

**CVA-64 Mini Reunion
Carthage, Texas
April 25-28, 2023
By Jeanette Swain**

Hosted by Gayland & Dinah Rush

The Holiday Inn Express was our home for the reunion and provided breakfast and a hospitality room. Even though the hotel was under renovation, and fully occupied most of the time, including workers in the local gas and oil fields, we always found places to park. We enjoyed carpooling to the planned events which provided for lots of one-on-one time to share personal events.

East Texas is known for its high humidity. It was rainy or cloudy most of the time, but the big thunderstorms occurred at night. Our hosts provided umbrellas for everyone in the welcome bags...for a good reason.

Tuesday evening's dinner in Carthage was at the Rancho Grande Mexican Restaurant. The fresh chips and dips were plentiful and wonderful! The guacamole was REALLY special. The menu had something for everyone and the service was excellent. It was a great place to enjoy with our noisy group.

Wednesday was "Monuments" day. In the AM, we visited the Historic 1891 Panola County Jail, the Veterans Memorial and the History Museum. The History Museum has a Military section containing memorabilia and various military uniforms donated by Panola County service men and women, which many enjoyed. A group photo was taken by the local newspaper reporter for The Panola Watchman, for inclusion in the next issue.

Lunch in the Texas Tea Room was longer than usual, the food was good and we had plenty of time and space in which to visit. The restaurant entrance was filled with antique items from the local area, for example, a round bank vault.

In the afternoon, the sun came out as we arrived at the Footprints in the Sand monument. It is a memorial park surrounding a sculpture by Bob Harness after he read the poem. There are benches, plaques, and walls for whom memorials have been provided by the deceased or their donors with comments from the deceased. It is simple, comfortable, beautiful in so many ways, and very peaceful. Most of us had never heard of it, but were so glad this place was chosen for our reunion. We visited it in the sunshine; the pictures on Facebook show that it is even more beautiful in the snow and at night time. Even if you are not of the Christian faith, the writings on the plaques in the memorial park and the story behind the poem

are worth reading. Everyone has something or someone who carries them through difficult times.



The next stop was at the Jim Reeves Memorial. We arrived after a brief rainfall that freshened the foliage and provided the perfect setting for our visit. I overheard a lady telling someone she wanted a picture by the guitar. I expected a guitar somewhere, but not in the sidewalk. This is creativity at its best, especially in a memorial!



After a quick stop at the hotel, we headed for the home of Karen, a friend of Gayland's and Dinah's, who offered to host the evening. Karen's home is outside Carthage on a winding road with lots of foliage. The property had been owned by her late husband's family. After additions and renovations, it had become the perfect home to share with groups such as the Mini Reunion. A chef friend provided the food, another friend served the beverages, and Karen provided the tour and history of her home. We arrived and left in the rain, but it was a very warm "sunny" evening for all of us.

Thursday was a beautiful day in the park...The Texas Country Music Hall of Fame. Texas is a BIG state, and the number of musicians from Texas in this museum shows how big a state Texas is musically. There are numerous inductees that are well known to the rest of the world, and many have skills beyond country music. During lunch at the Museum, the 2022 inductee into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, Chase Dawson, entertained us. The new building is surrounded by beautiful trees and foliage. The statue at the entrance was a perfect place for taking pictures.

Under dreary skies, we drove well into the country to see the Texas International Boundary Marker, erected in 1841, when Texas was known as the Republic of Texas, an independent country for about nine years. One side is Louisiana, and the other side is Texas. This is another unique fact about Texas!

Dinner was at the Main Street Café, where the meals were home-style and required "doggie" boxes for most of us.

Thank you, Gayland and Dinah for a wonderful 2023 Mini Reunion in Carthage, TX, a small town with Texas sized unique things to learn and see with our CVA-64 friends.