*Ely Air Lines –*

# Shelby Kritser's Still Hanging Around

*by Mike Ely and Linda Street-Ely*

***The Man Behind the Tradewind Airport***

Long before anyone had heard of a selfie stick, Shelby Kritser figured out how to take a selfie that would be hard to top. He did it upside down, flying over the airport he'd built in Amarillo, Texas. In the photograph, taken in July 1966, Shelby's goggled face fills the foreground while hangars, airplanes, and runways spread out beneath him. He even autographed it for an old hunting buddy.



We discovered this remarkable photograph above the coffee station in Shelby's Diner, inside the Tradewind Airport FBO on our most recent visit. It was one of many reminders of the adventurous aviator whose ambitions transformed an open field into an award-winning airport.

As we recounted last week, Shelby had helped pioneer transatlantic air travel aboard Pan American Airways' magnificent Clippers. But his next great aviation adventure would unfold much closer to home.

In August 1945, as World War II was ending, Shelby envisioned an airport dedicated to private and business aviation. He gathered investors and set about transforming a field south of Amarillo's Llano Cemetery into a first-class aviation facility.

By October, earthmoving equipment was at work. Tradewind opened in 1946, and Shelby's vision extended well beyond runways and hangars.

His linemen greeted arriving aircraft wearing white shirts, black bow ties, royal-blue trousers, and Legionnaire hats. It was the sort of polished welcome one might expect at an elegant hotel. Very classy.






Barely a year after construction began, Tradewind was named the finest airport in its class, winning the prestigious Haire Airports Award, a national honor recognizing excellence in airport development and operations.

Then came May 15, 1949. A devastating tornado tore through Amarillo, leaving destruction across the city. The storm demolished Tradewind's hangars, built from surplus World War II structures. Newspapers across the country carried photographs of the wreckage. Buildings lay flattened, railroad cars overturned, and the city faced millions of dollars in damage.

For an airport barely three years old, it was a staggering setback. But Shelby rebuilt, and by 1951 Tradewind was back on its feet. The airport became a Beechcraft sales and service center, handling Bonanzas, Barons, Twin Beech, and other aircraft. Shelby also served as chairman of the Texas Aeronautics Commission.

But running an airport never kept him from enjoying the skies himself. An accomplished aerobatic pilot, he flew several aircraft, including the Bücker Jungmann and Grumman F8F Bearcat.

Tragically, Shelby died during an aerobatic performance at an Amarillo airshow in August 1966. He was 52.

But Tradewind endured. In 2023, under the caring hands of Jon Kuehler, the current airport manager, it was named Texas Airport of the Year, another recognition of the standards Shelby established decades earlier.

Today, Shelby's Diner serves home-cooked meals, drawing local families as well as fly-in visitors like us. And that remarkable photograph from 1966? It's become the diner's logo. Eighty years after Tradewind opened, Shelby Kritser is still hanging around. Upside down, naturally.

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# Toys for Tots needs your help, *Continued from Page A-1*

erty County. The gift of a new toy helps bring the joy of Christmas and send a message of hope to area children.

Families in all areas of the county including Liberty, Dayton, Hardin, Hull, Raywood, Daisetta, Ames, Devers and the Cleveland area can apply for toys for their children by using the QR code or by visiting the Toys for Tots website at toysfortots.org.

Your toy donations make a major impact in the success of the campaign. Donations of new, unwrapped toys will ensure that children experience the joy of play and the power of imagination. Visit toysfortots.org for donation information. **Donation boxes are located at the Dayton Community Center, Dayton Police Department, Luxe Prints in Dayton and The Liberty Gazette in Liberty.**

The event will be held December 12, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the TVE Fairgrounds, 321 Wallisville Road in Liberty. Volunteers are needed to help with toy collection, sorting, organization and distribution of the toys on the day of the event.

To reach the area coordinator for Liberty County with questions, to volunteer, place a toy donation box at your business or location, or to request toys, email liberty.tx@toysfortots.org or call 936-346-2862.

The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public charity which was created at the behest of the U.S. Marine Corps in 1991. 97% of every donation goes directly to providing toys to children.

# Big Christmas Giveaway in Raywood, Dec. 19

RAYWOOD - In the spirit of Christmas, Doris Lang Ministries is hosting its 4th Annual Raywood's Big Christmas Giveaway. The event will be held Sat., Dec. 19, from 12-1 p.m. in the Raywood gym. Doors open at 11:30 a.m.

There will be plenty of Christmas joy to go around. Youngsters ages 3-18, who are pre-registered, will receive free toys. Each child must be accompanied by an adult to receive a toy. A free bag of groceries will be available for each household (limit one) and there will be a Christmas presentation and door prizes. Everything is available on a first-come, first-serve basis with a maximum of four registrations per household.

# Movie Night Saturday, *Continued from Page A-1*

The event will bring the community together for a fun-filled evening of movies, food, like free popcorn, and fellowship. Additional food vendors will be on-site ready to serve you and local vendors will have plenty of goods and services to offer. It'll be a great night of family fun and community spirit.

An event like this wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of the following sponsors: Luxe Prints and Cuts, Muraca Fiber, Magnolia Roots, Mike Wolf Construction, and Lone-Star Luxury Bathrooms.

So, spread the word, invite your friends, load up the car and bring the whole family. The Dayton Community Center is located at 801 S. Cleveland.

# Audiobooks, magazines available free

AUSTIN - The Texas Talking Book Program (TBP) invites veterans and the groups that serve them to learn about its free library for Texans with visual, physical or reading disabilities. Members can choose from more than 180,000 audiobooks and audio magazines, plus braille and large print books.

More than 1.5 million veterans live in Texas. Many have vision loss, a traumatic brain injury (TBI), limb loss, or another condition that makes print hard to read. Eligible honorably discharged veterans receive priority service through TBP, as authorized under federal law.

Individuals who cannot comfortably read standard print because of blindness, low vision, a physical disability or a reading disability, including from TBI, qualify for the program. A VA doctor, therapist, social worker or Veterans Service Officer may certify an application. Applicants do not need to provide medical records or proof of health insurance. Members never pay for books, players, postage or late fees. TBP mails books to members' homes, or members can download them instantly with the free BARD Mobile app.

TBP's outreach team provides free presentations to staff and community partners at VA facilities, Veterans Service Organization posts, county veteran service offices and Texas State Veterans Homes.

Veteran-serving organizations can also become TBP Demonstration Sites. TBP sends each site a free Digital Talking Book Machine, sample audiobooks in English and Spanish, applications and promotional materials. Veterans and their families can then explore the service firsthand before applying.

To sign up, schedule an outreach presentation, or learn more, call TBP at 1-800-252-9605 (toll-free in Texas) or email tbp.services@tsl.texas.gov.

# Spirit of Christmas, Nutcracker Market in Dayton, Dec. 4-5

DAYTON - There is plenty for families to enjoy as the City of Dayton presents its annual Spirit of Christmas events and the Nutcracker Market. This is a great way for families celebrate the holiday season right here at home December 4-5. Hours on Friday are from 5-9 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Visit the Nutcracker Market during both days of the Spirit of Christmas at the Dayton Community Center. Stroll through the vendors to find those unique Christmas gift items, Christmas décor, gift baskets, toys, jewelry, home and outdoor décor, food and more.

Saturday, the parade gets underway at 6 p.m. (staging and starting point is at Bronco Stadium). The lighting of the Christmas tree will follow at 7 p.m.

Whether you represent a local business, church, school group, civic organization, or neighborhood crew, you're invited to participate in this year's parade! For more information regarding the parade or securing a vendor space, contact the Trinity Valley Chamber of Commerce at 936-257-2393.

# Tree setup open at Community Center

DAYTON - Grab your tinsel and ornaments and help enhance the festive atmosphere of the Dayton Community Center this holiday season by participating in the 16th annual Christmas Tree program. Tree setup is now open.

Local businesses, churches, organizations, service clubs, and community members are invited to take part in this holiday event that showcases holiday creativity, spreads festive cheer all while competing for trophies and community recognition. Participation is free but an optional donation in any amount can be made to the Dayton Police Officers Association as a holiday gesture.

Trees can be natural or artificial with a maximum height of seven feet and should be fully decorated in traditional, unique, distinct or as one-of-a-kind originals. You decide. Tree placement will be in a designated, approved location; please coordinate with the community center staff on specifics. A sign must identify the organization, business, group or individual displaying the tree. A panel of judges will determine the winners. Deadline to enter is Thurs., December 3 at 5 p.m.

For additional information, contact the community center at 936-258-6630 or email: communitycenter@-daytontx.org.

# Letters About Literature writing contest open for entries

AUSTIN, TX - The Texas Center for the Book announces the opening of the Letters About Literature Texas writing contest for 2026-2027. Texas 4th through 12th graders are invited to participate in this annual writing competition. The theme for 2026-2027 is "Read. Be Inspired. Write Back."

Students select a book, book series, essay, play, poem, short story or speech and write a letter to an author (living or dead) explaining how his or her work changed their view of themselves or the world. They may write about challenging events in their lives that relate to a book they have read.

Competition categories are for grades 4-6, grades 7-8 and grades 9-12. The contest is open to all Texas students, including public, private and homeschool.

Winners receive monetary awards with grants awarded to the school libraries of each first place winner. A new Honorable Mention category has been added this year.

First place winners will travel to the Texas Library Association Annual Conference in San Antonio in April 2027 to be recognized in a ceremony at the conference.

The online submission portal is now open at (https://xtexasstatelibrary.submittable.com/submit). Entry deadline is Wed., Jan. 27, 2027. Applications are accepted only through the portal. To learn more including full rules, prize information and submission instructions, visit tsl.texas.gov/lettersaboutliterature.