Biographical Information on Hugh Ramsey

Having moved to Harlingen, Texas in 1925, Hugh Ramsey is elected Mayor of the city for the first time in 1936, then re-elected for four consecutive terms, and again to serve 1948 to 1946. This native of Milford, TX was born in 1894. He joined the army in 1913 and was stationed in the Valley in 1916. He served overseas in the Great War (WWI) with the 36th before being discharged in 1919. He is a member of the First Baptist Church and the Rotary Club for over 24 years. In the late 30s he is owner of a furniture store bearing his name and is also a general contractor.

As early as 1938, air-minded city officials launch a program designed to stimulate interest in making Harlingen a commercial airport center. The European events of 9/40 awaken popular enthusiasm for defense of the U.S. Mayor Hugh Ramsey makes a definitive proposal to the War Department. City officials, along with Senators Tom Connally and Morris Sheppard, point to a number of factors which make Harlingen attractive for military training. This sets the stage for the start of a military air field here in late 1941. It will become the Harlingen Army Air Field with a mission to train aircraft gunners. Over 48,000 gunners will have been trained before the WWII ends in 1945 and the field closes. In 1952 the field reopens as the Harlingen Air Force Base. In a period of just over a decade before it is ordered closed, it will train over 13,000 officers in air navigation. The economic implications (positive, later negative, then positive again) of what Mayor Ramsey initiated and wrought were immense for the city of Harlingen.

1939 St. Alban's parish builds a more sizeable sanctuary at the corner of 11th and Van Buren. Contractor Hugh Ramsey builds the brick edifice for $8,500 and at no profit to himself. It will be enlarged and remodeled in 1946. The old church, now to be used as a parish hall, will be move behind the new one. The church's first rectory, at 718 E. Van Buren, will be purchased in 5/42.

Hugh Ramsey Nature Park is at the 1000 block of South Loop 499, a northern extension of Ed Carey Drive, where the bridge crosses the Arroyo Colorado. It is named after the former mayor of Harlingen who served from 1936 to 1946 and again 1948-1950. It was designated as a park by the city commissioners in February 1953. Amenities in this 54 acre wooded park include nature trails, an observation blind overlooking the arroyo and restrooms. At some future time it will become the home of the Harlingen Birding Center.