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Tumbleweed Smith

"Small dreams don't stir men's souls," says Tommie Ritter Smith of Carthage. "That's kind of been my theme."

She had a big dream and it came true. Tommie is the guiding light behind the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame in Carthage, a four million dollar museum and reference center for country music. It opened twenty-five years ago and is a huge monument to Texas country musicians. The state has a lot of them including Gene Autry, Bob Wills, Tex Ritter, Jim Reeves, Dale Evans, Earnest Tubb, Waylon Jennings, Lefty Frizzell, Buck Owens, Barbara Mandrell, George Strait, Kitty Wells, Hank Williams, Kenny Rogers, Ray Price and Willie Nelson. These are among fifty inductees into the hall of fame in Carthage. New ones are added in August each year with a big concert and ceremony.

"When I started this project I sat down and made a list of four hundred singers, songwriters and others who had made significant contributions to country music. If I could live long enough I could do this a hundred years and still have plenty to put in there. Now we have another generations of musicians." Tex Ritter and Jim Reeves came from Panola County where Carthage is the county seat. Tommie is kin to Tex. While she was chamber of commerce manager in Carthage she built the Tex Ritter Museum upstairs in the antebellum house where the chamber offices are located. "It was a modest display of Tex's costumes and instruments," says Tommie. "Then I added Jim Reeves and some others."

The germ of the idea to build the hall of fame grew when Tex Ritter was inducted into the Grand Old Opry Museum in Nashville. Tommie convinced civic leaders in Carthage to go with her for the event. "All of the Grand Ole Opry stars were there along with all the people who were anybody in Nashville. The delegation from Carthage saw how well respected Tex Ritter was and what an important part of the country music scene he was. He was president of the Country Music Association for a while and one of the first inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville and it was a great weekend of celebration honoring Tex Ritter. They came back realizing we had something to build on. So we started raising money soon after that. The community really got behind the project to build something to honor Texas Country Musicians."

To mark the 25th anniversary of the hall of fame, Tommie started writing down some of its history and activities. She realized she needed help organizing all the material so she called on her neighbor Bill O'Neal, former state historian and author of nearly 50 books, to help her. The result is a 150-page book titled appropriately THE TEXAS COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME. It is full of photographs and stories about country musicians who call Texas home. Bill, a thorough researcher, says Panola County is the only county in the United States that has produced two famous country musicians.

Tommie is now planning to add an exhibit of Texas gospel musicians.



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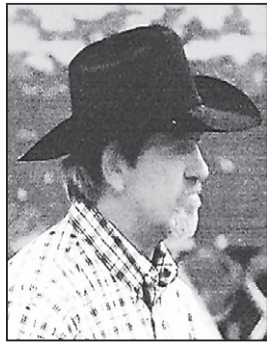
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Jeffrey Wade Vititow

Funeral services for Jeffrey Wade Vititow, age 60, of Leesburg, TX, will be held at 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 15, 2023, at Shannon Oaks Church with Bro. Mike Eason and Bro. Chad Lee officiating. Interment will follow at Greenview Cemetery with Lee Pogue, Lindy Shipley, Archie Lindley, Ricky Taff, Sammy Richards, Trey Whiteman, Evin Darling, Landis Klika, Matt Simmons, and John Elmore serving as pallbearers. Visitation will be held from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at West Oaks Funeral Home.

Jeffrey passed away on Saturday, February 11, 2023. He was born on April 2, 1962, in Sulphur Springs, TX, the son of Paul Ray Vititow and Linda Sue Gibbs. He married Traci Self Vititow on February 8, 2020, at Taff Farms. He worked as the ranch manager for Taff Land and Cattle. He is survived by wife, Traci, sons, Dakota Vititow, Calijah Self, daughters, Cara Thompson (Geoff), Afton Vititow (Nathan), Trinity Snow, brothers, Paul Ray Vititow, Jr. (Shelley), Mark Patrick (Jenna), grandchildren, Claire, Maggie, and Libbi Thompson, Kinsler "Little D" Vititow, Marlee McWhorter, Braggin Smith, Talont Anderson, father and mother-in-law, Johnny and Marcia Self, brother-

in-law, Charley Self, special friend and family, Kris Vititow, aunts and uncles, Larry and Wanda Vititow, Wanda C. Vititow, Sarah Gibbs (Mimi), and many special cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, sisters, Paula Sue Vititow, Stacey Patrick, son, Talon, and uncles, Charles Vititow, CF Vititow, and Jerry Vititow.

Ned Ball

A funeral service for Ned Ball, age 82, of Sulphur Springs was held at 4:00 P.M. on Saturday, February 11, 2023 at Murray-Orwosky Funeral Chapel with Neal Cochran and Danny Ballard officiating. Interment followed at Peerless Cemetery with Michael Ball, Matthew Ball, Charles (Bubba)Ball, Larry Ballard, Clyde Lee Ball, and Rickey Don Self serving as pallbearers. Honorary pallbearers were grandsons, Aaron Ball, Bradley Ball, and Sean Wells. Visitation was held from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. on Friday, February 10, 2023 at Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home. Mr. Ball passed away on February 8, 2023 at his residence.

Ned Cebert Ball was born on March 11, 1940 in Peerless, Texas to Jess and Zora (Wilks) Ball. At the age of 21, he met and married the love of his life, Glenna Beth Ballard on March 6, 1961. They lived in Sulphur Springs, Texas all of their married life where they raised their family and he worked serving the community with their backhoe business for 41 years.

Ned never met a stranger and loved visiting with family and friends. He never missed a chance to worship with his church family and loved the Lord with all of his heart. He spent all of his spare time golfing, fishing, hunting and watching old westerns on TV.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Glenna.

He is survived by his children, Harold Ball and wife, Jackie; Mary Ball Belz; and Jerry Ball and wife, Sabrina all of Sulphur Springs. Grandchildren, Aaron Ball and Sydney Clagett of Pflugerville, TX, Shawna Loper of Sulphur Springs, Tx, Bradley Ball and Kailyn Brantley of Sulphur Springs, TX; Haley Ball and Justin Wolfe of Tyler, Tx. Great Grandchildren; Kinlie Loper, Addison Ball, Natalee Ball, and Kyler Brantley all of Sulphur Springs. Also survived by siblings; Charles Ball (Pat), Harold Ball, Mildred Logan, Joanne Fouse (Roger), Cathy Pipkin (Junior), Laska Lathuris. He was also preceded in death by his parents; brothers: Clayborn Ball, Billy Jean Scarborough, Jess Thomas Ball, Herman Ball; Sisters: Delila Graham, Jenny Skinner, Evalena Sexton, Maurine Wayland, and Rita Fay Johnson.



Betty Smith

A graveside service for Betty Smith, age 81 of Cumby, Texas was held at 10:00 A.M. on Thursday, February 9, 2023, at Brashear Cemetery with Bro. David Burns officiating. Come and go visitation was held on Wednesday, February 8 from 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM at Murray Orwosky Funeral Home. She passed from this life on Sunday, February 5, 2023 at Rock Creek Health and Rehabilitation.

Betty Smith was born on December 4, 1941, in Dallas, Texas. Betty married Rayburn Dale Smith on October 6, 1962 in Brashear, Texas, he preceded her in death in 2013. She was a member of Brashear Baptist Church.

She is survived by two sons, Ricky Smith (Natalie) and Timmy Smith (Na); one daughter Debbie Gomez, grandchildren, Tyler Smith (Brittani), Landry Smith, Delaina Leary (Ryan), Coty Smith, Justin Varner, Tanner Gomez (Brittany), Brandon Gomez (Hanna), Lacie Gomez, Natalie Khamvongsa, Nina Khamvongsa,; great grandchildren, Sawyer Smith, Gavin Moss, Bub Leary, Scarlett Gomez; She is also survived by one brother, Harvey Perry (Judy); One Sister, Doris

Erickson; Two Sisters In Law, Carolyn Vaughan and Lisa Smith; One Brother In Law, Carl Smith (Donna). She was preceded in death by her husband, Dale Smith; parents, Rayburn and Nancy Smith; son in law, Sammy Gomez and brother, Alvin Perry.

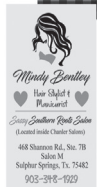
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Texas Governor



Gregg Abbott

Gregory Wayne Abbott (born November 13, 1957) is an American politician, attorney, and former jurist serving as the 48th governor of Texas since 2015. A member of the Republican Party, he served as the 50th attorney general of Texas from 2002 to 2015 and as a member of the Texas Supreme Court from 1996 to 2001.

Abbott was the third Republican to serve as attorney general of Texas since the Reconstruction era. He was elected to that office with 57% of the vote in 2002 and reelected with 60% in 2006 and 64% in 2010, becoming the longest-serving Texas attorney general in state history, with 12 years of service. Before becoming attorney general, Abbott was a justice of the Texas Supreme Court, a position to which he was appointed in 1995 by then-governor George W. Bush. Abbott won a full term in 1998 with 60% of the vote. As attorney general, he successfully advocated for the Texas State Capitol to display the Ten Commandments in the 2005 U.S. Supreme Court case *Van Orden v. Perry*, and unsuccessfully defended the state's ban on same-sex marriage. He was involved in numerous lawsuits against the Barack

Obama administration, seeking to invalidate the Affordable Care Act and the administration's environmental regulations.

Elected in 2014, Abbott is the first Texas governor and third governor of a U.S. state to use a wheelchair. As governor, Abbott supported the Donald Trump administration and has promoted a conservative agenda, including measures against abortion such as the Texas Heartbeat Act, lenient gun laws, opposition to illegal immigration, support for law enforcement funding, and election reform. In response to the power crisis following a February 2021 winter storm, Abbott called for reforms to Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) and signed a bill requiring power plant weatherization. During the COVID-19 pandemic in Texas, Abbott opposed implementing face mask and vaccine mandates, while blocking local governments, businesses, and other organizations from implementing their own.

Early life, education, and legal career

Abbott was born on November 13, 1957, in Wichita Falls, Texas, of English descent. His mother, Doris Lechristia Jacks Ab-

bott, was a housewife and his father, Calvin Rodger Abbott, was a stockbroker and insurance agent. When he was six years old, they moved to Longview; the family lived there for six years. When he was 12, Abbott's family moved to Duncanville. In his sophomore year in high school, his father died of a heart attack; his mother went to work in a real estate office. Abbott graduated from Duncanville High School, where he was on the track team, in the National Honor Society, and was voted "Most Likely to Succeed".

In 1981, Abbott earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in finance from the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a member of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity and the Young Republicans Club. He met his wife, Cecilia Phalen, while attending UT Austin. In 1984, he earned his Juris Doctor degree from the Vanderbilt University Law School.

Abbott went into private practice, working for Butler and Binion, LLP between 1984 and 1992.

Abbott, a Catholic, is married to Cecilia Phalen Abbott, the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants. They were married in San Antonio in 1981. His

election as governor of Texas made her the first Latina to be First Lady of Texas since Texas joined the union. They have one adopted daughter, Audrey. Cecilia is a former school-teacher and principal.

Wheelchair use

On July 14, 1984, at age 26, Abbott was paralyzed below the waist when an oak tree fell on him while he was jogging after a storm. Two steel rods were implanted in his spine, and he underwent extensive rehabilitation at TIRR Memorial Hermann in Houston and has used a wheelchair ever since. He sued the homeowner and a tree service company, resulting in an insurance settlement that provided him with lump sum payments every three years until 2022 along with monthly payments for life; both are adjusted for inflation. As of August 2013, the monthly payment was US\$14,000 and the three-year lump sum payment was US\$400,000, all tax-free. Abbott has said he relied on the money to pay for nearly three decades of medical expenses and other costs.

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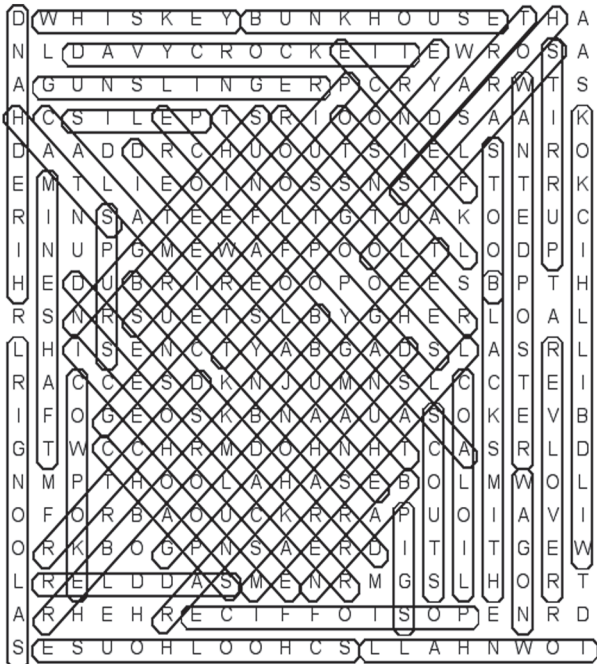
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