We were saddened to learn of the death of a long-time active member of AAFA. Gaston began working with AAFA on his Alford ancestry over ten years ago, and he had been at it without AAFA help long before that. He and Dorothy were present at several AAFA meetings. The first was the 1993 St. Francisville, LA meeting and the last the 2000 meeting in Augusta.

In addition to the following obituary there were two news articles and the church In Memoriam published about Gaston. One of the articles, Former Sheppard commander dies, Wichita Falls Record-News, May 29, 2002, is not published here because the content is covered in the other articles. While there is some repetition in the following accounts of his life each has something unique. It was considered more appropriate to provide them to you unedited rather than to consolidate them.

San Antonio Express-News (Obituary)
Wednesday, May 22, 2002

ALFORD
A Loving Tribute to Col. David Gaston Alford. A Distinguished Flying Cross recipient and a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, Colonel David Gaston Alford (USAF Ret.) died on Monday, May 20, 2002 of complications related to his recent struggle with bone cancer at the Health Care Center at Air Force Village II, where he had resided for the past 13 years. He was born in Rising Star, TX on May 29, 1917, attending Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, TX where he earned a B.S. in education, and East Texas State College in Commerce, TX where he received an M.B.A. in accounting. He became an Army Corps Flying Cadet in 1939 and graduated from flying school as part of Class 40E at Kelly AFB in August 1940.

Col. Alford began his military flying career as part of an Atlantic patrol to search for German vessels. Col. Alford is best known for his heroism while serving as Group
Operations Officer for the 91st Bomb Group when his plane was shot down while leading a raid on Frankfurt, Germany in February, 1944. While under heavy flak attack, his B-17 bomber caught fire, and, after bailing out his crew, he discovered that his parachute was on the floor of the plane; however, he managed to safely land it in a cow pasture near Groenio, Holland. Thanks to the kindness of Dutch families whom he has never forgotten, and with the help of the Dutch Underground, he was hidden by patriots who risked their lives to hide and feed him for more than eight months. With their help he evaded the enemy, traveling, as he frequently recalled with much delight, as a deaf and dumb typewriter repairman and was picked up south of Liege, Belgium by the U.S. Army as they overran the area in battle in October 1944. On returning to the States, he was part of a B-17 training organization in Tampa, FL, which was followed by duty as an Air Force liaison officer to the Army at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX. Col. Alford returned to action with the outbreak of the Korean War where he flew 35 missions in a B-29 bomber. One of Col. Alford’s fondest military memories was his 3-year tour in Greece as Base Commander with his family. It was in Greece where he became active in the Masonic Lodge, rising to a 32nd degree Mason and Shriner. Col. Alford’s final base command was at Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, TX where he retired from military service in December, 1965. For almost 14 more years, he worked in the public sector with the Wichita Falls city government and finally with the area planning commission. His final retirement brought adequate time to devote to his passion for golf and his fondness for traveling with his beloved wife, Dorothy. His last 13 years he lived at Air Force Village II in San Antonio, TX with his wife. Though his health took a turn for the worse just several weeks prior to his death, his memory was still sharp, said his family, and he could recount a story with remarkable detail. In spite of his illness, Col. Alford managed to keep his sense of
Retired Air Force Col. David Gaston Alford, 84, who survived the harrowing crash of his plane in World War II and spent eight months in occupied Holland hiding from the Nazis, died Monday of bone cancer.

After the rest of the crew bailed out, Alford discovered his parachute had unsnapped and there was no time to replace it. He raced back to the cockpit and, though all the engines were on fire, managed to land the plane in a cow pasture inside Holland.

The date was Feb. 4, 1944.

The following article was published May 23, 2002 in the San Antonio Express-News under the full page width headline Alford hid from Nazis after bomber was hit with a sub-headline Also served in Korea. The byline was Carmina Danini.

Retired Air Force Col. David Gaston Alford, 84, who survived the harrowing crash of his plane in World War II and spent eight months in occupied Holland hiding from the Nazis, died Monday of bone cancer.

Serving as group operations officer for the 91st Bomb Group, the 26-year-old Alford was on his 19th bombing mission when his B-17 bomber was struck by enemy fire over Germany's Ruhr Valley.

After the rest of the crew bailed out, Alford discovered his parachute had unsnapped and there was no time to replace it. He raced back to the cockpit and, though all the engines were on fire, managed to land the plane in a cow pasture inside Holland.

The date was Feb. 4, 1944.
from one place to another, he escaped detection by impersonating a hearing and speech-impaired typewriter repairman.

"He was apprehensive most of the time because he did not speak Dutch and most of the people he met did not speak English, but they risked everything to help him," said Alford's wife, Dorothy Jean. "He was very lucky. He always said the only injury he suffered during the war was a broken fingernail."

The Belgian underground also helped Alford, and in October, he was picked up by U.S. Army troops near Liege, Belgium.

Alford also served in the Korean War, flying 35 missions in a B-29 bomber.

He later served as base commander in Greece and at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls before retiring from the military in 1965.

Alford's decorations included the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Born in Rising Star; in Eastland County, Alford earned a master's in business administration from East Texas State College in Commerce and a bachelor's in education from Daniel Baker College in Brownwood.

He joined the Army Air Corps in 1939 and graduated with Class 40E from Kelly AFB in August 1940.

Originally with the 92nd Bomb Group, he was later assigned to the 91st.

Other survivors include his son, Michael Alford of Framingham, Mass.; a daughter, Patricia Lanier of Kaufman; stepdaughter Dorothy Dee Phillips of Stuart, Fla.; three grandchildren and a great-grandson.

Alford donated his body to the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

A memorial service will be held at the High Flight Chapel at Air Force Village II on May 29, on what would have been his 85th birthday.

The following was taken from the program printed for his memorial service.

When his time came this old pilot followed the directions from the ground crew to the parking area, closed the throttles and cut the switches— and exhaled and softly said, "It's been a great flight."

IN MEMORIAM

Col. Alford was born in Rising Star, Eastland County, TX the son of Eula Mayfield Alford and Virgil Carl Alford. He attended Rising Star schools and Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, TX getting his B.S. in Education (1939), taught briefly in Baird, Callahan Co., TX before resigning to become an Army Air Corps
Flying Cadet (December 1939), graduating in Class 40E at Kelly AFB, TX on August 31, 1940. While on ROTC duty at East Texas State College, Commerce, TX he received his MBA in accounting.

The 21st Squadron was sent to Gander, Newfoundland in May of 1941 and opened up that Base for American traffic. In September of 1941, the Squadron was transferred to McDill AFB, FL, and became a part of the 29th Bomb Group. In the spring of 1942, several groups were formed out of the 29th. He joined the 92nd Bomb Group and after training in B-17Es, he went to England and the 8th AF in August of 1942. They were preceded only by the 91st and 97th Bomb Groups.

After serving as a Squadron Commander in the 92nd, he joined the 91st Bomb Group as Group Operations Officer in May of 1943. He flew 19 missions with both the 91st and 92nd; was shot down on the 20th mission while leading a raid in Frankfort, Germany on February 4, 1944.

On returning to the states, he was in a B-17 training organization in Tampa, FL, until the end of the war in Germany. After the war he had 3 years duty as Air Force Liaison Officer with the Army at Ft. Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX. With the outbreak of the Korean War, he returned to McDill and with his old SAC Bomb Group, the 307th, went to Okinawa to fly B-29s in Korea where he flew 35 missions.

Among his many awards and decorations are the Distinguished Flying Cross, eight Air Medals (one Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters), Army and Air Force Commendation Medals, Service Medals for American, UN, and European-African Middle Eastern Campaigns. He retired from Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, TX, in December of 1965, having been offered a job with the City Government of that city. After 3 and one-half years with the City, he worked with the Area Planning Commission for another 11 years then retired a second time.

Gaston and Dorothy moved to AFV II in August, 1989. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy; daughter, Patricia Lanier, of Shawnee, OK; son, Michael Alford of Framingham, Mass; one step-daughter, Dorothy Dee Phillips, of Stuart, FL; three grandchildren, Michael Chad Lanier and Lori Lanier of Shawnee, OK, and Lea Alford, of Framingham, Mass; one great-grandson, Jacob Alford Lanier, of Shawnee, OK.