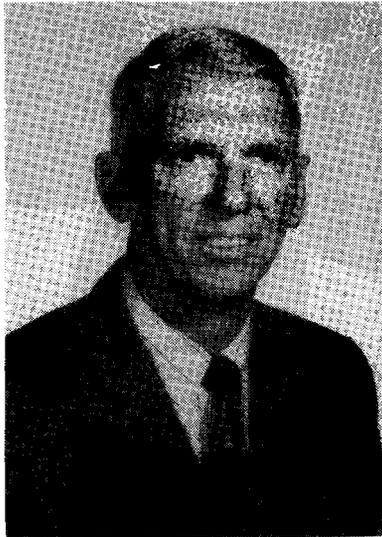


Getting to Know . . .

James P. "Posey" Alford, AAFA #0021

Posey has been a big part of our Alford effort since 1984, when he was still employed as a counselor at the junior high school in Gonzales. He is a licensed Professional Counselor and has Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees from Texas A&M. Even now he is an avid Aggie fan.

Those who were present at some of the annual AAFA meetings will know Posey best as the "after dinner speaker." Most recently he had us rolling in the aisles at the San Antonio meeting.



James Posey Alford, AAFA #0021, son of James Isaac and Mary Ellen (Gilmore) Alford was born Feb. 22, 1921, in Houston, Harris Co., Texas. He was one of two children—the other being a younger brother, Delmar Ray "D-Ray" Alford. (See *AAFA Action* Winter 2000, p.17).

These years, the early '20s, were the beginning of the Depression, and when Posey's father lost his job with the railroad because of a strike, the young family moved back to Waelder, Gonzales County, Texas. The family lived in town and Jim, Posey's father, worked at various jobs and operated a small sandy land farm that he had bought from his father, John Posey Alford. That 100 acre farm is still in the family and a part of Posey's children's farm. At one time when Posey was about five

the family moved out to the farm and lived in a barn. The family slept under a shed on the north side of the crib. This shed also served as a garage that housed their Model T Ford. The crib, or enclosed part of the barn, had two rooms, which were enclosed and floored. One was used for corn storage, the other served as the kitchen. The kitchen contained a wooden cook stove which provided their only heat and hot water. The kitchen was also the site of the Saturday night bath, meals, and any family activity such as reading or story telling.

The farm was adjacent to "Grandma Alford's place." The family unit there was composed of Grandma, who was Mary Jane Borrer Alford, widow of John Posey Alford, and her oldest son William Aaron Alford and his five children. Will Alford, Posey's "Uncle Bill," had suffered the loss of his wife when his children were quite young and he made his home on the "home place" with his mother. It was a lively and unusual life. Lots of work, poor living conditions, no indoor plumbing, no electricity, both families poor, but it did not seem to bother any of them. The boys went to a dug well to take their baths in the summer time. The bather would stand in a circular horse trough and somebody would draw up a bucket of cold water and dash it on him. The bather would soap up, generally with homemade soap, and then get water dashed on him until he was rinsed off.

Watermelon, fried chicken, squirrel and rabbit, cured pork and dried beans and peas, potatoes, cornbread, eggs, milk and butter were staple items in their rations. Occasionally they would go to town in a wagon or buggy or the Model T to buy supplies and bring back ice. This was a treat, for with ice they could have iced

tea, or wild mustang grape juice and homemade ice cream. Clothing and shoes were repaired at home. Patches were worn on everything except their Sunday clothes. None of the adults smoked or chewed tobacco or used snuff, but the boys soon began to sneak Bull Durham tobacco and smoke their hand rolled cigarettes. There was no radio or television but there was a hand cranked phonograph which would get played on occasions. The boys hunted, fished some, shot marbles and played mumble peg (a game played with their pocket knives), spun tops, tossed washers and played dominoes for recreation. Highlights of the years were then as they are now, Christmas, Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. Two aunts, Suzie Alford Harrell and Ida Alford, would return home on occasion for extended visits and these visits were celebrated and festive occasions.

After living in the barn for over a year, Posey's family moved back to town, so that Posey could enroll in school. Both of his parents worked hard both on the farm and at other jobs and enterprises. They kept "boarders." They not only rented rooms to school teachers but his mother prepared and served them meals. She didn't make much money doing this but the family certainly enjoyed good meals. Posey, in the meantime, had a paper route and assisted in the family chores. They sold milk to other families in town, so one of the things he did was to deliver milk. As a high school student he lettered in football, basketball and track and was active in other extra-curricular activities.



Posey as a cadet at Texas A&M

Upon completion of high school he enrolled in Texas A&M College (now University) and became a lifelong Texas Aggie. Posey says that being an Aggie is sort of like having a chronic disease, you never get over it. Texas A&M, at the time, was an all male school with most students living in college housing and in the ROTC program. As a senior Posey held the rank of Cadet Captain and was company commander, a coveted position in the corps.

He graduated from Texas A&M in January 1943 with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Though he had been in the ROTC program the training had been speeded up because of perceived shortage of officers in the army, and so his class graduated early and had to complete Officer Training in OCS. In Posey's case he was sent to Armored School at Ft. Knox, KY. It was tough and rigorous training and several of the candidates dropped out. Those who made it graduated in ninety days and were commissioned 2nd lieutenants. Upon completion of his training there, he was sent to the 14th Armored Division at Camp Chaffee, AR. Several of the men he served with there have remained lifelong cherished friends. While there he was the maintenance officer for Headquarters Company of the 47th Tank Battalion. The regimental commander was a crusty West Point graduate who gloried in chewing people out for violating his mandates or whims. Among other things he began to carry an air gauge with which to spot-check the tire pressure of vehicles. When they were not at the prescribed pressure, the vehicle driver and/or maintenance officer were subjected to his ire. It is said that Posey's transfer out of the 14th was precipitated when he rode a bicycle onto the dance floor at the officers club party, dismounted and checked his tire pressure in front of the regimental commander and the assembled officers and their wives.

Not long after that he boarded the Aquitania along with 15,000 troops for transport to Europe. He went to Britain and then six days after D-Day on June 12, 1944, he went to France where he reported to the 746th Tank Battalion at Ste. Mere-Eglise. Not long after he was made the commander of a tank platoon comprised of five M-4 Sherman Tanks. From discussions with other tank commanders he quickly learned that the Sherman Tanks, with their 75mm guns, were no match for the German Tiger tanks with 88mm guns. His platoon took part in a major breakthrough in St. Lo in late July. On

one occasion a German soldier shot a rifle bullet through Posey's steel helmet, going in the front and out the back. His helmet just did protrude from the tank turret. Posey says it was like being hit with a 10 pound sledge hammer. Fortunately the bullet traveled between the helmet and its liner and missed doing serious damage to his head. He says it did burn up a stash of toilet paper he had tucked into the webbing of his helmet. Two of his tank commanders were hit during that engagement.

As they were advancing up a road from St. Lo, his tank hit stacked German mines, destroying the tank which exploded and burned on impact and wounding two of the crew. In August he and his outfit participated in the Battle of Falaise and later that month he was put in command of a platoon in D Company. This was a platoon of M5 light tanks and they were attached to the 9th Infantry Reconnaissance (Recon) Company. After the St Lo breakthrough the recon outfits became the leading elements of the 1st Army, as it, like Patton's 3rd Army, began a rush through France to exploit the breakthrough. The 9th Division's reconnaissance company's job was to check the roads and find the enemy. Later he and his unit were involved in the Battle of the Bulge. In the spring of the year, when the allies began moving, the battalion ran into opposition and officers were lost. Posey was again moved into medium tanks and shortly thereafter had another interesting and narrow escape.

He is proud of the fact that he crossed the Rhine on the bridge at Remagen the morning following its capture. While he was in the middle of the bridge a German plane flying up the Rhine at a very low level bombed the bridge. Fortunately for Posey and a number of others, he missed paying with his life as he climbed up into range of the anti-aircraft fire. Posey says he will always be grateful that it was not a Kamikaze-attack where the pilot rides the plane to the target.

After the war in Europe ended, Posey was transferred to 3rd Army Headquarters and while there was awarded the Bronze Star for Meritorious service. General Patton himself decorated him and Posey has a picture of the event. He has named the picture "Blood and Guts and No Guts." But he is proud of the picture and that contact that he had with one of our most famous Generals.



No Guts and Blood and Guts

After the war Posey worked as a salesman in Houston, Dallas and Chicago. He liked and enjoyed the big cities, but was unmarried and decided that all the city folks were working hard so they could buy a place in the country. He had one so he went back to the farm and worked at milking cows and raising chickens. His pastimes were fishing and running hound dogs after the wily coyote.

His good luck held and before long he bolstered up courage and called a Texas University co-ed for a date. Fortunately for him she accepted and he applied his best military tactics and proceeded to seize and capture Mary Elliott Henderson. She held out long enough to graduate from the university, but gave up a teaching career to marry him on July 18, 1953. They have three children, all members of AAFA: Amanda Alford Urban, James Henderson Alford and Mary Chella Alford Gordon.

Shortly after that Posey was hired by the Waelder School District to teach vocational agriculture. He remained in that position for fifteen years. While teaching he attended Texas A&M University and earned a masters degree in education. He also did post graduate work in guidance and counseling and became a Licensed Professional Counselor.

He resigned as Vo. Ag. Teacher in Waelder and moved to Gonzales where he was employed as Junior High

School Counselor until his retirement in 1988. Since his move from the city life to the country he has been involved in agriculture. He and Mary Elliott have been fortunate in being able to acquire several farms in and around their home town of Waelder, Texas. He has done a little bit of everything, from raising watermelons to producing turkey eggs for a major hatchery. At present he considers himself a livestock farmer raising both commercial and registered Piedmontese cattle. He is kept busy most days feeding cattle and repairing fences that some over-stimulated bull has torn down.

His Alford ancestors were some of the first American settlers of Texas. His uncle, Winfield Alford is on the Register of Impresario Stephen F. Austin for the period 1823-36.



Standing: Daughter Chella and son James H. Alford
Seated: Mary and Posey Alford

Posey has been involved in our "organized" Alford work from the early beginning. Members who were present at the meeting in Springfield, Mo., or in San Antonio, Tx., will remember Posey for his outrageously humorous after dinner presentations. He says that he really enjoys public speaking and attributes that to the fact that he is a "natural born ham". He participated in little theater before he discovered after dinner speaking. He hopes to continue public speaking until the ailments of old age force him to give it up. Those ailments have already

forced him to give up jogging which he did regularly until he turned eighty. He enjoyed 10K runs (a distance of over 6 miles) and had a lot of funny things happen to him at those runs. His physical activities are now limited to walking and chasing cows or running from cows that are chasing him. He has a red mule (Kawasaki, that is) that he rides at times to check his pastures and fences.

Mary Elliott and Posey have seven grandchildren ranging in age from a college sophomore, Ginny Urban, down to two year olds, Travis Gordon and Eloise Urban. One grandson, Ross Urban, participates in high school sports, giving Posey a keen athletic interest. The granddaughters, Kaitlin Gordon, Callie and Suzanna Urban, are ballerinas and make attendance at the Nutcracker ballet mandatory each Christmas season.

When asked about retirement, Posey says that being in the cattle business is like being on a roller coaster - once you get on it is hard to get off. When you are going up it is sort of fun and you enjoy that. However, when you're going down it's scary and there is no way to get off. All you can do is ride it out. So he says, "as long as I can I guess I'll just ride it out". He adds that it has been a good ride and that he is eternally grateful for the blessings it has given him. He feels very fortunate to be alive and as active as he is.

ARX YOU A KXY PXRSON?

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