

Biography: Daniel Lee Alford

The following was copied from the *Burleson County Texas History*. D. L. Alford, Jr. and several of his close kin are members of AAFA. D. L. is the leader of our effort in Texas.

Lee Alford, the eldest child of Halcut and Mary Jane Scott Alford, was born 12 December 1876, in a log cabin on his Grandfather Scott's farm in Elizabeth Chapel Community. As was the custom, he was named for his paternal grandfather, Daniel Lee, of Aberdeen, Mississippi. Life was simple and times were difficult when Lee was a boy. He recalled that sugar was a precious commodity, to be carefully stored, and that shoes were hard to come by. He said that the prairie grasses were as high as a horse's stomach and that he could remember the wild turkeys roosting in rows along the rail fences.

As soon as Lee completed his schooling in the Elizabeth Chapel Community, he moved into Caldwell and went to work, doing whatever he could. Until his parents moved to town, he boarded with family friends. Afterward, he worked for his father at his livery stable; he said that when salesmen came to town, he drove them all over the county to call on their customers.

In 1901, Lee bought a confectionery store from the Boswell Brothers. In the meantime, he had been courting Anna Frantiska "Annie" Klukan, a local belle. Annie, the daughter of Frank and Theresa Schiller Klukan, was born on 15 November 1879 in Wesley, Texas, where her father was a merchant. Her maternal grandparents were Vincent and Frances Schiller, who came to Texas from Czechoslovakia in 1853 and settled in Industry, Austin County. During the Civil War, Grandfather Schiller joined a group of freighters who hauled cotton to Mexico in wagons drawn by four or more yoke of

oxen. Annie was baptized and confirmed in the Moravian Brethren Church in Wesley and could remember watching Reverend B. E. Laciak paint the interior of the church in 1889. Her father died in 1889; shortly after, Mrs. Klukan sold their store and moved to Burleson County. She and her three younger children, Vlasta (Lester), Annie, and Frank lived with her oldest daughter, Lillie, and her husband, Dr. B. O. McLean.

When Annie graduated from Caldwell Public School in 1897, her mother sent her to Kidd-Key College in Sherman, a fashionable boarding school for girls. Upon her return to Caldwell, she taught at "Red Hollow" until her marriage to Lee on 22 June 1903. They were married in Brenham in the home of Annie's cousin, and returned to Caldwell on the night train. The young couple rented an apartment in the residence of Judge A. W. McIver on South Echols Street. Annie always said that there was a Chinese laundry across the street from Judge McIver's home and that the old Chinaman played Chinese music all day long. In 1904, Lee and Annie built a home at 703 West Buck Street.

Lee prospered in the confectionery. He sold candy, cigars, peanuts, popcorn, fruits in season (he ordered apples by the carload), lemonade, glaces, and ice cream which he made himself—in fact, he milked his own cows. Later, when soft drinks became the vogue, he sold them, too. The ice cream parlor was a popular rendezvous for everybody in town, young and old alike. Lee liked to tell about the time his popcorn machine exploded. At that time, his wife's cousin was working for him. When the noise had subsided, and the steam began to fade, Lee began looking for the boy. He found him still crouching under a counter. The young man later joined the Signal Corps of the United States Army and carved a distinguished

career in the service. He rose to the rank of brigadier general and participated in the African and European campaigns during World War II. Lee always said he received his baptism of fire when the popcorn machine exploded!

After twelve years of marriage, Lee and Annie became the proud parents of a son, Daniel Lee Alford, Jr., born in January 1915. When the news spread around town on that cold, snowy Sunday, one of Lee's friends arranged for the fire whistle to blow to let everybody know that the couple had a boy. In 1917, Lee sold the confectionery because it kept him away from home so late each night. Although he had begun farming and raising cattle, Anne didn't want to move to the country. Lee established a wholesale gasoline agency, representing Gulf Oil Company and, later, Sinclair Refining Company until the late 1940's. He also built and operated a cotton platform between his office building and their home. After the birth of their boy, Annie devoted her energy toward the care of their son, their home, and her flowers. She, along with her family, joined the Presbyterian Church in Caldwell to be with Dr. & Mrs. McLean, her sister. Lee, reared a Methodist, later joined the Presbyterian Church with Annie and D. L., their son.

Lee, like his father before him, was active in the life of the community. He was appointed to the board of the Caldwell Public School in 1919 and served through 1930. It was during his term as president of the board that the third public school building in Caldwell was constructed in 1922.

When the depression hit in 1929, Lee suffered severe losses in investments and in his farming operation. In addition to this his gasoline customers

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had a very hard time paying their accounts. He believed in them, though, and said he never lost any money there. He refused to give his creditors the opportunity to foreclose on his property and by the late 1940's had paid every dime that he owed. He and Annie always lived simply. She was very frugal, and Lee was content to stay in Burleson County and work from daylight to dusk—and they were able to send D. L. to college when he graduated from high school.

After he sold his gasoline agency, Lee devoted his time to his cattle, and until he was 85 rode horseback regularly, checking the pastures. He died on 15 September 1964 and was buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Caldwell. Annie, who had never stayed alone in her life, determined to live by herself, and did, until she had to have a companion. In November 1972, she left her home for the last time, subsequently spending ten months in the Goodnight Memorial Hospital and the remaining months in the local nursing home until her death on 10 February 1975. She was buried beside her husband in the Masonic Cemetery.