

‘Rogue Soldier’



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Alan Barber authors book about ancestor David Kokernot

BY WANDA ORTON
Special to The Sun

Once upon a time one of the most fascinating characters in Texas history inhabited the Baytown area.

Who? Sam Houston, Lorenzo de Zavala, David G. Burnet or Ashbel Smith, all of whom lived around here at one time or another and contributed greatly to the formation of Texas?

Although all of the above qualify as fascinating characters, the man in question is someone else – someone whose name sounds like coconut.

Full name: David Levi Kokernot.

Hardly in the mold of those previously mentioned, DLK wasn't your typical, larger-than-life Texas legend. He was no military hero, intellectual or innovator. Yes, he knew Sam Houston – going back to 1832 when they shared bottles of wine in Nacogdoches – but he was no Sam Houston.

Indeed, one might call up an old expression, “They threw away the mold,” when describing Kokernot, this trouble-making, street-smart rogue from Amsterdam. Never before or since he made his home on the shores of Scott's Bay – and later on Cedar Bayou – has Texas experienced such a colorful and controversial character.

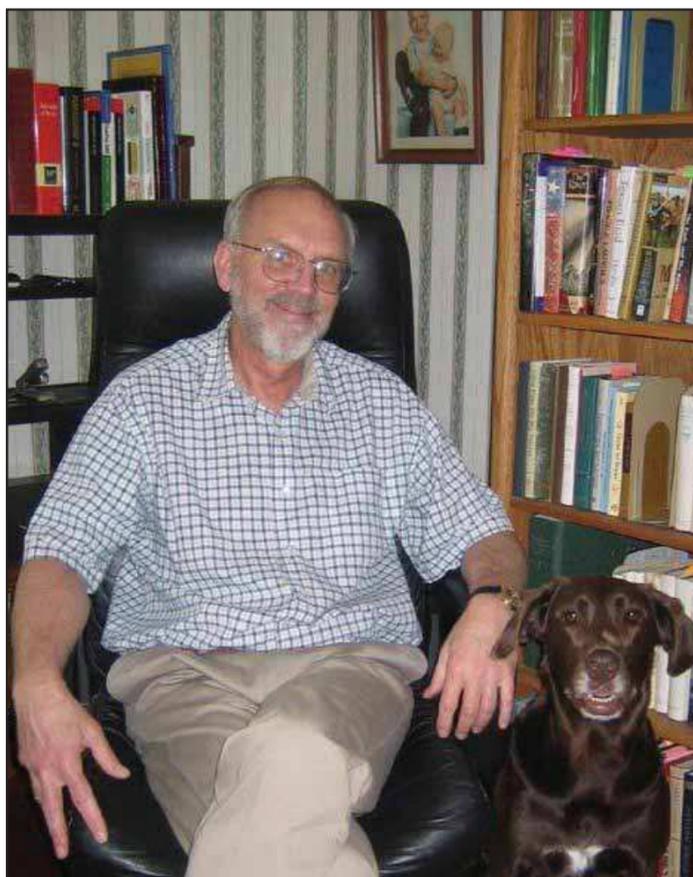
He ended up in Gonzales County, by way of Columbus, but not until he had left his mark (black mark, some would say) in this



DAVID LEVI KOKERNOT



Elizabeth, the daughter of David and Caroline Kokernot, married John Barber, a member of a prominent Chambers County family.



Alan Barber is the author of a newly published book, “David Kokernot, Rogue Soldier of the Texas Revolution.” Barber is a direct descendant of Kokernot. Contributed photo

bay area.

Alan Barber, a DLK descendant who's kin to the Barbers of Barbers Hill, wrote a book about him. “David Kokernot, Rogue Soldier of the Texas Revolution,” newly published by Kullyspel Press in Idaho, is a treasure of regional and state history, and as a bonus, reaches out to the Kokernot roots in New Orleans and The Netherlands.

Kevin Ladd, director of the Wallisville Heritage Park and himself a noted author/historian, offered this opinion: “Barber, a remarkable researcher, has accomplished a great miracle with this book. The end result vividly captures the man and the times in which he lived.”

Barber delves into the activity that Kokernot relished – chasing Tories. After the battle at San Jacinto, supposedly at the behest of Gen. Houston, Kokernot tracked down the so-called slackers, those who failed to back the cause of independence from Mexico. As British loyalists were labeled Tories in the American Revolution,

they were the Tories of the Texas Revolution. Mostly, however, they were solid citizens, ranchers and farmers who just wanted to be left alone to mind their own business. To paraphrase a line from a movie – they “didn't need no stinkin' war.”

Soon after San Jacinto, Kokernot was confiscating their cows and horses and in general making lives miserable for them and their families. For his efforts, bordering on obsessive/compulsive behavior, DLK became Public Enemy No. 1, especially in Chambers County.

(Keep in mind that when Barber alludes to Liberty County, usually it's Chambers County. Until 1858 Chambers was part of Liberty County.)

So, David Kokernot was the bad guy, the zealot hell-bent on making Tories pay for what they had done – or rather what they had not done – in the struggle for freedom from Mexico.

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LIBRARY MEMORIALS

Gifts to Sterling Municipal Library honored the memory of the following people during recent weeks:

MEMORIALS

Jeanne Bitterly: “Landscape Painting Inside and Out,” “The Oil Painting Course You've Always Wanted: Guided Lessons for Beginners and Experienced Artists” and “The Simple Secret to Better Painting: How to Immediately Improve Your Work with the One Rule of Composition” from Mike and Myra Nebgen; “The Artist's Handbook” and “Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith” from Jim and Lindy Orr

Montez Botkin: “Mom, It's My First Day of Kindergarten!” and “Brother Sun, Sister Moon” (for the Children's Collection) from Ronn and Anna Lee Haddox; “The Joy of Reading: A Passionate Guide to 189 of the World's Best Authors and Their Works,” “The Little Book of Talent: 52 Tips for Improving Your Skills” and “Etcetera: Creating Beautiful Interiors

with the Things You Love” from the Parsons, Patton, and Erdman families

Tyler Enderli: “One on One: Behind the Scenes with the Greats in the Game” from Mary, Callie, Braden and Madison Navarre; “Stalking Trophy Brown Trout: A Fly-Fisher's Guide to Catching the Biggest Trout of Your Life” from Brenda and Bryan Ralls; “Ray Eye's Turkey Hunting Bible: The Tips, Tactics, and Secrets of a Professional Turkey Hunter” from Gloria and Walton Scott

Susie Cirelli Flores: “Flavor Exposed: 100 Global Recipes from Sweet to Salty, Earthy to Spicy” from Barrera, Clymes and Ponce families; “The Curious Garden” and “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (for the Children's Collection) from Alexander and Nicholas Clymes

Hattie Ashley Garrison: “Our Mother's War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II” and “American Women and World War II” from Tommy and Linda Hathaway; “Knit Your Own Cat:

Easy-to-Follow Patterns for 16 Frisky Felines” and “Julia's Cats: Julia Child's Life in the Company of Cats” from Larry and Diane Woodcox

Forrest Gober: “The Dust Bowl: An Illustrated History” from Jean Froneberger

Margaret O'sullivan Hill: “American Quilts: The Democratic Art, 1780-2007” from Tommy and Linda Hathaway

Mary Beth Holt: “The Women's Fitness Book” from Ronn and Anna Lee Haddox

Marilyn Marshall Bennett Jobe: “Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife” and “The Complete Guide to Repairing and Restoring Furniture” from Larry and Diane Woodcox

Rosemary Langelier: “The Cat and the Hat” and “The Giving Tree” (for the Children's Collection) from Ivory JohnBaptiste

Berta Mask: “The Complete Photo Guide to Perfect Fitting: The Essential

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Seems like old times, writing ‘From Sun Files’

In this allotted space on July 29, I recapped my old job of writing a regular column called From Sun Files, based on past issues of the newspaper.

Just for old times' sake, here's another From Sun Files column – snippets from stories and ads found at random from the '60s and '50s:

June 6, 1962: Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris – the M&M of the New York Yankees – star in a movie, “Safe at Home,” at the Brunson Theater.

June 27, 1962: Quack Shack members sponsor a dance at the Humble Community House. Since their building was destroyed by Hurricane Carla last year, they are seeking a new location and building for the teen recreation center. Newly elected officers are David Geaslin, president; Karen Boudloche, vice president; Sandra Wilkie, secretary-treasurer. On the student board from Robert E. Lee High School are Mel Ocker, Earlene Barr, John Tucker, Pat Hudnall, Bill Tucker and Penny Wadley.

June 28, 1962: The Wooster Chamber of Commerce will present a resolution to the Baytown City Council to oppose the proposed annexation of Wooster, Brownwood and Lakewood. The resolution was drafted by a committee com-



WANDA ORTON

posed of Gene Muller, Bud Blackburn and James Harrop. Wooster Chamber leaders fear that the annexation will jeopardize plans for a levee for Brownwood.

Harris County Commissioners Court has agreed to pay one-third of the cost of the levee if it is approved by the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

July 29, 1963: Five seamen from England, Wales and Scotland, after their ship the Esso Cambridge arrives at the Baytown Refinery docks, wander into the Knights of Pythias Hall where a square dance is going on and they end up learning how to square dance themselves. “They caught on very fast,” commented Mrs. J.R. Geaslin. After the dance, Mrs. James Lee took them home for tea and sandwiches, and, being British, she knew they liked sandwiches buttered instead of spread with mayonnaise.

Nov. 16, 1967: Athletic director and former Gander football coach Dan Stallworth is the subject of a feature

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The stirring saga of the one-eyed dog

Sure, some of you think that I can't write about animals unless it involves horses and cows, me being an old Brazoria County cowpoke and all.

With all due respect, you're wrong.

Today I present the bold, exciting saga of Annie The One-Eyed Chihuahua. You won't want to miss a single line of this.

Little Annie belongs to granddaughter Katie and her Erikson clan. Annie recently spent the better part of two weeks with us while the Eriksons went on vacation.

We charge cheap boarding fees. Like, next to nothing. Wait. It was nothing.

Annie wasn't a problem. Save a few “accidents” (it wasn't her fault), everything went well.

It was kinda fun having a pooch around again – not permanently, understand – since we've been dogless for 26 years. We lost our Tippy in 1986 to old age.

Tippy was like an alien punk from the planet Pluto – Pluto, get it? – or somewhere. Maybe Massachusetts? Sicily? Syria?

Tippy didn't like or interact with many people, and I bet had we checked, we would've found he had a criminal record. Think Lindsay Lohan here.



JIM FINLEY

Annie is not that way. Far from it. She's a sweetheart. She's lovable. She likes to snuggle with you.

(NON-EDITOR'S NOTE: I'm almost positive that when Taco Bell was searching for a pup to star in their TV commercials, they secretly took pictures of Annie and then found a look-alike (there are only several million). Why they didn't just hire Annie is still a mystery.)

In the beginning – years back – I was worried when Annie, named after Wife Margie's sweet mom, trotted down Baron Drive looking for a place to stay overnight and a free meal. She was a lost soul, a stray, a dog with no friends and no future.

Katie, who never met a stray she didn't like, took her in. What a break for this wondering mutt.

But I was troubled. Chihuahuas sometime can be a little uppity, a little hateful, a little territorial (like Hugo Chavez), and we had just welcomed great-granddaughter Kamille, now almost 8, into our lives.

Not to worry. Annie liked babies, too.

She does have one glaring fault. She thinks she's tough when it comes to other dogs, most of whom are 10-times larger. She's paid for that mind-set several times.

This Tough-Dog Attitude began when Katie took in Bella, a black lab, a few years ago. Bella and Annie got along pretty well ... until it came to food. That was

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BOOK REVIEWS

Farfalla

By Vánita Oelschlager,
A Story of Loss and Hope.
Art by Kristin Blackwood.
Vánita Books, LLC. 2012.
Paperback. Ages 4 to 8.
ISBN: 978-0-9832904-3-8



JOAN
MARTIN

When Mother Beetle and Little Beetle arrived in the garden, they noticed numerous caterpillars on the blueberry bush.

Little Beetle spent the summer playing with his soft fuzzy friends.

One day all the caterpillars disappeared.

His mother pointed up to the glistening cocoons dangling from the top branches of the blueberry bush.

She explained the nature of caterpillars and Little Beetle looked forward to all the fun he'd have when the butterflies

came out of their cocoons.

What a disappointment.

They all flew away.

Only one

cocoon was left that Little Beetle named Farfalla (Italian for butterfly.)

He waited and waited patiently.

Would this turn out to be another disappointment?

Kristin Blackwood's giant beetles and a page full of yellow caterpillars squirming and crawling takes the reader into the middle of the action.

Little Beetle imagines

being lifted into the sky on the backs of thousands of brilliantly colored butterflies.

After experiencing a pregnancy loss, stillbirth or miscarriage, the narrative of Farfalla offers both comfort and hope for the future.

Parents now have a resource to have a conversation with children when tragedy occurs without rhyme or reason.

Farfalla begins like a fable on friendship, but becomes a story of expectation.

When I Grow Up

By Sharon Griffin,
Illustrated by Veronica Sepulveda. Griffin Girls Publishing. 2012.
Paperback. 28 pages.
\$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-615-61862

Subtitled "A Little Girl's Big Boy Dreams," Sharon Griffin begins her inspiring, motivational story, written in rhyming couplets, with an African-American family in bed.



They happily dream of all the possibilities in the future.

As the reader turns the pages, the illustrator offers us a great diversity of faces as they imagine their life in the next few years.

The decisions the girls explore are a wide range of occupations from astronauts to school principal, from pastor to lawyer.

They consider the less glamorous jobs like truck driver, auto mechanic as if they are open even to the top role as President of the United States.

James Brown said, "It's a man's world."

These young girls of future generations prove him wrong.

Veronica Sepulveda's vivid art brings Sharon Griffin's ideas and words to life, helping the reader see herself and her friends in various walks of life.

As a sign-off the author challenges moms, dads, and family to read the book with their little girls and encourage her to choose several careers she might pick at this time.

Just the act of signing her name might become a life-changing moment for her.

ORTON

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story by REL track coach Beverly Rockhold in Texas Coach Magazine.

Rockhold wrote, "Dan, as a coach, is a perfectionist. Dan, as an athletic director, is a guiding light. Dan, as a man, is my friend."

Glenn's Food Market at the corner of Cherry and Cedar is selling crowder peas for 19 cents a pound. ... Hollaway's at 701 N. Alexander advertises a pound of Admiration coffee on sale for 89 cents. ... Fuller's Humble service

station and grocery store at 913 S. Main are open around the clock. ... Henke & Pillot on Market is selling apples at 19 cents per pound.

March 6, 1952: KNUZ deejay Paul Berlin will emcee the Press Club Stunt Night at REL Mike Coady, a native of Dublin, Ireland, tells plans for a St. Patrick's Day program at the Humble Community House. ... James Carnes and Anna Vann are crowned king and queen of REL in an assembly program. ... Joe Kenneth Platt is elected president of the 7th grade at Baytown Junior High.

SOLDIER

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Republic of Texas President David G. Burnet had to make him back off and return the livestock to the rightful owners, but the damage was done. Then and thereafter the name of Kokernot would be mud, even in his own neighborhood.

Getting away from all that, DLK returned to his first love, the sea, boarding a schooner called the Terrible that kept the Gulf of Mexico safe from Mexico during the summer after San Jacinto.

Now there was a job Kokernot could handle, having been a capable sailor before docking permanently in Texas.

Start from the beginning: David was born in 1805 in Amsterdam, the second son of Levi and Elizabeth "Betsy" Kokernot. His Jewish family, with roots in Germany, had been in Holland a hundred years.

By the early 19th century, the Kokernots, along with a multitude of fellow Europeans, were ready for a change in a far country – America.

Young David accompanied his father to New Orleans in 1818 and they were followed within a year by David's mother Elizabeth, known as Betsy, and his older brother, Louis.

The Kokernots established a mercantile business in the French Quarter, importing goods from Europe.

David, however, never planned to be a shopkeeper the rest of his life and as soon as possible he sailed away, satisfying his longing for the sea. After a variety of voyages and adventures, including a shipwreck, Kokernot arrived one day at Anahuac and never looked back.

An instant Texan, he established his first Texas home in the early 1830s on Scott's Bay in present-day Baytown. (Specifically, present-day Baytown Nature Center). He bought the property from William Scott, whose home stood about where the ExxonMobil docks are located today.

With fellow seafarers Scott and James Spillman, Kokernot managed to block supplies being

shipped to the Mexican garrison at Anahuac in the early stages of the Texas Revolution.

Spillman, who lived on the island where the Baytown-La Porte Tunnel would be built more than a century later, had been Kokernot's friend in New Orleans.

It didn't take long for Kokernot to catch "war fever" in his new environs, and a chance encounter with Sam Houston drove his patriotism even deeper.

Perhaps that is why, soon after the battle of San Jacinto, DLK went "over the top" in his zeal to persecute alleged Tories.

Another reason, too, could have been the alcohol. It was no secret that Kokernot had a drinking problem and in the process of searching out Tories, he helped himself – when such opportunity arose – to barrels of whiskey owned by the non-combatants.

His second home in Texas, after trading places with William Bloodgood, was on the banks of Cedar Bayou in the vicinity between Baytown and Barbers Hill.

Eventually he pulled up stakes and moved away, first to Columbus, then to Gonzales County where the Kokernots' son Levi Moses became a prosperous rancher. While in Columbus, DLK got sober for good and became a devout Methodist.

Their son-in-law and daughter, John and Elizabeth Barber, also relocated to Gonzales County and finally to the Rockport area.

John's sister, Melissa, married George Maley, a half-brother of Kokernot's wife, Caroline.

There were two Maley brothers, George and William, sons of Juliane Maley and her second husband.

John and Melissa Barber were the son and daughter of Chambers County pioneer Sam Barber.

All of the family connections cited in Barber's book are too numerous to list here but, suffice to say, locals will recognize names from many Chambers County and Baytown area families.

The author, who lives in Sandpoint, Idaho, is the great-great-great-great-grandson of David Levi Kokernot.