** “Got tired of being a homeowner and all of the nagging little things that go along with it, so I decided to move to a retirement community! Absolutely LOVE it – no responsibilities – just walking my little dog (he is getting adjusted to his new environment – all the new smells outside keep him interested!!”

**Bev Murphy Wells:** “Loved seeing all the fall pictures in Colorado and North Carolina. What a beautiful country we live in! Congrats to Larry Thomas with all the 80's shirts he and his family wore to celebrate his 80th. Great idea! Looks like Judith Hamff Murphy's trip to Iceland granted her good weather! David Dibbs' reminiscing of the old western movies brought back memories and provided some info about Gunsmoke that was new to me.”

**Robert Wilson:** “WHS 60 Luncheon was attended by 22 people enjoying being together.

1. Aubrey Stringer 2. Howard Dudgeon 3. 4. Linda and James McKee 5. Tommy Ruth Toler 6.7. David and Janie Mc Phail 8. Will Markum 9. Sherry Nunn 10. Gary Roberts 11. Carol Scarborough 12.13. Kay and Ralph Sparks 14.15. Gregg and Linda Howell 16.17. Marvin and Ruth Schutza 18.19. Mickey and Melody Lavy 20.21. Nina and Bob Wallace 22. Robert Wilson Thank everyone for the fun.

Linda McKee will be hosting our next Luncheon in January.

See you in January 🐾🐾”

### **UPDATES:**

New address for **Dana Sauer Keifer:**

5800 Forest Hills Boulevard, Apt. B-121  
Columbus, OH 43231

**Bob Easter:** Mayo Clinic found what was not wrong with Bob and has referred him to different doctors in Austin. He has an appointment with a Neurosurgeon on Dec 5. Things seem to be focusing on his spine. If desired, you can email Bob at: [Bob@easterand easter.com](mailto:Bob@easterand easter.com) to get on his update list for further reports.

### **Regarding Grover Rogers:**

**Robert Wilson:** “So sorry to hear of Grover’s passing. He was a great guy.”

**Malissa Ruth Starnes Baugh:**” So sad! We have lost another dear classmate! Grover was one of a kind! What a guy!”

**Bev Murphy Wells:** “So sorry to hear about Grover and my heart goes out to Sandra and her family. I know they will all miss him dearly. I know they are thankful for having him in their lives.”



## **Whatever Happened to**



### **..... James Rankin**

*By David Dibb*

On April 2, 1981, two San Jose, California police officers were on a routine patrol, and noticed a yellow car parked, with two men asleep inside and the motor running. As Officer Pitts tapped on the window with his flashlight, he noticed a “whole bunch” of credit cards on the visor. When the surprised driver, Kelvin Malone, woke up and saw him, he began reaching under the car seat, so Pitts drew his pistol... but Malone hit the gas and sped off, knocking Pitts to the ground.

Pitts and his partner gave chase through the usually quiet streets of San Jose, and after Malone crashed into a lamppost, he and the other man, Michael Crenshaw, were taken into custody. The credit cards belonged to a James Rankin and a Minnie White. White was the owner of the yellow car. Her body had been found, shot, near Bakersfield, in the trunk of a blue Buick LeSabre, and Malone was charged with her murder. The Buick belonged to James Rankin. He had not been found.

San Jose authorities contacted Rankin’s family in Dallas, TX, and were told that he had not been seen or heard from in two weeks. James Rankin was vice-president of a Dallas engineering firm, Forrest and Cotton, and had recently taken charge of a branch in Kansas City, MO. He had met with 3 business associates at a Denny’s in Kansas City around midnight on March 19. He left by himself in the Buick, and was never heard from again. His wife, Beverley, and their four children, had begun to fear the worst.

James Rankin was one of our classmates, a member of the WHS Class of 1960. Like me (David Dibb), he was a member of the Slide Rule Club... not exactly the social springboard of WHS. We have no information about his time at WHS, but perhaps some of our Town Crier readers have a memory to share. Because the intriguing case of his disappearance and probable murder garnered the interest of the press, and was investigated by law enforcement authorities, we do have information about his probable murderer. And because his wife’s mother shared his late-blooming college success (and marriage to her daughter) with the University of Texas, we have that story, too.

## COLLEGE, MARRIAGE, ENGINEERING

After graduation from Waco High School, Jim enrolled in the engineering program at The University of Texas (Austin). His first year was an academic failure, but a personal success. He made “the Dean’s List” (the bad one), and was forced to withdraw because UT did not think he could make the grade. But he met a girl. Beverley Jones was also a student at UT... a dark-haired, dark-eyed beauty who immediately captured his heart.

Evidently Beverley did not see Jim as a failure. With her encouragement, he re-enrolled in the engineering program with new determination. Having someone you love who believes in you is a powerful motivator! He persevered for 4 more years, summers included, and in his final year, he made “the Dean’s List” again. This time, it was the good list... the Honor Roll. And somewhere in the middle of those 4 years, 1963, he and Beverley were married. His justifiably proud mother-in-law wrote a letter to the UT Alumni magazine (aimed at the school Administrators) suggesting that struggling students may benefit more from faith and encouragement, rather than a swift expulsion.

He took a job at Forrest and Cotton (F&C), engineering consultants, in Dallas, and he and Beverley and a new baby moved into a suburban home. In 1970 he was named Outstanding Young Engineer of the Year, in the Dallas area. In 1978, he was named a vice-president of F&C. As his responsibilities grew, so did his family. By 1980, there were four children: Donald, David, Anna, and Alan.

In late 1980, he was offered the job of taking over a newly-acquired F&C branch in Kansas City, MO. It would require the family to leave their beloved Texas and move to Kansas City, but the pay increase and new challenge were strong incentives. He and Beverley decided not to move the children until the end of the 1981 school year, so for a few months he would commute to KC Monday-Friday, and be home with the family on the weekend, and, of course, in touch by phone daily. He was home on the weekend of March 14th for Alan’s fifth birthday party, then headed back to KC for a week of important meetings with prospective clients.

When the KC office called Beverley on the morning of Thursday, March 19th, to say he had not shown up for work, and she knew of no reason for it, he was immediately reported

missing. A search of his hotel room found neatly folded clothes and no evidence of foul play, but Jim and his blue Buick were nowhere to be found in Kansas City.

## **CRENSHAW'S STORY**

When Kelvin Malone and Michael Crenshaw were apprehended by San Jose authorities, Crenshaw began singing like the proverbial choir boy. Amazingly, over an 18-year span from his arrest to his execution by lethal injection, Malone never admitted to anything. In fact, Malone's defense attorney claimed that Crenshaw was the real murderer. Juries were not convinced. Malone received convictions and death sentences in both California and Missouri, while Crenshaw was sentenced to 25 years for his role. (Doubtless, all that "singing" garnered him a plea bargain or two.)

But the details of the story now on record that connect a trail of dead bodies from Missouri to California are details provided by Michael Crenshaw, and gleaned from articles in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Kansas City Times, and several California newspapers. And one of those bodies is still missing. This is Crenshaw's story:

Malone, an Afro-American, was born in California in 1961. He had relatives in the St. Louis area, and attended high school there, where he met Michael Crenshaw. In 1978, Malone went to California, and came back "a different person", wanting to get involved in gang activity. Malone and a man named Armstrong robbed a judge at gunpoint in St. Louis. They were apprehended, and Malone served 10 months of a 7-year "reform school" term, then was paroled in November, 1980. He was 19 years old and already a convicted felon.

He headed back to California, and it was not long before he was convicted there of burglary and grand theft. He escaped while awaiting sentencing. On March 10th, Malone kidnapped a man in Santa Maria, CA. He asked the man for a ride, then pulled a gun and forced him into the trunk of his car. The man (who must have had a guardian angel) was eventually turned loose near Long Beach. Malone then robbed a gas station, and was probably responsible for an unsolved murder in Merced County.

Now on a serious crime spree, he took a bus back to St. Louis, where he joined up with Crenshaw. On March 18, Malone shot and killed a 62-year-old cab driver. William Parr was found with a bullet in his head in a parking lot not far from Crenshaw's home.

**They then kidnapped James Rankin in a Denny's parking lot just after midnight. They forced him in the trunk of his Buick, and took off towards California. Somewhere in the Mojave Desert, near the California border, Malone took Rankin out of the trunk and shot him to death, leaving his body in the desert, never located.**

**Hours later, in Baker, CA, they robbed and kidnapped a gas station attendant, Myrtle Benhan. She was sexually assaulted and beaten to death in a shack off a dirt road. Later that morning they robbed and shot Minnie White to death, and stole her car. One account states they placed her body in the trunk of the Buick, then set the Buick on fire after soaking the inside with alcohol.**

**The next day, they drove to San Jose, where alert city police apprehended them in Minnie White's car. In their possession were 15 or 20 credit cards belonging to White and Rankin, and a gun eventually linked to the murders of White (in California) and Parr (the cab driver in St. Louis.) Over the next 18 years, Malone faced prosecutors, judges, juries, and penal systems in two states, but he never escaped again.**

## **THE AFTERMATH**

**Beverley Rankin was left to raise 4 children on her own. In addition to the emotional uncertainty and lack of closure caused by the inability to locate her husband's body, she was unable to collect life insurance for quite some time. She stayed in Dallas, took a job, and got on with life and family. She remarried to a lifelong friend in 2004, more than 20 years after James' disappearance, but died in 2005. The oldest son, Donald, followed in his father's footsteps, and graduated from the University of Texas with a Civil Engineering degree in 1995.**

**In California, Kelvin Malone was convicted on 2 counts of 1st degree murder, with special (aggravating) circumstances, and sentenced to die by lethal injection. Then he was extradited to Missouri, where he was convicted of the Parr murder, and sentenced to die by lethal injection. His only comment to the judge was that he wanted to go back to California. And no wonder... from 1977 to 2022, Missouri executed 90 men on death row. In that same timeframe, California executed only 13 of their over 700 death row inmates.**

But Malone had more going in his favor than he realized. Under a death penalty in 2 states, neither state could execute him without infringing on the legal prerogative of the other. This kept the legal system in tangles for 18 years, until California got smart and reversed their death sentence so Missouri could execute him. And Missouri finally did in 1999, though it was little compensation for the many families he brought sadness to.

#### Post Script from the Editor:

According to the article in the *Alcalde*, Jim graduated from University of Texas Austin in 1965 with a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering. Also, I have been in touch with one of Jim's sons, Donald. Donald has been so good to send us the dedication to Jim that is in the book about the history of Forrest and Cotton Consulting Engineers. I am including what Donald sent to me:



## DEDICATION

This book on the history of Forrest & Cotton Consulting Engineers is dedicated to the late James T. Rankin, P.E., who in 1970 was voted Outstanding Young Engineer of the Year in Dallas, Texas. Eight years later he was promoted to vice-president of URS Forrest & Cotton. On March 19, 1981, after a night meeting with three architects in Kansas City, Missouri, Jim was abducted and murdered by two men and his body was left somewhere in the Mohave desert and was never found.

James T. Rankin, P.E., Vice-President  
URS Forrest & Cotton  
Dallas, Texas

James T. Rankin and his wife, Beverly met in March, 1962 while they were students at the University of Texas at Austin. They were engaged and married in 1963 and in 1965 they both graduated from the University. In 1965, Jim began his career in consulting engineering at Forrest & Cotton Consulting Engineers and they purchased their first home north of LBJ Freeway. Jim was a skillful young engineer who worked hard and having gained the respect of the officers and associates, he was given more and more responsibility and soon became a Project Engineer. In 1969, Jim and Beverly purchased twenty acres of farmland located five miles east of McKinney, Texas where they began the hobby of keeping bees. In addition to his dedication to the practice of engineering, Jim was active in professional and civic activities. On February 26, 1970 Jim was named "Outstanding Young Engineer of the Year" by the Preston Trails Chapter, Texas Society of Professional Engineers at the Annual Engineers Banquet. Eight years later Jim was elevated to the title of Vice-President of URS Forrest & Cotton. By 1980, Jim and Beverly had four children, three boys and a girl. During this period the family spent much time with soccer, Jim being the coach, and Beverly was active in the School PTA. URS Forrest & Cotton's Dallas Office was very busy during this period and had expanded by opening several branch offices. Jim Rankin was offered the opportunity to be manager of a new office in Kansas City, Missouri and he accepted the challenge. As is usually the case there was a transition period where Jim would come home

on weekends to be with the family. On Wednesday, March 18, 1981 Jim had met at night with three architects after a convention related to his work. The meeting broke up and Jim went to his car where he was kidnapped, put in the trunk of his

car and was driven across the western part of the country. Jim was shot and left in the Mojave Desert and was never found. Beverly, Jim's wife and their four children spent many agonizing days and nights afterward. The two kidnappers were apprehended by California authorities and it is not known what sentences they received. Sadly, Beverly Rankin passed away in 2005. She is to be greatly commended, having raised a wonderful family. Jim and Beverly's eldest son, David is a registered electrical engineer and has

a law practice. They have been blessed with three children. Don is a registered civil engineer

and has his own consulting firm. Don and Karen Rankin live in Plano, Texas. Anna is married and she and her husband have two children. Alan, the youngest of Jim's children, was named for Jim Rankin's fellow-engineer, Alan Plummer. Alan Rankin is a graduate electrical engineer and works for Texas Instruments.

Donald also sent me pictures from the family album of James T Rankin. I am including those along with any dates that were provided. Donald has been absolutely wonderful to share with us these pictorial memories and we are truly grateful!

I found a picture of Jim in our 1960 annual taken in the Sportman's Club and one of Jim at our very first reunion in Waco, 1975. Any other pictures or comments that our graduates might possibly have will certainly be welcomed to be featured in a future newsletter.

It was a true tragedy that Jim Rankin, this young, innocent, WHS graduate who had such potential was killed while in the prime of his life! Rest in Peace, Jim. You are not forgotten to all of us who knew you during the Waco High School days.

Jim, 15 yr. reunion- 1975



Jim, Sportsman Club 1960



From the Rankin family album as provided by Jim's son, Donald:



Jim and Bev 1973 or 1974



circa 1973



Jim Rankin family 1974



Jim and Bev 1975



Jim and Bev-1980ish



Circa 1977ish



1979



**URS**

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AN INTERNATIONAL  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE  
ORGANIZATION

**J. T. RANKIN, P. E.**  
VICE PRESIDENT

# Engineers cite Rankin

James T. Rankin was named "Young Engineer of the Year" by the Dallas and Preston Trail Chapters of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers Friday, during the National Engineers' Week banquet held at the Hilton Inn.

Rankin is a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Texas. He resides in Richardson with his wife and two young sons, and is a member of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church.

A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin where he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering, Rankin presently serves as Project Manager for Forrest and Cotton, Inc. as such he is responsible for client relationship, project planning, and project administration for various clients. One of his most outstanding recent accomplishments is his contribution toward the completion of the 5 million dollar Ten Mile Creek Regional Sewerage System For the Trinity River Authority.

Rankin's technical society activities include membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Water Pollution Control Federation, and the American Water Works Association.

He has been active in the

Dallas Chapter of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers since 1965 and has served in various positions including Chairman of the Membership and Reception Committees, the Young Engineers and Inter-Chapter Coordinating Committees, and currently is Chairman of the National Engineers Week Committee.



*James T. Rankin*



Bev, daughter Anna, Jim - 1975



Jim and baby David 1966



JT Rankin ,CDR building OneKey



Jim as MC -with son, Don



The children of James Rankin 2008

## **Jim Monnig remembers Jim Rankin:**

**“Jim Rankin and I were pretty good friends in high school. You may recall that Jim somehow or other had lost an eye. His parents had a 1957 four-door hard top bright red Oldsmobile I think they called the motor a rocket 88 and it was a really fast car. As you know, when you only have one eye, you have no depth perception. What used to impress me greatly was what a really great automobile driver Jim Rankin was. He would drive fast and kind of wild. He would zip in and out of traffic with very little clearance and I never saw him have any kind of a wreck. I never could figure out how he could drive the way he did with the handicap that he had. It was really impressive. Jim was a real heavy smoker. I think I probably met him in the smoker which was in the boy’s restroom. You probably never saw the smoker. It was a room about 8 feet wide and maybe 15 or 20 feet long and all around the perimeter were benches and in the middle of the room was a big can perhaps like a trashcan lid with about a million cigarettes butts in it. Between classes and during lunch the room would be packed with people smoking and we all came out of there reeking of smoke. I think that’s probably where I met Jim. Another thing that always impressed me about Jim was what a wonderful job his mother did with his clothes, his jeans were always pristine, pressed, and creased and his shirts were the same. Jim was a muscular guy and he always looked sharp. I heard somewhere that he got murdered I don’t know if that is the case or not but would love to know, what you might know about that. Jim was a good guy, and this is a little of what I remember about him, and I hope it is helpful.”**

**Jim**

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## **DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:**

- 9- Sondi Nelson Pace**
- 13- Jerry Causey**
- 14- Peggy Wake Thyfault**
- 16- Chinky Johnson**
- 17- David McPhail**
- 24- Howell Johnson**
- 26- Howard Dudgeon, Joan Beaty Settle**
- 28- Gayla Miller Webb**
- 31- Elizabeth Bentley, Gwen Ewing Hodges**



1. More memories of **Howard Dudgeon** as told at the **2005** reunion:

a. "I went to spring football and basketball training at Waco High from West Junior in the spring of 1957. My first day there I was asked by Buzzy Hoover, the Tiger football manager, if I could drive a truck. I said 'yes' which was a lie. I drove the truck out to Death Valley on 4<sup>th</sup> Street with as many of the ninth grade football players that could pile on the truck. I practically had to stand up while I drove the truck. I was less than 5'5" at the time. It was an adventure. The truck had to be double clutched to change gears so the first few times that I drove it, I was stripping gears all the way out there and back."

b. "In the fall of 1957 Mr. Knipper caught on fire in Biology class. Milton Kerr put him out. I think Milton is a preacher now. I sat next to Chinky Johnson and Cynthia Kirkland in that class. Chinky has a PHD in microbiology and was honored as a distinguished alumus of the Waco Public Schools in 2002. I went to the ceremony. Cynthia married a Baylor friend of mine named Frank Mazza. Frank was the first person in the history of the Southwest Conference to throw the sixteen pound shot putt over 60 feet."

2. **John Anderson**: "I just got back from a cruise down the mighty Mississippi, before the Galápagos and French Polynesian, before that the Acatama desert and a charter flight over Anartica to view a total solar eclipse. Soon will go back to South Africa."

A few pictures from the November 15 graduate luncheon:



Aubrey Stringer, Howard Dudgeon, Robert Wilson



James and Linda McKee



David and Janie McPhail

## A Neat Idea for wrapping presents:



Utilize two ends of rolls of wrapping paper by getting a little creative and making a new design.



Wrap the person's gift with his/her initial



Use a picture of the receiver on the front of his/her package

## HUMOR:

**We've been  
friends for so long,  
I can't remember  
which one of us is  
the bad influence.**

**It's my wife's  
birthday tomorrow,  
she's been leaving  
jewellery  
catalogues all over  
the house, so I've  
bought her a  
magazine rack**

**A Sign at optometrist office:**

**"If you don't see what you're looking for,  
You've come to the right place."**

**A sign on a plumber's truck:**

**"We repair what your husband fixed."**

**A Sign in a non-smoking area:**

**"If we see smoke, we will assume you  
are on fire and will take appropriate action."**

**DON'T  
TRUST EVERYTHING  
YOU SEE.  
EVEN SALT LOOKS  
LIKE SUGAR.**



**Cute bathroom signs:**



**Merry Christmas!**

**and**  
**Happy New Year !**

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