Information on Harlingen Municipal Golf Course Photographs contributed to the Harlingen Public Library Archive Room by Crystella Liston Holloway, 12 Hollybrook, Gilmer, TX 75644 in December 2004. The time span of the photographs likely ranges from the year 1935 to the year 1948.

**Sam Botts**

1909 was the year Sam Botts established himself in Harlingen. Born on 1/4/83 in Bottsville, TX near Gonzales in Central Texas, by 1907 he was in the ginning business for himself in Gonzales. In Harlingen he started buying cotton and selling groceries and general merchandise, the latter with J.B. Chambers, in the Lon C. Hill Building. They occupied the first floor of Harlingen's first major brick building completed in 1909. Part of the first floor was occupied by the Harlingen State Bank.

It was in late 1910 that Botts was among the signers of a petition to the state to incorporate Harlingen under the commission form of government available for cities of over 1000 population. A census had revealed that the town had a population of 1,126 people. In 1911 the civic-minded Botts was a member of the volunteer fire fighting organization.

Botts later married Miss Geneva Tarver, who, in 1917, was a first grade teacher in town. In 1920 he became interested in the concentration, packing, and shipping of citrus fruit and vegetables and formed the Botts Produce Company of Harlingen. Other firm members were W.E. Jeffries and J.R. Barnett. By 1929 he becomes president of the Farmers Gin Company of Harlingen. This same year he was president of the Valley Mid-Winter Fair.

In November 1925 it is announced that a new gin is to be constructed at Palmetal by the People's Gin Co. Another is to go up north of Botts Produce on Commerce. Principles for the latter are C.L. Webb of Hugo, OK and T.A. Henderson of Harlingen. Botts Produce at 305 N. Commerce Street is this month to be succeeded by the Fruit Produce Exchange. By 1939 Botts is out of the produce business altogether. He then becomes manager of the Combes-Rangerville Gin.

Botts was destined to be Harlingen Mayor, 1928-36. This pioneer ginner and 33 year resident of Harlingen, who served on the city commission for 16 years, is to die in July 1942. Sam Botts, who served on the City Commission 4/19-12/28, becomes mayor in 12/28 and is in office to the end of 1936. His administration is similar to Ewing's in that it has drive, integrity, idealism, and the business know-how. He was involved in the Valley Mid-Winter Fair and chairman of the board of the First Methodist Church. It was his motion under Mayor Ewing that the city voted not to charge churches a building fee. Under him, air passenger service was established at the relatively primitive municipal airport whose location was the south end of the present-day golf course.

Julia Botts, Sam and Genieve's daughter, is living at home (622 E. Harrison) but in 1939 will become a Texas A & M College student.
1957 As Expressway 83 is widened in West Harlingen this necessitates the rearrangement of part of the municipal golf course. The south side airstrip is removed at what is now between the 7th and 13th fairways. Plans for what was to be Sam Botts Park on the very south end are discarded. Sam Botts Park was designated as such but was never developed. It was to be located at the south 74-acre tip near the vacated municipal airstrip adjacent to the municipal golf course. It lay between the Arroyo Colorado and the Harlingen Main Canal. Some of its area was taken when the golf course was redesigned; the remainder is scrub brush.

**Evelyn Joyner**

Eevlyn's parents are well established in the community and are able to provide her comfortably. The Italian villa style home built by W.T. Liston at 613 E. Taylor is for Oscar Nathan Joyner and his wife Anne Evelyn. The house was built in late 1925 and early 1926 for the Joyners who had come to Harlingen in 1919 from Rosdale, TX. He became the first Valley agent for the Texas Co. (Texaco) and will later own the Joyner Oil Company. The house was modeled on Boca Raton, FL homes designed by Addison Mizner, a famous architect of the day. The Joyner family owned it to the early 1980s when the new owner completely restored it. O.N. Joyner was born in Rockdale, TX on 9/1/91 and attended high school there. He married Annie E. McCalla on 7/15/13. They came to Harlingen 7/26/19. This Presbyterian member was also a Mason and Shriner.

1930-34 A Valley resident since 1930, C.W. Blackwell has a flying school in the area. Mr. and Mrs. O.N. Joyner's daughter Evelyn is one of his students and is considered to be the youngest woman pilot in the country. After she earns a flying license, her father purchases a plane. Blackwell makes most of his living with his pioneer agricultural dusting service and will manager the old Harlingen Airport for a number of years. At age 67 on 5/15/59 Blackwell passes.

**Bill Williams**

1923 The first locally owned plane is brought to town. Leman Nelson and Clay Rader have purchased a WWI bi-plane, still in its crate, for $600. Later Leman Nelson and Bill Williams open a flying school. Two students plan to hi-jack the plane to Central America. With Nelson in the front cockpit, the student shoots him while airborne, intending to dump the body in the Gulf, land, and pick up his accomplice. Instead the novice crashes between Harlingen and San Benito. As rescuers move to the plane he commits suicide.

In November 1928 Harlingen boosts that its airport was the first in the Valley to be rated by the Department of Commerce. It begins to draw up plans to enlarge and modernize the facility and equipment. Its address is listed as ½ mile San Benito Highway, 1 mile West.
Obviously Bill keeps his hand in aviation, for in 1937 he is the manager for the city's municipal airport. He, his wife Clara, and children make their home near the caliche airstrip. Mostly the strip services agricultural applicators.

**E.C. Bennett**

It is in April 1921 that E.C. Bennett arrives in Harlingen. He will become Manager of the Water and Light District operated by the city. Born in Farmersburg, IN 9/29/90, he attends public schools. Married to Jennie Reed on 5/18/11, this First Methodist member is also a Mason and Shriner and a member of the American Legion.

3/6/22 E.C. Bennett, in charge of all city equipment, unloads first solid wheel fire engine, a 350gpm American-La France Type 40 pumper. Fund raisers have helped to defray its cost. Bennett is city manager of utilities, 1921-1929. He authorizes the street name changes for the south-north cross streets but these are not implemented until 1926. Those east of the intersection of Harrison and Commerce get numbers and those west, letters. The cross streets west are given consecutive alphabet letters starting with A at Commerce and to the east, consecutive numbers. Street names which were lost, starting with Mexico Street becoming F Street, and moving east were: Matamoros, Hidalgo, Winchell, Bell, Hill, Fordyce, Brookings, Van Arsdale, Beggs, Vanderbilt, Bennett, Whataker (7th Street), Bryan (9th), and Regan (10th). The correct numbering of houses is also accomplished. These changes occur in late 1925 or early 1926.

1/1/27 E.C. Bennett commences service as fire chief and remains until late 1934. He will serve again from 1/36 until 8/36. 8/36 This month E. C. Bennett completes the reorganization of the fire department and recommends fireman Jake Childress for the position. Childress commences his tenure as fire chief and will continue until April 1943 when he resigns to become deputy sheriff in Harlingen under Sheriff Tom Morrison.

Bennett is its manager by 1931 of the Central Power and Light Company (CPL) power system for the city, He and his wife reside in the 1930s at 302 E. Monroe.

9/49 The Masons dedicate their new lodge at 702 E. Harrison. The cornerstone was laid in March 1949 by Dr. Clarence M. Cash, "the man who first set the lodge to work." E.C. Bennett is general chairman of the dedication ceremony.

It is in 1950 that Fire Station No. 1, 121 W. Jefferson, built as a $90,000 central facility and by 2002 valued at $910,720, opens and is named the E.C. Bennett Station in honor of the early chief.

**George Wroten**

Sam Foster starts the first Chevrolet agency at 516 W. Jackson. In July 1, 1934 he sells his business to the Knapp Chevrolet Co. Shortly thereafter its W. Harrison building burns
to the ground. The dealership moves to the Wroten Building where Harlingen Motors later was located. George Wroten, in addition to operating Wroten Motors, together with Phil Edie, operated the Cadillac Grill. In 1944, after he had left the dealership behind, he was employed by Browns Express Co. as a claims adjuster. He left the Valley in the fall of 1955. He died in San Antonio at age 81 on 2/8/61.

James K. Junkin is selling furniture at 211-3 W. Monroe. In 1931 he will have moved into the building at 124 North A Street across from the Arcadia Theater. By 1941 he will move into the spacious two-story building that has been vacated by Wroten Motors at 516 W. Jackson. The Olympus Gym moves in when Junkin's Fine Furniture vacates this site in 1990, only to close a few years later in smaller premises.

Mary Freese Wroten came to Harlingen in 1933 to be near her son George. This Episcopalian born 8/26/1850 lived to age 100. She had married Dr. George Wroten and lived in South Dakota where he had been superintendent of Indian schools as well as surgeon for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. Later they moved to Louisiana where the doctor died in 1917.

Jim Ferguson, after working as auto parts manager for another Harlingen agency, acquires a Chrysler one in 1935. He then receives the Chrysler franchise in 1938. Don Bodenhammer, Sr. joins the firm as partner in 1941. In 1958 Ferguson purchases Harlingen Motors, a Dodge-Plymouth agency and added the Chrysler line. The Harlingen Dodge agency was originally organized by George Wroten. In 1936 it is located at 516 W. Jackson but a year later is at 424 W. Harrison. By 1942 it had dropped the name Wroten and was the Harlingen Motors Dodge and Plymouth. Wroten later sold it to Dr. George Gallaher. Ferguson bought the agency from Gallaher.

Betty Palis

Elizabeth (Betty) Palis was the wife of Fred W. Palis. He was secretary to Charles F.C. Ladd, the real estate man responsible for selling acreage at Adams Gardens, Inc. starting in 1931. They resided at 6 Madison Street. When Ladd turns over the Adams Gardens enterprise to Sid Berly and departs the area so do the Palis family.

Alta Porter

Alta Porter is the wife of Roy Porter. He is the proprietor of the Hi-Way Inn. It was started in 1927. Roy Porter's Hi-Way Inn located at 312 South F Street between Harrison and Tyler becomes a very popular gathering place. Later to be open 24 hours a day, it proclaims "4 Corners-Harlingen" and "We never close." The four corners moniker comes from the fact that this heavily-trafficked area has a service station on each corner. The café has a long existence but is closed after 1983. At one point in time Phil Edie, who owned several restaurants in Harlingen, apparently purchased it from the Porters. For
many years prior to its closing it is the gathering place for Latino teenagers. It is replaced by the Mexican food restaurant Las Cazuelas owned by the Medrano family.

Alfonso (Al) Escalante

Al Escalante shown in these photos (taken between 1928 and 1936) appears to be in his late teens. He was born in Brownsville in 1916. He along with an unidentified individual appears to have been a tournament winner. The photos of him are likely from the mid to late 1930s. His father was a pro at the Brownsville Country Club and upon his death Al took was involved at this club. His parents had been born in Mexico. He participated in World War II and likely had attended college previously because he had a rank of captain. He was a member of the 330th Bombardment Group (VH) which flew B 29s from Iwo Jima and Guam and bombed Japan in 1945. Al was a bombardier who possessed amazing 20-10 vision. He flew under LTCOL. R.B. Smisek in the K-29, "City of San Francisco". The window nose of the plane had Al's wife's name, Ozelle painted on it. Escalante earned the nickname '88 Keys' after he mistakenly bombed a piano factory in Tokyo.

He went on after the war to instruct golf, supervise the upkeep of the golf course, and operated a pro shop at Fort Davis, Texas, Cristobal, Canal Zone, and the Brownsville Country Club. In 1950 he moved to northern Mexico and in 1954 returned to Brownsville for a few years. Around 1957 or 1958 he moved to Monterrey and around 1963 accepted a position with the Club de Golf Chapultepec, a large country club near Mexico City. He was a pro there for more than 35 years. Escalante died in 2002 at age 85, having given a golf lesson a few hours before. His wife Ozelle died in 2004. Al was proud of being born a Texan.

Tony Butler

It is in 1929 that the Harlingen Municipal Golf Course of 168 acres is being built to the design of John Bredemus, famous golf course architect and secretary of the Texas Professional Golfers Association. The idea for the establishment of a course came from an organized group of golfers called the Arroyo Country Club.

The Harlingen Municipal Golf Course with its 18 holes costing $127,000 for land and $120,000 for construction is opened for play. Its formal opening is in September when the $10,000 Caddy House is completed. It is located off M Street, south of Expressway 77/83. It is a par 71 course of 6,360 yards having 120 sand traps and bunkers. A city owned gravel-dirt airstrip is south of the course in a 72 acre area later designated to become Sam Botts Park but which never comes to fruition. When Expressway 83 is constructed, the course loses some land but expands to the south into a 27 hole course.

1932 The first Lower Rio Grande Valley Men's Amateur (golf) tournament is held and won by Hill Cocker. Three years later the first Lower Rio Grande Valley Lady's Tournament will be held and won by Mrs. A.E. McClendon.
Tony Butler first comes to Harlingen as a 25 year old in 1933. Born in Ganado, Texas 4/19/08, he grows up to be a slight to average-build young man. A protege of the famed Austin golfer Harvey Penick, Butler is to turn professional in 1928 shortly after entering the University of Texas. He is to move to Port Arthur as a pro then return to UT as student/coach, the first golf coach at the school. In 1931 he wins the Texas PGA and a chance to play in the PGA Championship in Providence. This year he is in the money six times. In 1932 he places second in the Texas PGA Championship played in Harlingen. Butler would leave Harlingen for a position in Beeville but was soon to return and become a fixture as golf pro here for many years. He is good and plays the 18 hole course in a record 62 strokes as verified by his August 6, 1936 score card now in the library archive. The course par at the time is 71. In 1937 he is renting a room at 713 E. Jackson at the home of J.L. Cady, a barber by trade. When he does leave for greener pastures his devotees petition him to return. On June 20, 1973 the course is renamed the Tony Butler Municipal Golf Course in recognition of his 40 years of service. He retires in 1975 and becomes Professional Emeritus. Butler is to die in December 1979 at age 71. In 1998 he is inducted into the Rio Grande Valley Sports Hall of Fame.

1948 The Municipal Golf Course holds the inaugural "Valley Open" with a $10,000 purse. The tournament lasts only four years after losing money. The noted professional golfers who were champions (in order) were Lloyd Mangrum, Cary Middlecoff, Jackie Burke, Jr., and Chuck Klein. Top notch golfer Craig Wood was also a participant.

8/15/49 The Harlingen Country Club is incorporated and chartered with total assets of $450.00. The incorporating directors are; J.L. Head, A.M. Jones, R. Kroeger, L.R. Baker, Dr. Phil A. Bleakney, E.G. Pink, J.D. Chambers, Jr., H.H. Young, and Karl Gibbon, Sr.

1950 The Harlingen Country Club organizes with a membership of more than 350. It is the owner of a two acre $125,000 property adjacent to the municipal golf course on M Street. This facility can accommodate 300-400 people. A large swimming pool is one of its amenities.

1967 The Harlingen Country Club edifice adjacent to the Municipal Golf Course burns down. After obtaining 150 acres in what is to become Palm Valley Estates, the club in 1968 under its president Neal Bonner has contractor Frank Parker build a very stylish and enduring clubhouse. In late July 1969 with Matt Gorges as president, the club opens and the course is inaugurated under its golf pro George McKay.

**Traxler Daughter**

David B. Traxler and his wife were parents to daughters Julia and Georgia. In 1929 he is sales director for Valley Developments, Inc., an aggressive firm selling Valley real estate.
Several years later he has his own firm selling securities from his office at 202-04 State National Bank Building. The family resides at 1021 S. F Street. By 1937 the Traxlers are gone from the Harlingen scene.

**Dr. Frank D. Walsworth**

In 1931 Dr. Walsworth and his wife Thelma I. are residing at 213 E. Madison. He is a physician and surgeon with an office at 106 S. A Street. He is also the city health officer. He has a private practice as a physician and surgeon with an office at 106 S. A Street. He and his wife, Thelma I. reside at 213 E. Madison. By 1938 he will be owner of the Harlingen Optical Company and have moved on to 1422 E. Tyler. A year later he will advertise his specialty as ear, eye, and nose operating at his office at 107 N. A Street.

**Liz Watson**

Liz is very likely the daughter of E. C. Watson and his wife Verdie who reside at 206 E. Lee. He is the publisher of *Texas Citriculture* magazine. Its 1939 office will be 319 E. Jackson. By 1937 Elizabeth is residing at 221 W. Buchanan.

**Grace Wood**

Mrs. Wood is the wife of C.S. Wood. He and his wife have been in Harlingen since at least 1930. He is an employee of the Department of Agriculture. She is a writing instructor in the school system. In most of the 1930s they reside at 114 E. Buchanan Street then in 1937 move to 517 E. Taylor.

**Davis and Grace Wade**

He is in 1939 sales manager for La Feria Produce. They reside at 1126 E. Filmore and apparently lived later in San Benito.

**Craig Wood**

Craig Wood is a noted professional golfer on the PGA tournament tour. See appended information.

**Henry Picard**
Henry Picard is a professional golfer on the PGA tournament tour. See appended information.

**Patty Berg**

Patty Berg is a professional golfer on the LPGA tournament tour. See appended information.

**Ed Brady, Sr.**

Ed Brady was a San Benito resident. He owned two theaters in San Benito, one of which was the Rivoli. He was an avid amateur golfer. One anecdote told about him is this. In the 1930s he was in Houston on business when he was approached and asked if he was interested in selling his two movie theaters. The offer was for $30,000. He thought that a good offer and agreed to the sale. The buyer gave him $16,000 down as earnest money with the remainder of the note to be paid later. When the economy soon went into a tailspin with the Great Depression already in force, the buyer backed out and never came up with the remainder of the purchase price. Brady then retained the theaters as well as the $16,000. The buyer was none other than Howard Hughes, the famed aviator, inventor, movie mogul, and eccentric among other things.

We have information on two of the three photographers of the golf-related pictures. John W. Gardner was established in the city as early as 1930. He had his Gardner's Studio at 1005 W. Harrison. This photographer will do considerable publicity photographing for real estate firms in the area. He apparently passes away before 1937 for the 1937-38 telephone listing has Gardner's Studio now at 1185 S. 1st Street under the name of his wife Lillie R. By 1939 the business has disappeared. This scenario pinpoints the golf pictures embossed "Gardner's Studio, Harlingen, Texas" between 1933 and 1936.

The photos stamped "All publication rights reserved John L. Martin, Box 965, Harlingen, Texas" came later. John "Johnnie" Martin is listed in the telephone directory of 1937-38 as an employee of the Valley Morning Star. He is noted to be a roomer at 315 E. Jackson this year. Apparently he was a staff photographer and/or may have been a free-lancer.