



JAMIE'S JOURNAL



Jamie Hansard
Texas Tech University
President

Greetings TACRAO members! We successfully hosted our first and hopefully only virtual conference with over 1,000 registered attendees. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made the virtual conference happen including the amazing TEC committee. I especially want to thank Jennifer Beal and Nancy Faris for all of their hard work to provide virtual sessions. I also want to send a warm thank you to our presenters, facilitators, ZOOM facilitators, and attendees for your patience as we navigated our way through the virtual world. It's difficult to network and engage in meaningful conversations virtually, but I hope you were able to find time to connect with your colleagues before, during, or after the conference. Since this was our first virtual conference, your feedback is more important than ever. Please do not forget to submit your [conference survey](#). We want to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Please join me in welcoming our new TEC members: President-Elect, Paige Bussell; Vice President for Records and Registration, Tana Miller; Vice President for Technology, Justin Schilke; and Treasurer, Lori Zerr. I also want to welcome the 2021 LAC Co-Chairs, Jessica Cravens and Kat Livingston who have been busy at work meeting with the 2021 Local Arrangements Committee to plan the 100th TACRAO conference. Next year's conference will be held in Lubbock November 7-10, 2021. So, mark your calendars now. At

the 100th conference, we want to celebrate the success of the past 99 conferences and look to the future for another century of success. We want to remember the previous conferences through pictures so I would ask that you please share any old photos from past conferences with us. Please send pictures to [Jessica Cravens](#) or [Kat Livingston](#). Thank you to those of you who have already shared pictures; you can check them out at [lubbocktacrao.org](#).

Our President-Elect, Paige Bussell and Vice Presidents, Jennifer Beal and Tana Miller, are working with the session planning committees to plan the best sessions for next year's conference. If you have an idea about a presentation, please submit a program session proposal [form](#).

Lastly, I want to thank our immediate Past-President, Bobby Lothringer, for his fearless leadership this past year. It is an understatement to say that 2020 has been a difficult year, but Bobby led this organization with integrity, courage, and learning agility. Bobby had to make so many difficult decisions over this past year but his commitment to TACRAO was admirable and unwavering. I am honored and humbled to follow in Bobby's footsteps.

Jamie Hansard
TACRAO President

PAIGE'S PAGE



Paige Bussell
Texas A&M University-Commerce
President-Elect

Howdy fellow TACRAON's from East Texas! Please join me in thanking the 2020 TEC Committee for working so hard to put on a WONDERFUL Virtual Conference for us! This year has presented many new challenges and opportunities to see what can be accomplished by thinking WAY outside of our boxes, and NEW Ideas have definitely prevailed!

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your President-Elect for this amazing organization! I am so excited to help guide us through 2021 and serve with such amazing colleagues as our new President, Jamie Hansard, Past-President Bobby Lothringer as well as Tana Miller, Jennifer Beal, Justin Shilke, Kristin McDonald-Wilery, Lori Zerr and Melinda Carroll.

Mark your calendars for the 2021 annual conference to be held November 7-10, 2020 in Lubbock. I know our LAC chairs; Jessica Cravens and Kat Livingston will be ready to astound us with excitement and entertainment!

If you are interested in serving on a TACRAO committee, please be sure to fill out the available [form](#). I hope you will all consider getting involved. TACRAO is always ready for volunteers!

If you have a session idea or you would like to present, please submit a [session proposal](#). Your TACRAO VP's Jennifer Beal and Tana Miller would LOVE to see proposals pouring in as soon as possible.

Not sure what to present on? Review the TACRAO website Session Planning Committee descriptions. Session Ideas include: Recruiting, Orientation, Registration, FERPA, Veteran's Practices, Professional Development, Degree Audit practices, Work-Life Balance, Reporting, Transcript evaluation/processing, Graduation, Admissions, transfer credit – you name it, we want to learn about it! Until next time I wish you all a very safe and happy Holiday Season! Cheers to a NEW and IMPROVED 2021 YEAR!

Paige Bussell
2021 TACRAO President-Elect

BOBBY'S BULLETIN



Bobby Lothringer
Southern Methodist University
Past President

Greetings TACRAO!
Now that the first-ever, and hopefully last, TACRAO virtual conference is in the books, I think we can look back on it, and the entire year, as a success for our organization. I want to thank all of the presenters for generously giving their time and talent to helping make 99th annual TACRAO meeting a "virtual" success! I have heard nothing but compliments and positive reviews from so many of you. On behalf of the TACRAO Executive Committee, I want to thank all of you for your support and feedback.

I especially want to thank Jamie Hansard, Jennifer Beal, and Nancy Faris for pivoting so quickly to develop virtual sessions from the traditional sessions they had been working on for so many months. Many thanks to Rex Oliver and Jessica Cravens for their technical expertise and all of the hard work they put into setting up the zoom sessions and working with the presenters ahead of time. Major shout out of appreciation goes to Julian Olivas and the Tech marketing team for the wonderful website they put together.

In addition, I am so impressed with Anne Delgado and Alex Holt for quickly putting together a virtual 5K fun run for the organization, ensuring we can continue to support the Fred Russell Scholarship. Great job!

Thank you to Troy White and the SEM committee for once again providing an absolutely incredible SEM workshop! What a great way to cap off our annual conference, and I can't wait to see what they deliver in 2021!

But now I look forward to the new TACRAO leadership team, led by the incredible Jamie Hansard as the new president. I am excited about the future of our organization with the new TEC at the helm and seeing on the horizon our future leaders who have distinguished themselves this year and previous years!

TANA'S TIDINGS



Tana Miller
West Texas A&M University
VP for Records & Registration

I am so excited to be given the opportunity to serve our TACRAO community! While this year has been unique with COVID19, it has challenged us all to do things differently and I believe we have risen to that challenge well. While it was sad to not get together in San Antonio last month, the online program was a fantastic alternative. Kudos to everyone who participated to support our TEC and colleagues.

We are already in planning mode for next year's meeting in Lubbock and are moving full speed ahead expecting to be in person! If you have ideas for sessions now is the time to send them our way. Use the [Session Proposal Form link](#) found on the homepage of www.tacrao.org and let us know what you want to hear more about OR even better, what topic you are prepared to present for a session! Then plan to join us in Lubbock, Texas, November 7-10, 2021 as we "set the sun" on 2020 and look forward to the "promise of another century of success"!

BEAL'S DEALS



Jennifer Beal
North Central Texas College
VP for Admissions

Hello TACRAO friends! We have completed the very first VIRTUAL TACRAO conference and I would say that it was a success. We missed seeing everyone this year and hope that you were able to get some good information from the sessions that were available to you. I know that this year has been trying for everyone and we are all doing our best to survive. I am so proud of our industry and our organization. We have been able to shift our direction on a whim and still come out shining. GREAT JOB TEXAS!! Congratulations to our outgoing president, Bobby Lothringer. You led us through one of the hardest years in higher education and I could not be more grateful for your leadership and "we can do this" attitude during this time. You are "King" of TACRAO in my eyes! I would also like to congratulate our new president Jamie Hansard, I know you will continue leading us down a wonderful path. Now we can hopefully put 2020 behind us and start fresh with the new things we have learned and some of the old things we love. I look forward to our 100th annual conference in beautiful Lubbock Texas. You will not want to miss all that Lubbock has to offer.

We want to make the 100th conference the best conference you have ever attended, but we can not do this without your help. Sessions presenters are the core of the conference and we are calling upon you to make it great. If you have a topic that you would like to present please submit a session proposal through the TACRAO website and we will do our best to get it on the docket. The online [form](#) is easy as 1, 2, 3...

Another way to help make this year's conference the best is to get involved. If you have not already turned in your I'm Available form here is your chance. We welcome all new and old to get involved with TACRAO as this organization is one of the best networking opportunities of your career. Submit your form online [here](#).

I am so excited to serve as your Vice President for Admissions this year and I look forward to seeing you all at the 100th Annual TACRAO conference in Lubbock, Texas November 7th-10th. Get ready to have a blast!

TECH TALK WITH JUSTIN



Justin Schilke
Rice University
VP for Information Technology

Greetings from Houston! As I write this message, I'm wondering if I am even in Texas, as Houston just experienced below freezing temperatures for the first time this winter. It may be a bit chilly outside, but things have been heating up with some major changes to TACRAO's IT infrastructure. (Thank you to Bobbie Brown who took the time to lead me through the web of TACRAO's IT components!)

The Executive Committee approved moving to a new membership system called MemberClicks. Many state and regional organizations, including SACRAO, are moving to (or have moved to) this software, and it will provide us with a number of enhancements over our current system and may even allow us to consolidate a number of systems we have scattered about. Additionally, a partnership

with AACRAO will reduce TACRAO's costs in this area, further strengthening TACRAO's financial position. Due to the complexity of the implementation, this will be a long-term project for TACRAO. The implementation kickoff is in mid-December, and we will provide updates on the progress along the way. Lots of good stuff to come!

Thank you to all those who presented at the TACRAO 2020 virtual conference and to all those who attended, handled registration, worked the technology behind the scenes, and straightened out cameras using sugar packets. The fact that TACRAO was able to pull this off using volunteers shows the ingenuity of the membership, and I look forward to serving you and the organization in this role. My goal is to continue working on the foundation that Bobbie put down to help streamline TACRAO's technology functions and make administering the organization easier.

KRISTIN'S COLUMN



Kristin McDonald-Willey
Amarillo College
Secretary

Greetings! Thank you all for joining us at this year's virtual TACRAO conference. While Zoom doesn't allot the same number of session options or Topsy Cow* experiences as an in-person conference, it was so great to be able to gather and learn with you all this year. We sincerely thank all of you who helped to make this conference a success—those of you who are brand new to the organization all the way up to our conference speakers share the same goal of ensuring student success and it's so wonderful every time we are able to gather together to support that goal.

As with the previous year, Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS) billing information will be sent out soon. TCCNS is one of the top tools we have available to us that helps ensure seamless transfer for our students and without your participation, maintaining the TCCNS would not be possible. So please know we are very thankful for your continued participation.

As I move into my second year as the TACRAO secretary, I just can't thank you enough for all of the support you have provided to me over this past, very difficult year. I am so grateful for the opportunity to get to know each of you both as both colleagues and friends. I look forward to working with you all over my final year as the secretary and sincerely wish you the happiest of holidays!

Kristin McDonald-Willey
TACRAO Secretary

* Over the years, there have likely been numerous names for the various, after-hours, networking happy hour rooms. However, the "Topsy Cow" remains my personal favorite.

LORI'S LETTER



Lori Zerr
The University of Texas Health
Science Center at Houston
Treasurer

Greetings fellow TACRAOans!
First, I would like to extend kudos to the 2019-2020 Executive Committee. They worked tirelessly for TACRAO during a year that was anything but normal and in which their regular jobs required Herculean effort. They volunteered for our membership: maintaining the stability of the organization, having our voices heard, and giving us a fantastic virtual Annual Conference. Thank you all!!

To all of the members of TACRAO who have entrusted me with the responsibility of maintaining the financial records of the Association, I thank you. It is an honor and I will do my best to uphold the high standard that has been set by those who have served before me, most recently Melinda Carroll. She and I have been working diligently to

transition the responsibilities and I look forward to continuing to learn from Melinda's vast knowledge in her role as the first TACRAO Past Treasurer.

The Lubbock 2021 Annual Conference is a year away, but make plans now to attend, the time will fly by!

CONFERENCE CHAT

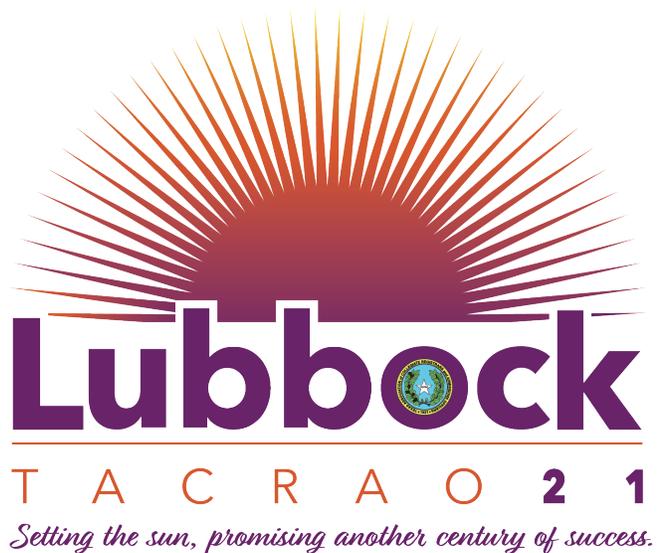


LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Jessica Cravens
Texas Tech University
Kat Livingston
Texas Tech University

The 2021 TACRAO annual conference will be held in Lubbock, TX on November 7 – 10, 2021. The conference will be held at the Lubbock Civic Center. Hotel accommodations will be hosted by the MCM Eleganté, the Cotton Court, and the DoubleTree Hotel.

We encourage you all to visit our website at www.lubbocktacrao.org for updates and additional conference information. We can't wait to host everyone in Lubbock!



REGIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEST TEXAS

McMURRY UNIVERSITY

McMurry University in Abilene, Texas recently launched a new financial aid initiative, the Community Commitment, to support those who are employed in careers focused on service. The Community Commitment guarantees at minimum 50% of tuition in institutional aid for students or students whose parent, legal guardian, or spouse is employed fulltime in public service, non-profit, education, healthcare, or ministry. The Community Commitment is an extension of McMurry's servant leadership focused campus culture and a reflection of our core institutional value; "service as the measure of life." Our commitment is simple, if a life of service runs in your immediate family, then we'll cover half your tuition at McMurry University.

McMURRY
COMMUNITY
COMMITMENT

HALF TUITION FOR
FAMILIES WHO SERVE

REGIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

NORTH TEXAS

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON



TACRAO mourns the loss of longtime TACRAO friend and pioneer Marty Grassel. Marty was a great supporter of admission counselors across the state and was closely connected to NTTCURAO through her friendship with another TACRAO great, Marcilla Collinsworth.



UTA is glad to announce that Amanda Nickerson has joined our team as Executive Director in Enrollment Management.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

UNT is excited to welcome Krista Huff as the new Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications for Admissions. We are also excited to welcome Ashley Mason, Associate Director of Admissions Processing, and Laurel Collins, Assistant Director of Admissions Operations, to TACRAO. They been at UNT but are new to TACRAO participation.

REGIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

EAST TEXAS

PANOLA COLLEGE



Jeremy Dorman, Director of Admissions and Registrar at Panola College, will be changing positions at Panola beginning in January. He will be our new Director of Human Resources. Jeremy has been in student services ever since he was a student worker at Panola in 1995-97, then was hired full-time in 2000. Not only has he been the go-to guy for anything, he has served while wearing many different hats as an academic adviser, International Student Adviser, Veterans Affairs coordinator, and for the last 11 years as the Director of Admissions and Registrar. We will truly miss him in Student Services, but thankfully he will just be across campus.

STEPHEN F AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

SFA has recently converted all our course offerings to TCCNS format. Updates to the TCCNS website are on the way! SFA has also moved toward offering more eight-week courses to accelerate students' progress through their programs. There are several major construction projects underway on campus. Renovation to the fine arts building and main auditorium is moving along quickly. There is also major renovation in progress on the William R. Johnson Coliseum. We are excited to watch the campus transformation!

DO YOU KNOW TEXAS (RÜEGG THAT IS)?



Dr. Texas Rüeegg is the Registrar at LeTourneau and is a busy guy, serving on the AACRAO Awards Committee, the AACRAO Nominations & Elections Committee, and the AACRAO Executive Director Search Committee. He has also served as the Chair of the AACRAO State & Regional Committee for the last 3 years (and again this year as interim vice-chair).

In addition to his work for the national organization, he serves as Cub Master for Hallsville Pack 302, Lieutenant with the Nesbitt Fire Department as well as serves on their board, and serves on the board of the Longview-Greggton Rotary Club. LeTourneau University has reason to be proud! ETACRAO thanks Dr. Rüeegg for his willingness to serve others.

BURIED TREASURE

By Jennifer Ritz for the [Texas Techsan \(Winter 21 Issue\)](#)

Special thanks to Curt Langford, President and CEO of the Texas Tech Alumni Association and Jean Ann Cantore, Editor for sharing this article with TACRAO from the paid subscription alumni magazine.

“I always wanted a brother..”

It's an oft-quoted line of men who grew up with one or more sisters. And, yes, it cuts both ways, with women wishing they'd had a sister in addition to a brother or brothers. But this isn't a story about sisters. It's about two brothers, born in the 1940s, who, until 2019, never knew of the other's existence.

“I was adopted as an infant by a caring couple who were unable to have children of their own,” says Dennis McMillan. “For a long period of time, they volunteered to be foster parents thinking that it would result in an adoption. Each time, the social worker would return to pick up the foster child for a placement with a grandparent or some other family member. Finally, my parents were successful in adopting my sister in 1942, and my adoption came about five years later in 1947.”

McMillan later learned that the court-appointed woman who facilitated his adoption was, at the time of his adoption, hired by his parents to serve as a nanny to him and his older sister. “My adoptive parents must have thought that I would never learn of my adoption,” he says. “Maybe they thought I would somehow become aware of this and they could avoid an uncomfortable conversation. At any rate, we never had ‘the talk’ explaining how I was adopted or how my situation was different from other children. It was very shocking to hear about this for the first time from someone other than my family.

“When I was about 10 years old, I learned that I was adopted when a neighborhood classmate revealed this fact to me. Evidently my mom had discussed my adoption with his mom and she, in turn, told her son. He somehow must have felt compelled to blurt out the newsflash to me as we were playing on his front porch. In 1985, his mother died in April, shortly afterward, his father was diagnosed with cancer. Dennis spent a lot of time with his dad in his last days, and his father told him that, in 1947, they had become aware of a young couple who were planning to divorce and had decided to give up for adoption the child that was on the way.” That child was McMillan.

He was born in December 1947, and his adoption was finalized in January 1948. Shortly after the adoption was final, his birth parents returned saying that they had reconciled and would like to take back their son. After a long discussion, his adoptive dad suggested that everyone needed to just sleep on the decision and that they resume the discussion the next day. The birth parents returned the next day and said they realized they were wrong to ask. Dennis' birth parents then left, saying they would not bother the McMillans again.

McMillan's birth parents ended up relocating to San Angelo, Texas. Shortly after the death of both of his adoptive parents in 1985, McMillan discovered a clue. “While cleaning out my parents' home, I came across an obituary that my mom had clipped in 1968 and saved all those years. It was for James Alvin Alred. She had written in the margin a note — ‘Dennis' grandfather,’ and one name listed as a surviving relative (Grady) was circled. I could only surmise that she had indicated that Grady Alred was my biological father. At this point the only information I had was a name and San Angelo as a location.

He wrote Alred a letter explaining he was adopted as an infant



Photographed above Dennis McMillan. McMillan unenrolled from Texas Tech to serve in the Navy during the Vietnam War. He did one tour of duty and returned to Tech on the G.I. Bill. Following graduation he worked as the assistant registrar at Texas Tech, then moved to a series of jobs in higher education, in Amarillo and Edinburg, Texas.

and had reason to believe that he had resolved the question of who his father was. “The next day, I drove to El Paso to meet up with my Amarillo church group for a Juarez mission project,” he says. “I mailed that letter just before crossing into Mexico for a week, thinking I might have a response when I returned home. I never got a response to that letter, and I have spent a lot of time thinking of all the reasons why this didn't yield any results.”

Fast forward many years, and McMillan was able to use the Internet to search for information on his family. “I discovered that my birth father, Grady Alred, had relocated to San Angelo shortly after I was given up for adoption. I also learned that he had passed away at about the same time I was trying to contact him with the letter I mentioned earlier. That is when a light bulb went off in my head while thinking about that obituary that my adoptive mother had clipped and saved.

“I decided to contact the San Angelo newspaper in an effort to obtain the obituary for Grady Alred. I got an email response very quickly with the obituary containing all the info about my siblings. At this point I had uncovered enough missing puzzle pieces to confirm that Grady was my birth father and that I had a brother and a half-sister. The information about my birth mother was not as clear or complete.”

McMillan's daughter, Tobi McMillan, gifted him an Ancestry.com DNA kit and membership in 2019. McMillan says he had submitted a DNA test almost 20 years ago, but the results only predicted the regions from which his ancestors came. The new test showed much more: Alred was a full-brother. The discovery stunned and delighted McMillan. This was a life-changing turn of events that would bring into his life a whole new family. “I was so excited for him, but I was also a little bit concerned that they might not know about or want to

know about my dad,” Tobi recalls. “However, I remained hopeful. We talked a lot during that time. As he found each new detail and took each step toward actually meeting his brother, my excitement grew. I was ready for us to know more.”

McMillan’s research showed that he and his brother, at different points in their careers, had the same boss, a man named Greg Williams. Williams shared Alred’s email address with McMillan. “I was very careful to not tip my hand when I sent an email to Clayton,” she says. “I told him that I had gotten his email address from Greg Williams and that I was researching my biological family.

“I explained I was adopted as an infant and my research had started with Grady Alred, hence we might be related. I asked if he would be willing to speak on the phone to answer any questions I might have. He responded to my email stating that genealogy was one of his interests and that he would be happy to try to answer my questions in a phone conversation. “After Clayton read my email and reviewed my genealogical research, he too came to the same obvious conclusion. He immediately responded to set up a time for the first phone call. I sent several photos to compare before the phone call and asked if he had an iPhone so we could Facetime and he said yes. A couple of days later we were virtually face-to-face and that call lasted more than two hours.”

That initial phone call occurred in August 2019. Since that time, McMillan and Alred’s wives — Lise and Catharine, respectively — have become close friends as well. Their children, newfound first cousins, have all met and become friends as well. Most of McMillan’s adopted family has passed away, so finding his brother and their half-sister, Candy McDaniel, who lives in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, had an even bigger impact.

“I’m starting a new chapter here, finding new family members,” says McMillan.

The Brother

“I was absolutely flabbergasted that I had an older brother,” says Clayton Alred, Dennis’ McMillan’s recently discovered brother. “There was no clue, and my mother’s still alive. I have aunts and uncles, or had aunts and uncles that lived in Lubbock, and nobody said a word to me.”

Alred knew his parents had lived in Lubbock but could never have guessed he had a full-brother who lived there. Lubbock was a familiar town to Alred. “I was in and out of Lubbock three and four times a year all of my life,” he says. “I’ve got aunts and uncles there. I was there at Christmas, Thanksgiving, summer, spring break.” When one contemplates the frequency Alred visited Lubbock, it’s conceivable the brothers — who were born two years apart — could’ve been in the same place and never known they had a sibling there.

“Well, actually the could-have scenarios run deeper than that,” explains Alred. “Both of us had careers in higher education, we would go to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board hearings and meetings in Austin, the state agency that governs higher ed. We would go to statewide conferences. We would go to national accreditation conferences, and undoubtedly during his career and mine, he and I were in the same building a number of times.” Alred, who received his bachelor’s degree from Angelo State, started his career teaching in Big Spring Independent School District. He earned his master’s degree in education from Sul Ross State University, then went on to earn his doctoral degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Once he completed his doctoral degree, he accepted a position at Odessa College, where he stayed 30 years. Later, he moved to Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso where he served as president until his retirement.

“So Dennis writes me this long, detailed email message, and he talked about how his daughter had given him DNA tests and a subscription to Ancestry.com and that he had established through



This photo, above, shows brothers Dennis McMillan and Clayton Alred on the day they first met. The similarities were striking, not just in their physical characteristics, but also in their choice of clothing: green shirts, khaki shorts and sandals.

that (Ancestry.com) he was related to, and he lists my cousins who were named Alred,” says Alred. “He said, ‘There’s some other relatives that I don’t know about, some of whom are named Holly.’ When I saw that, I thought, ‘Well, okay, I’m reading this email as he’s explaining this, and okay, he’s related through the Alred side of the family.’ “When I saw ‘Holly’ I was just astounded. My mother’s maiden name was Holly. Having a background in science, I was immediately stricken by the limited possibilities in terms of identifying this relationship. That is, if he has first cousins on my dad’s side and he has cousins, actually, that were first cousins on my mother’s side named Holly, there is only one way he got that DNA: that is from my mother and my father.

“It was astounding. I mean, in my lifetime, I’ve had surprises. I’ve had good surprises. I’ve had bad surprises. I have never had a bigger surprise in my life than some guy writing me, someone I’ve never heard of, telling me he is related to me by both sides of my family and the stark realization that the only way that happened was through my parents, our parents.”

Alred and Dennis’ mother lives in a nursing home in San Angelo and is in the memory care unit. Alred says he visited his mother and inquired about having another brother, and, she has “little glimpses of memories of what took place.” The 1940s were a very different time; support systems for mothers and their children that are in place today were not in place then. “She was separated, a single mom, with a two-year-old girl, a brand new baby, and she chose the best thing for everybody concerned,” says Alred.

The brothers were finally able to meet in person in New Braunfels, Texas. And although there are many years that have been lost to time, the brothers are making up for that with a close relationship today. “I am regularly asked, ‘Wow, you found out you have a brother. I mean, was it like you had a brother that you just loved instantly?’ says Alred. “It really was kind of, in an odd sense, a relationship that developed quickly. But I very definitely welcomed this and immediately wanted to pursue a relationship with Dennis. So here I find out I have this brother, and it’s like a new family member. It’s really cool. It has really opened up a lot of opportunities in my life.”