

Chapter Research Project: NTCC Webb Chapter Film on Mary Kay

A) The Scope of the Undertaking:

Our yearly historical dramatizations of Texas legends are year-round efforts that require input from Webb members, the honors professors and program at Northeast Texas Community College (NTCC), Webb donors, and college administrators of NTCC. We are beholden to civic leaders, and B&Bs for the right to film, and this year took a leap of faith in trusting that we could carry out the filming in a bigger city, Fort Worth. In January we finish production, and prepare publicity; in February, we have the local premiere, and apply to present in upcoming honors venues; in March we feature part of it at the Webb meeting; in April--at the Great Plains Honors Council; in May we begin research on the next film; in June, and July we write the script; in August we are most intense with meeting and filming; in September we obtain a rough edit, and trailer; in October we feature the trailer before patrons, and the college President, and at the Webb Society; and in November, at the National Collegiate Honors Council. Finally in December, we call attention to the Premiere in February with a radio feature, and apply for a Whatley Enhancement Grant.

With our Mary Kay film all these basic steps have occurred or are occurring in their traditional sequence. In a few cases, something more was added to the mix. Meanwhile from January to November of 2017, we have been maintaining our agenda for the previous film on the Texas Cherokee. So two separate film agendas traditionally overlap from May until November. But with the Mary Kay film, they overlapped from last January (2017) till November (2017).

Last January of 2017, Webb member, Yami Zuniga took an honors credit in History 1302, and began her research on Mary Kay. Her final paper is featured in our yearly Caldwell send. For this effort, she visited a local Mary Kay consultant in Pittsburg, Texas, and developed the point that Kay was a ‘refined feminist’, trying to fend off the ugliness and selfishness of the northern feminist movement. Yami Zuniga was also instrumental in getting a group together to start our group research on Mary Kay in March rather than May. She is shown with this group below, and is on the extreme right. She also enlisted help from Alicia Cantrell to her left. Cantrell will present one of the invited yearly essays for the Webb Society this spring in San Marcos on two other Texas women, Barbara Jordan, and Ann Richards. She also recruited William Fox who was our Film Scholar for the Cherokee film—he is to the right below in the back:



During our 2017 spring break in March, our first research team explored the Mary Kay Corporation in Addison, and utilized resources at Southern Methodist University for research:



Above: William Fox, Yami Zuniga, Alicia Cantrell, Leivy Zuniga, and H. Dyal at Mary Kay Corporate Headquarters and at Southern Methodist University

While all this was going on proposals were made and accepted to feature our films at the upcoming Beaumont meeting of the Great Plains Honors Council, and the Atlanta Meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council. Cassidy Watkins did an excellent job of presenting our filming ideals at the GPHC, outshining we thought, two upperclassmen who presented alongside her. They talked about their films, and what they hoped to do. Watkins exhibited ours.

Thanks to some complicated financial maneuvering at the college, including the input of Vice President Dr. Ron Clinton who is now the college President, we were able to finance a second research trip to Denton, this time for three days, 31 May to 2 June. The University of North Texas Library had among other sources, a valuable transcript of an interview with Mary Kay performed by Business Professor Donald Carath in 1974, and a link to a dissertation about her in 2010 that was pursued at North Dakota State. We also, while at the University

of North Texas library, saw our favorite state librarian, Ana Kraemer, who leads the Portal to Texas History project, and presented her with a little present for helping us through the years. We also did research at Texas Woman's University where the staff was exceptionally kind to us in granting us our own private room for research.



In Photo on Right from Left: Webb members Matthew Chambers, Laura Ross, Jazmin Garcia, Hannah Dickson, and Karina Pena at TWU, and also, at left at UNT

Van rides provided time for our discussions and various readings from Mary Kay's books. We then scanned all the notes, and sent them out in email files, to gather the feedback of a larger group. In our discussions we noted that Mary Kay had a very dramatic personal narrative, she used her own beauty to marry the right husbands at the right times, and that much of her effort was consumed in the end of trying to envision a whole new Southern Evangelical slant to female employment. We wrote the script. This year we again transliterated our drama into professional film script with slug lines, and indented dialogue. We also compiled a comprehensive listing of Northeast Texas Webb film notes which we now distribute to all the students involved in the film.

June and July are busy months as we form our executive committee, choose our actors, hustle to try to win student involvement, make reservations at B&Bs at the designated location—this last year, Fort Worth, attempt to wring every penny we can get from the

NTCC honors budget for equipment, and travel, and try to match the evolving script with the available students.

Our sophomores are the most important catalysts for the film effort. Without their experience, and enthusiasm, it is hard to envision how we could proceed. We were very indebted this year to Cassidy Watkins, last year's producer for turning around and agreeing to star as Mary Kay this year. This required assembling ten outfits, including a bumblebee pin which was an important part of Mary Kay iconography, and memorizing the lines of forty scenes in which she was the preeminent speaker.



Cassidy Watkins with her Bumblebee Pin

We were fortunate also to gain Brenda Godoy as our Director. Webb member Godoy is an expert on the “shock trauma” experienced by leaders in the Texas Revolution, and even presented at the East Texas Historical Society last October on this theme. She is a very gifted student with a high acumen, and she won universal respect.



Director Brenda Godoy, acting as Tillie, a friend of Mary Kay.

Sophomore cinematographers, Adriana Rodriguez and Rachel Jordan had a major impact. Their enthusiasm from day one, and experience working with Canon HFG40 camcorders, and boom mics greatly enhanced the film experience. Their ideas on blocking (the movement in a scene) and cross-cutting (back-and-forth camera imaging) helped the filming to proceed in a careful, yet efficient manner.



Adriana Rodriguez, and Rachel Jordan as cinematographers.

Our Executive Committee was fully formed by late July, and we met to agree on who would be taking the parts, and playing other important roles like Unit Production Manager and Producer.



Executive Committee Above composed of Matthew Chambers, Jordan Whelchel, Rachel Jordan, Adriana Rodriguez, Cassidy Watkins, and Brenda Godoy.

We were very pleased that entering freshman, Warren Wu, agreed to be the film's producer. A Webb member, A-student, and also a social media director for the

Wu became our first producer to use Adobe Premiere, rather than I-films, and our first one to compose a trailer without a template.



Warren Wu

Webb members memorized their parts. Yaritza Romero tallied prop needs, and Karsen Nelson helped Theatre Northeast, our college theatre department, to loan us some of their outfits. It was rather unfortunate that when returning the costumes in late August, Dr. Yox dropped one, and it was out all night in the rain until found the next morning by Theatre Director Marin Holden. Profuse apologies followed.



Karsen Nelson in the Costume Room of Theatre Northeast

Our practice sessions at Jo’s Coffeehouse went as scheduled, except that on 11 August, they had scheduled a gathering in their upper room that left us stranded. Fortunately our Webb Society has gained a very good friend over the years in Hudson Old, publisher of the *Journal of the American Historical Association*. He not only allowed us to practice at his establishment, he and his staff took one of our professional photos ever in Mount Pleasant below:



Photo courtesy of Hudson Old, Publisher of *Journal of the American Historical Association*. Left to right: Madison Blood, Karsen Nelson, Adriana Rodriguez, Rachel Jordan, Jordan Whelchel, Brenda Godoy, Sebastian Martinez, Leivy Zuniga, Cassidy Watkins, Dr. Andrew Yox, Matthew Chambers. Not pictured Rhylie Anderson, Alicia Cantrell, and Yaritza Romero.

At last we were ready for some initial filming in Mount Pleasant, and the big trip to Fort Worth, 14-18 August. The Executive Committee made this the longest filming experience ever, stretching through five straight days. We were excited, but also concerned. One boom mic was not functioning properly, and NTCC Technical advisor, Adam Bise, could not fix it. A preliminary trip to Fort Worth by Webb Director, Dr. Andrew Yox in July had elicited assurances from the Fort Worth B&Bs, but they tended to be lukewarm, and conditional. It almost seemed we had made a mistake. Our budget was limited by the College's reconfiguration of the Honors Budget, so we only had two drivers, Cassidy Watkins, and Dr. Yox. In fact, Yox, had to make two trips each way to Fort Worth, leaving students there at the Texas White House B&B while he returned for another five-hour trip to get more actors. We had booked three other B&Bs ahead of time: The Rosen House, the Azalea Plantation, and Miss Molly's by the Stockyard District.

All four B&Bs did indeed allow us to film, though the experience of Matthew Chambers and Sebastian Martinez staying the night at Miss Molly's was not of the most edifying nature. Some rather unusual denizens of the stockyard district showed up at night. We continued to have full filming at Miss Molly's but we pulled the two guys out. We were surprised and very gratified by the fact that the other B&Bs picked up the slack—gratis. This was especially due to the generosity of the Rosen House owned by Kelly Bowden, who took an interest in our project. Matthew and Sebastian thus were able to stay two nights for free at the Rosen House, in addition to Cassidy, Brenda, Alicia, Rachel, and Adriana who were also staying there. Thus our fears about the big city B&Bs were in the end unfounded. They were very generous with us again—including the Azalea B&B that looked the other way when we filmed in an off-limits room, and exonerated us for a spilled coke in their living room.

We had 61 scenes to film and in five days. We also housed students at the downtown Holiday Inn. Director Godoy raced against the clock using Matthew Chambers, Leivy Zuniga,

and Alicia Cantrell and others as liaisons to anticipate scenes. Alicia Cantrell helped a great deal with makeup, and indeed that was an expensive little sidelight for doing a Mary Kay film.



Alicia Cantrell as Makeup Director

We worked each day from about 9 AM to 11 PM, with the officers, and Godoy working even later in the evening to figure out the sequencing. We did find time to have nice breakfasts in the B&Bs, and dinners, including this one below at Joe T. Garcia's. The only problem with this Fort Worth standby was that they wanted the payment all in cash, and this took away almost all our cash reserves!



Our Group at Joe T. Garcia's:
From Left: Cassidy Watkins,
Rachel Jordan, Alicia Cantrell,
Karsen Nelson, Rhylie Anderson,
Sebastian Martinez, Adriana
Rodriguez, Jordan Whelchel,
Madison Blood, Matthew
Chambers, Leivy Zuniga, and
Brenda Godoy.

Warren Wu took over the production of the film on our return. He produced the trailer we featured at the Walter Webb Meeting in October in Austin. Our group that made the trip are shown below.



Warren Wu, Rhylie Anderson, Jordan Whelchel, Karsen Nelson, and Matthew Chambers in Austin.

Wu's trailer and aspects of the film were also included in the November presentation to the NTCC Interim President, Ron Clinton and Friends of our film effort performed by Brenda Godoy, and Cassidy Watkins. We also had a breakfast for interested businessmen in early November at Laura's Cheesecake Restaurant in Mount Pleasant. It was at this breakfast

that Kerry Wooten, a probate lawyer in Mount Pleasant, suggested the subject for our next film which was recently funded: the African American operatic legend from Pittsburg, Texas, Barbara Conrad.

At the Atlanta meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council, on 11 November of 2017, Adriana Rodriguez, Brenda Godoy, Cassidy Watkins, Rachel Jordan, and Dr. Yox presented aspects of our Webb film culture, including Wu's trailer on Mary Kay. The group discussed our use of niche cinema with Texas legends, the effort to "Lime-light" academics, and engage the community.



Finally, in December our group went on the radio to promote our upcoming Mary Kay premiere, February 16 at the Whatley Center for the Performing Arts at NTCC.

At K-Lake Radio: Mathew Chambers, Chesney Davis, Jordan Whelchel, and Jazmin Garcia

This project would not have been possible without the encouragement of the State Walter Prescott Webb Society, and the Caldwell Awards which have enticed the support of NTCC administrators. We are also indebted to the Friends of Honors Northeast, and a tradition of Texas History scholarship at Northeast Texas Community College that is forging bonds with friends who support our premieres and outreach.

B) Its Purpose:

Our Webb Society film on Mary Kay provides a number of stories and revelatory details that can serve as an inspiration to people in our community who believe they have struck out in life. Mary Kay by 1946 was divorced with three children. She had a scary medical diagnosis from Scott and White in Temple that indicated she would never walk again. She had dead-ended at the University of Houston. But from this impasse, Mary Kay created an empire in direct sales. The fact that she was from Texas and did all this from the standpoint of being a Southern evangelical with a strong Texan accent makes this work doubly relevant.

Mary Kay also invites discussions about regional culture, and the way regional values filter national trends. Our film shows that though Mary Kay believed in employment opportunities for women, and refused to speak out on controversial issues like abortion, she refused to be classified as a feminist. Fifty years after the “Freedom Trash Can” had served as a receptacle for cosmetics, Mary Kay was helping to make the South and West the world capital of cosmetics use. Moreover, Mary Kay wanted corporations to accommodate feminine needs rather than fit women to the same career race known to males.

We also believe that a film on a Texas legend like Mary Kay can help to ‘lime-light’ the work of Webb students, honors students, and the academic aspect of the college. One-hundred years ago, the English discovered that if you put a flame to calcium oxide, or quicklime, it would admit a torrent of white light. Community vaudeville, and culture was born. But who got into that lime-light? Football rather than academics. We believe that niche cinema is one way to bring academic activity into the center of community life. This is necessary to increase support and funding for Texas history on the local level.

C) Procedures Followed:

Our basic approach is to begin with a relevant Texas legend, obtain some funding, perform the research, write the script and form the executive committee, recruit actors, fix the logistics, film, produce, and disseminate.

This year the **idea** for our film about Mary Kay came from the fact that our Webb Society has turned decidedly female, and we wanted to do a woman. We noticed she had written a number of books, and we were impressed by her corporate headquarters in Addison.

Our need for **funding** translates into a year-round enterprise. A primary source of our funding has been unused amounts in the Honors Scholarship fund at the end of the year. This fund is endangered as the college cut honors scholarships by 33 percent this past September. We are hopeful that this Cherokee film is not the last with access to this fund. The College has also held faculty salaries without a raise for three years, and is experiencing problems as enrollments at the college have stagnated, and costs have increased.

For **research** we are thankful for the ongoing efforts of the Webb Society to award Caldwell awards. We have about twelve students who seriously strive for this each year, and thus we have projects “in the making.” When Mr. Old first suggested the theme for this film, we had a student, Marisol Bautista, who immediately began research on it a year ago. She helped concretize Mr. Old’s suggestion but was not able to remain with us in Honors or the Webb Society.

Writing the **script** has in the past been a volatile exercise. Students mentored by Dr. Yox, and Dr. Yox as well contribute various portions of the script. These are reviewed by the **Executive Committee**, and sent back for more work. William Fox, William Jones, Ryan Mendoza, Kassandra Martinez, and Dr. Yox were the main authors. This year we avoided parental involvement which the year before led to damaging letters sent to our

president and vice president, and forced visits to a psychiatrist because of the disciplinary action that resulted. We made all the students sign a form which stated that they were free to quit, but that major changes in the script could not be made after 30 June, and minor changes could not be made after 30 July.

We have the benefit of **recruiting** from a solid base, the 25 members of Honors Northeast, who are then drafted into our Webb Society. Sophomores like Presley McClendon, Emmalea Shaw, and Alecia Spurlin already had Texas history. The freshmen are almost all required to take it their first semester.

Fixing the logistics was pretty much in the province of two who maintained a presence at NTCC this past summer, Dr. Yox, and Ryan Mendoza. Often Yox has to go ahead and reserve B&Bs before the funding is there, and we have had to pay extra for this when changes are made. One particular mistake was ordering the Hardeman B&B through an agency rather than through them, as we paid more, and had less flexibility. We believe that Dr. Hearron who stayed at the Hardeman House may well have paid some extra money out of her own pocket to cover our irregularities at that House. We also have a tough time finding drivers since the college insists it has to be a college employee that drives. We were very thankful the two honors professors, Clay, and Hearron, were willing to come through.

The filming again encountered our biggest obstacle over the years. Sound. Out of doors scenes can be trying, and some of our students don't speak up enough, though we make every effort to get their volume higher. This year Cassidy Watkins, and William Jones hit on a wonderful solution. Since our honors students all have Apple MacBooks, we found a way to send emails, with files from Garage Band, the Apple App for sound. This helped with some of the weak spots.

Cassidy Watkins, a Salutatorian from Daingerfield was our **Producer**, and she is the one who gets what has been referred to as our all the hours of work on her computer. She edits during the semester, and her production is performed in lieu of a paper grade for Texas History. She was very smart, reliable, and dependable; she began editing even as we were filming in Nacogdoches. She and William Jones and Dr. Yox had to even meet this last Christmas Break to work out some details with film intelligibility. Cassidy always came through, and for that, we thank God!

We are now in the dissemination stage. Cassidy has just got the entire film on Youtube, and we encourage you to watch it. Our Trailer is nearby and has a golden sign on Youtube, so watch that you get the full one-hour film. Query on Youtube: <Sam Houston, and the Fate of the Texas Cherokee>.

D) Findings:

In our research in Austin, we realized that the state lacks a good treasure trove on the Texas Cherokee, but we tried as best we could from other sources to piece together images of the Cherokee way of life. We staged a wedding ceremony, a birthing, and the Green Corn Festival from extent sources on Cherokee life. We found that the Texas Cherokee were a traditionalist group, and hypothesize from the murders of quarter-blood Cherokee such as Richard Fields, and John Dunn Hunter that there were some fairly profound differences between their way of life and the Anglos, as well as blood memories from the East that made the Texas situation with the Cherokee more volatile.

It was interesting how we came together on the script. Ryan was very intrigued by Houston's relationship with Anna Raguet, and believed that Houston had more energy than empathy. William found the case of Edward Burleson, troublesome, and believed that

Houston had some similarities with this leading anti-Indian racist. We debated this until we found that Houston had once called the Mexicans, “half-Indians.” Cassandra took the most notes, and she was startled when she found that Houston must have been related to the Texas Cherokee Chief Bowles, because his Cherokee wife, Diana Rogers, was the daughter of one of Chief Bowles’ wives. As we re-enacted the parts we embraced the quote from the Bible, Hosea 6:4—“For Your Love is like the Morning Mist.” That is to say, the love that was proffered between Houston and his Cherokee family was not really love, or at least, not love that lasted.

E) Conclusions:

Houston’s life story pivots not only with his marriage to Margaret but with the simultaneous destruction of a tribe that represented much of his youth, the Cherokee. The Cherokee episode transformed Houston. He was outraged with the elimination of his former friends, but also aware that he had done little, in practical terms, to save them. Our film concluded by showing that Houston was more prepared to be resolute about taking an enlightened role with his slaves. He in the end, with spiritual guidance from his new wife, Margaret, was now prepared to suffer for his convictions.

F) Significance:

We are gratified at least by the fact that we now have the only cinematic version of Sam Houston, and the Texas Cherokee in existence. Films are important in today’s culture.

For even as historians have compiled an A-list of monographs about Texas, much of the public remains oblivious. The average American of the early twenty-first century encounters the past in some way every year, but watches about twenty films for every book

read. Not only is the interaction with yesteryear usually through television or film, it is with legend rather than history. Whereas _____ or Stephen Spielberg's _____ (2012) may provide exemplary channels to awaken public interest in the factual past, in regard to Texas, the fictional deluge is especially pronounced. The second highest rated prime-time telecast ever, an episode of the Soap Opera, _____ reverberated with that show's fictional obsessions and verisimilitudes. Cowboy Westerns accounted for about one-fourth of the films produced by Hollywood in the twentieth century. As one of the most admired of the Western filmmakers, John Ford, noted, when the "truth becomes legend," one indeed needed to give people the legend. Aside from films about the Alamo, and Sam Houston, the Texas past has been highly fictionalized. One is reminded of the numerous jokes about Texas swimming pools having lighthouses, or Texas oil barons buying automobiles by the six-pack—the state remains a stronghold of a prevaricated past. Historiography walks. Fiction sprints.¹

The Northeast Texas Community College Webb Chapter's effort to "film un-filmed" stories of Texas in the past five years has stemmed from the conviction that cinema is where the "cultural action" is. But our goal is to dramatize history as best as possible. This is an action which exhilarates our students and sponsors: we hope to utilize good historical research to communicate the stories that will expand our horizons and bring us together as a culture.

We welcome you to view the completed film, and the trailer on YouTube. Type <Sam Houston, and the Fate of the Texas Cherokee>.

¹ Marnie Hughes-Warrington,
1; William Indick,
Schickel, "The Man Who Shot the West,"

University Press, 2003), xi.

(New York: Routledge, 2009,
(Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2008), 1-2; Richard
9 January 2000. Peter C. Rollins,
(New York: Columbia