

# Her first parade was on a pony – in 1930

by PETE KENDALL  
Staff Writer

Granbury's Fourth of July Parade, as celebrated Saturday morning, is about to be 30 years old.

No one debates its age, scope or immense popularity. But there was a forerunner ... several forerunners actually.

Sandwiched around various wars.

"The Old Soldiers and Settlers Reunion was established after the Civil War," Mary Kate Durham, this year's grand marshal, said. "The old soldiers were still wanting to get together.

"Their first reunion was in 1897 at Thorp Spring. In 1901, they held it at Doyle Springs, which was at the end of South Baker Street, in a big house built by one of the prominent old soldiers.

(Please see PARADE, P. 2A)



**2004 parade  
grand marshal  
Mary Kate  
Durham**

## Fourth of July celebration schedule

(Please see P. 2B for complete schedule)

### Friday, July 2

- 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Arts/Crafts Food Vendors (Historic Square)
- 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Family Fun (Shanley Park)
- 9:15 p.m. Lighted Boat Parade  
(Departs from Bridge Harbor Marina)

### Saturday, July 3

- 7:30 a.m. "Run for the Hills"-5K and 1 mi run/walk  
(Performance Zone)
- 8 a.m. Tom Ward, CPA Memorial Decorated (Decker Gym)  
Youth Parade (Decorated Bikes, Wagons & Strollers)
- 10 a.m. Annual Hometown Parade (Historic Square)
- 4 p.m. Eddy Raven Concert (Reunion Grounds)

### Sunday, July 4

- 1 p.m. DARE Ice Cream Freeze-Off (City Hall Stage)
- 1:30 p.m. Old-Fashioned Games (Houston St. Park)
- 6 p.m. Ranch Rodeo (Reunion Grounds)
- 9:15 pm Fireworks over Lake Granbury (July 5 is rain date)

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"The house was on a bluff overlooking the Brazos. It wasn't convenient to the river. So after one year, they decided to look for a better site.

"In 1902, the old soldiers went east of town and found 17 acres on what we now call the reunion grounds. They bought the land and built a huge tabernacle.

"The last time a storm damaged the tabernacle, it was getting pretty old. The Livestock Raisers, who now own the property, decided they didn't need the tabernacle and demolished it.

"They said it was dangerous. I don't doubt it. It was all wood. I sat many a boring hour under the tabernacle when I was too little to go play on all the reunion rides."

The tabernacle was popular with the old soldiers, who would orate, listen and presumably snooze within its confines.

"We had Confederate veterans here for many years," Durham said. "The reunion was in honor of them and of the settlers coming back."

The reunion was staged the second week of July and lasted three eventful days.

"A carnival came to town," Mary Kate said. "There was horseracing. It was quite a big celebration.

"Before my time, people would come in wagons, with a milk cow tethered behind the wagon, and stay the entire time.

"Then they began to have a parade in the early 1900s to let people in town know what was happening."

The parade is the only portion of the original reunion that remains today.

Mary Kate missed the parades prior to, and immediately following, World War I.

She missed none after she was ushered onto the earth, and into the family of Keith and Minnie Grissom Randle, in 1924.

"When I was six, my father bought me my first pony," Mary Kate. "She was a small horse, very trim and pretty. Her name was Dimples.

"Dad took me to Fort Worth to have a saddle made. So I had a brand new saddle and horse, and she'd had plenty of experience so that she would take care of me.

"My dad always said that he had to choose a horse that was smarter than the kid who was going to ride it.

"That same year, 1930, I rode in my first Old Soldiers and Settlers Parade, and I never missed one after that."

Horses were common along the

and attention. He created a lot for himself. He was an interesting character.

"One year, when I was 10 or 12, my pony had a colt that was fairly good size but still small. Dad had me bring the colt with us on the parade. It was not tethered. It was loose, with its mother giving orders quietly out the side of her mouth.

"We went through that entire trip to town and entire parade and the trip home with that colt right by her mother's side. I was scared spitless, and my daddy kept saying, 'That's all right. Her mama

the reunion.

"In the afternoons sometimes, my mother would take me to the reunion. She would have me sit with her for hours on end at the programs under the tabernacle.

"I learned to absolutely despise the tabernacle. We sat year after year and listened to the old soldiers. They would put them on stage, which was built into the tabernacle, in a semi-circle.

"Every year, there would be one or two fewer old soldiers. The last two or three wore long white beards. They were quite picturesque.

## Historian leads historic (30th) Granbury parade

It's been a part of Hood County's history for generations and who better to lead it than a historian?

Hood County historian and native Mary Kate Durham will lead the Granbury's 30th Anniversary - 30 Red, White and Beautiful Years Fourth of July parade as grand marshal.

The Lake Granbury Area Chamber of Commerce (LGACC) Fourth of July committee selected Durham.

"She is a lifelong resident of Hood County and such a historical advocate. We thought it would be fun to honor her as grand marshal," said Lia Mays of the LGACC. "She began riding horseback in parades when she was young. This year she will be riding in a car."

She will lead and ride the entire parade route.

Durham said she began riding her horse in Granbury parades in 1930 but has never served as a grand marshal.

"It's definitely an honor to be selected," Durham said. "I was very surprised to be chosen."

"I guess I'll get to ride around and wave at everyone," she said. "It's a special honor."

will take care of her.' And she did.

"Another parade, my dad had my mother bring him the brightest piece of crepe paper she could find. He tied a gigantic crepe paper bow at the base of my pony's tail.

"Dimples didn't seem to mind, except she wouldn't put her tail down. It attracted attention."

Mary Kate was the apple of her daddy's eye.

"My parents were married for seven years before I arrived on the scene," she said. "I was born in October, so I had almost a year before the reunion of the next July.

"The first thing my dad had to do was take me on the merry-go-round. Mother said he kept telling him, 'That baby is too little.'

"Well, she said he got deathly motion-sick and that I didn't seem to care what happened. So that was my first experience at the reunion, on the merry-go-round in 1925, because my dad couldn't wait."

Her first memory of the reunion was 1928.

"We'd moved within hearing distance of the reunion grounds. It was on the hill, south of where we lived. The corner of one of our pas-

"I don't know the exact year, I would say around 1939, that the last soldier died."

Then the event became the Old Settlers Reunion.

"There were plenty of old settlers around," Mary Kate said. "It was like a family reunion. You'd see your family once a year and make the date match the reunion. That was a very important date in our lives.

"Then World War II started, and that ended the reunion as we knew it. There were no parades or celebrations during the war."

The latest July 4th parade took shape in the early '70s, Mary Kate said, when Jean and Charlie Cate began preparing the burgeoning community for the nation's bicentennial celebration.

"Jean said, 'The bicentennial is coming up, and we can't just sit on our duffs and not do anything.' She said, 'Let's get some people together, and let's get organized.'

"We formed what was called the

Bicentennial Committee, and the committee assumed the management of the Shanley House. We'd have meetings there, and Jean was always the ramrod.

"She said, 'Let's revive the parade. That's the most important thing.' So we had a practice parade in 1974."

That attracted attention. So did a barbecue inside the then-dilapidated Opera House.

"Everybody will eat barbecue," Mary Kate said, "so we had a big turnout."

Practice made perfect. The parade began, more or less officially, in 1975.

"Then when 1976 came, we were ready," Mary Kate said. "We all had our costumes to celebrate the bicentennial."

Twenty-eight years later, Mary Kate is the reluctant honoree. "It really should be Jean and Charlie Gate. They're the parents of the Fourth of July Parade."

They can cheer her along the parade route, which hasn't been drastically altered since the 1930s.

"It starts at the high school and the administration building," Mary Kate said. "It goes down Pearl Street and around the square on three sides ... Pearl, Crockett and back up on Bridge.

"Then it returns to the school areas on West Bridge. There are so many entries that they have to limit them. It got to where the parade was too long.

"It doesn't move very fast. It moves so slowly sometimes that it gives the people in motorized vehicles some headaches."

She won't be riding a horse this year.

"I don't believe I could get on one."

Whatever she rides, she's unlikely to ride far.

"They said I could ride in the parade to the square and that they'd take me home from there," Mary Kate said. "I said that sounded fine. I know how hot it will be, and I'll have trouble if I have to climb up on a reviewing stand.

"I'll make the parade route, but I won't be sitting around on the square for people to talk to or look at."

Will she be signing autographs?

"I doubt if we'll stop that long. But if anybody asks, I'll be glad to. I have part of my daddy in me."

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one after that."

Horses were common along the route in those days. Now, motorcycles and skateboards seem more in vogue.

"There were lots of horses then," Mary Kate said. "We all met under the big tree on the southeast corner of the school yard where the administration building is today.

"It took me awhile to realize this, but I was in the parades because my father loved parades. If he took me, he had to be there. That's how he got to ride in them.

"My dad loved showmanship

was on the hill, south of where we lived. The corner of one of our pastures came right up to the road across from the grounds.

"As I got a little older, my greatest delight was when the carnival came to town and missed the turn on what is now Reunion Road.

"They would come to our gate and have to turn around in our pasture, I sat outside and waited to see how many of the wagons would miss the turn."

She didn't wait long. There were chores galore at the family dairy before anyone could attend

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