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Yuba City, California

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Leaving for Denver

1/26/41

Bill Huntington and his dog, 1941

Photo courtesy of Margit Sands



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*The year the director joined the Board.

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The 2010 dues are payable as of January 1, 2010. Mail your check to the Community Memorial Museum at 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City, 95993-2301. 530-822-7141

Student (under 18)/ Senior Citizen/Library	\$ 20
Individual	\$ 25
Organizations/Clubs	\$ 35
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Business/Sponsor	\$ 100
Corporate/Benefactor	\$1000

President's Message

As we prepared to go to the printer, we received the sad news that a dear friend of the Historical Society, Dewey Gruening, passed away. Dewey was president of the Society from 1981-1985 and with his wife, Barbara, has been a stalwart supporter for many years.

At the same time, we are welcoming two new members to our Board of Directors: Vicki Rorke and Joe Bouchard. Some of you may remember Vicki from her time as an intern at the Museum. Joe is a familiar face because of his work with Middle Mountain Foundation.

Speaking of projects, your Historical Society is planning and discussing several new items. Among them: oral histories of or about local people who survived the Dust Bowl; creating a website; holding a picnic meeting in the Buttes; participating in the 2010 Live Oak Fall Festival; and recording Century Farms, farms that have been in one family's hands for at least 100 years. If you would like to participate in any of these, or if you have other ideas for the Society, please give me a call at 695-2965.

Did you miss buying *Thompson and West's History of Sutter County* as Christmas gifts? Well, it may be too late for Christmas, but it's never too late to own this valuable, informative book describing Sutter County's history up to 1879, when the book was first published. *Thompson and West* is available at the Museum for \$45 plus tax. We'll even mail it to someone you love for \$60 total.

Please join us for our annual dessert meeting, Saturday, January 16 at 2 pm at the Museum. Our program will be Photography and the Collector: Identifying and Preserving Your Collection, by Allan Lamb, who has been working with the Museum's collection of glass negatives. Afterwards we'll partake of wonderful desserts provided by the Board members. Everyone is welcome, so please bring your friends and family.

Audrey Breeding, President

Message from the Editors

We always have an eye out for articles, and love to get an old document someone found in the attic trunk. So we were very interested when Margit Sands said she had letters home from her cousins, who both served in World War II.

Usually we just print what we're given. But when Margit started sharing these letters, photos and other documents, we saw there was opportunity here for much more than reprinted letters. These letters, and the story that surrounds them, led us to delve into old documents, memoirs, and historic analyses regarding the events the cousins describe. The tale was fascinating, and of course we learned much more than we can actually print here - that's what research does for you.

Because there is so much material, we have broken the story into sections. As we write this, we anticipate the Huntington brothers' story will be covered in four bulletins. In this issue, we meet Bill, the older brother. He was not in the service as long as Harry, nor was he such a prolific writer, but his story is compelling. Be sure to renew your membership so you don't miss any of this gripping tale.

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Director's Report

The Museum is off on the right foot in the new year with a chuckle and a bit of quirky history. The new traveling exhibit, *Past Tents: The Way We Camped*, is a humorous romp through Californians' early forays into the great outdoors to enjoy nature and the extraordinary beauty of the West. Picture in your mind John and Annie Bidwell in 1898 in front of their exotic, brightly striped, cabana-like tent in an otherwise serene outdoor scene beneath overarching trees. She is seated, wearing a proper Victorian ankle-length skirt, matching mutton-sleeve jacket, high-collared blouse, and is severely reined in by corset. John's more outdoorsy outfit is topped off with a respectable jacket and a broad-brimmed hat. Annie's expression is somewhat resigned, but it is hard to tell if John's severe look under his long gray beard really expresses the fun he is having, or if he is just holding very still for the photographer. Inside the tent, you can see their neat, nattily striped bedroll on the ground. If that scene doesn't bring a giggle, what will? Maybe the stylish and well-appointed large striped tent that housed Phoebe Apperson Hearst in Sonoma County, replete with an iron bedstead, elegant linens, a wicker rocker and wood writing desk?

While some of the early camping trips blurred the lines between home and outdoors, Californians soon learned how to get along in the wilderness. *Past Tents* also reveals the origins of environmental organizations and how and why they developed. Based on the book *Past Tents* by Susan Snyder (also author of *Bear in Mind*), the exhibit includes an array of vintage photos, stories and anecdotes of camping adventures of long years ago. Ms. Snyder, of the Bancroft Library, will present a program about the exhibit and its intriguing topic in February. A flyer will come your way with details. I'm sure you've heard that history should be fun, and some topics just make that easier than others. Come to the Museum and enjoy *Past Tents*.

We are hoping for completion of two Museum projects this year. Exhibits for the multi-cultural wing are proceeding slowly, as community groups and Museum staff work hard to do a thorough and accurate job of collecting and interpreting photographs, stories, history and artifacts to present them in a way that engages understanding of our different and common experiences. The Museum meeting room project is coursing its way through all the steps that are involved in the planning and construction of a building. Many folks are looking forward to the opening of such a needed and useful community resource, being made possible by a generous bequest from Dorothy Ettl. Sutter County Supervisors have generously dedicated remaining state Proposition 40 funds to the project. With such a great partnership of funding and goals, we look forward to the building's completion this year.

This spring we are once again looking forward to seeing the lively art projects from both Yuba City and River Valley High Schools. Keep in mind that the Museum's popular fundraiser *Wear & Remembrance* Vintage Apparel Fair is back again for the 18th year with a change of venue. It will be held on April 17th and 18th at the Sutter County Veterans' Building. Last, but most importantly, remember that your favorite chocolate amaretto truffles will be available in the Museum Store during February!

Julie Stark, Director

Memorials

In Memory of **Earl Blaser**
Joe & Rebecca Benatar

In Memory of **Gail Bunce**
Sharyl Simmons

In Memory of **Paul V. Cary**
Dewey & Barbara Gruening

In Memory of **Dan Halcomb**
Bob & Lee Jones

In Memory of **Eleanor Holmes**
Kenneth Calhoun

In Memory of **Nina Lois Langlois**
W. C. McFarland

In Memory of **Lucille Child McCarthy**
Marge & Bryan Fairlee

In Memory of **Colleen Jodene Moore**
Carolyn Childers

In Memory of **Barbara Norvell**
Inner Wheel Club of Yuba City

In Memory of **Richard Owen**
Norman & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **Edwina Dean Park**
Shirley D. Schnabel
Sharyl Simmons

In Memory of **Truman Prater**
Mrs. Jan Prater

In Memory of **Judy Reed**
Marie Fuller

In Memory of **Norbert H. Rehermann**
Joe & Rebecca Benatar

In Memory of **Lonny & Evelyn Renfro**
Norman & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **Trudy Speckert**
Norman & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **James Lauren Strain**
Joe & Rebecca Benatar

In Memory of **Betty Taylor**
Beeler Tractor Company
Roy Ciappini
Bettie Fuller
Jim, Laura & Jake Goble
J.D. & Beverly Johnston
Helen & Charles Luce
Sunset Molding & Morrison
Family
Mitsue Oji
Rosalie Palmer
Ida Philpott
Norman & Loadel Piner
Jan & Curt Schroeder
Sutter Orchard Supply
Robert & Rosemarie Wood

In Memory of **Jane Ullrey**
Erna Barnickol
Robert & Sheryl Bartlett
Bob & Katie Bryant
Natalie Cartwright
Robert T. Coats, Jr.
Joel & Jennifer Daven
Ronald & Dianna Dunnington
George & Shyrlie Emery
Gene & Joan Erfle
Heidi Erickson
Joy Hammons
Helen Heenan
Kimberly Heische
Dorothy Jang
George & Kate McDowell
Gayle & Meredith Morrison
Dorothy Niesen
Norman & Loadel Piner
John & Dot Reische
Shirley Schnabel
Marilyn W. Smith
Marcia & Bennie Stranix
Burwell L. Ullrey
Robert & Rose Wood

In Memory of **Robert Wapple**
Allen & Kathe Herr

Far from Home: The Letters of Bill and Harry Huntington

edited by Phyllis Smith

Some of the terms the boys used in their letters are offensive, but reflect the times in which the letters were written. We left them as written with the goal of sharing history as it really happened. We are thankful to the local Japanese American Citizens League for their input and guidance on what was appropriate to print.

Introduction by Margit Schnabel Sands

I fell heir to the letters that my cousins wrote after enlisting to fight in WWII. They were two country boys who grew up during the Great Depression a few miles south of the town of Sutter. Their mother, Dorothy Dean Huntington, was the daughter of Edward and Edwina Dean. Dorothy was my mother's (Shirley Dean Schnabel) sister. The Huntingtons and Deans lived about a quarter of a mile apart along the Wadsworth Canal where it joins the Sutter Bypass. I can just imagine my grandmother stopping the two boys on some of their adventures to make them come to the house to get their hair washed and cleaned up. They spent a lot of time playing marbles and walking down the levee to the bypass area to fish, hunt or camp.

Bill was the elder of the two boys, but younger than their sister Miriam. School came easily for him and he was more serious. He had a slight lisp that didn't seem to bother him. Harry was more gregarious and light-hearted.

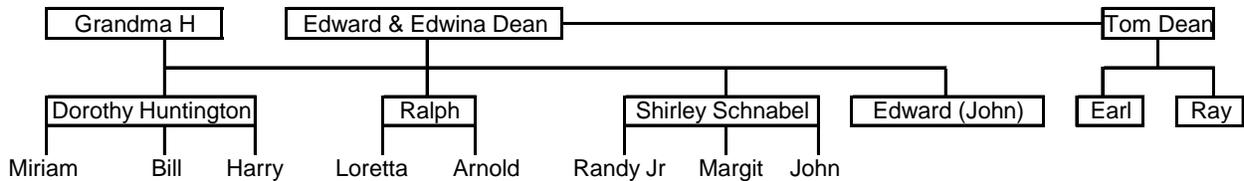
Bill and Earl Dean, an older cousin, went deer hunting in the Sierra and stopped in Portola to visit my parents, Randolph and Shirley Schnabel, who were living there while Randy taught school. Bill had graduated from Sutter High School in June, 1940 and was ready to join the army. My parents tried to talk him out of joining at that time and to go on to college, especially since he had a scholarship offer from UC Berkeley to be on the rowing team. I guess he had a lot of practice with a rowboat in the bypass. He was determined to join the army and so he did. His father, Warren Huntington, was a sergeant in WWI and had a big booming voice. He saw a lot of action in WWI and wanted to join up again, but his age was against him. He encouraged his sons to join.

After Bill was missing in action, Harry was determined to join up as soon as he graduated from Sutter High School in June, 1942. He wanted to go fight to avenge his brother. As you will see in future articles he was a letter writer and even he said that he wasn't much of a speller, but that didn't stop him.

During this process of typing all their letters I have a better idea what these two cousins were like. As I was growing up I always heard about them, but didn't have any idea what kind of young men they were.

Following are some of the people mentioned in the letters, and a partial family tree to help you keep track of the characters. Some of the people named in the letters we could not identify.

Warren & Dorothy Dean Huntington - parents to Miriam (Coon), Bill and Harry
 Edward & Edwina Dean - Grandparents - the grandma Harry wrote to
 Shirley Dean & Randy Schnabel - Aunt and uncle and my parents
 John Dean - Dorothy and Shirley's younger brother who became a psychiatrist
 Loretta & Arnold Dean - cousins (children of Ralph Dean who lived with their
 grandparents, Ed & Edwina Dean)
 Earl & Ray Dean - cousins (children of Tom Dean, Ed Dean's brother, who lived
 about a mile away)



*In December of 1940, Bill Huntington was stationed at Hamilton Field, an Army Air Field in San Rafael. Construction at Hamilton began about July 1, 1932, and in 1940 it housed organizations totaling over 4,000 officers and men. A description of the base in 1940 or early 1941 said, "An average of 250 clear days each year makes the mile-square, table-flat landing field ideal for huge Army bombers and fast pursuit planes. Field exercises and long-distance mass flights are the rule, rather than the exception, at Hamilton Field. One mass flight, of two months' duration, covered practically the whole of the United States."*¹

Monday, Dec. 16, 1940
 Hamilton Field

Dear Folks,

We have our uniforms now and here is what they gave us. 2 pr pants, 4 shirts (2 cotton and 2 khaki), 1 flight cap, 1 campaign hat, 1 pr coveralls, 2 pr. shoes, 8 pr. socks, 2 barracks bags, 4 pr. shorts and shirts, 2 neckties, 1

blouse, 1 raincoat, a razor and blades, a shaving brush, comb, towels and a toothbrush.

I passed all examinations so far, about 4. I signed up for armorer so at the end of 6 weeks, I expect to go to school in Salt Lake and learn how to shoot. I may be home the 21st if I make the right connections and can get a pass. Also we have to pass inspection Saturday.

They feed good here. All you want and then some. I was on K.P. Sunday, curses. One of the guys that was with me went to Fort McDowell but I don't believe he passed all the ex's.

Bed time now, Bill

Just time to drop a line before drill. They sure pour it to us. This is only the 3rd day and they think we should be experts. They are walking us about 20 miles per day. They quit when they are too hoarse to shout anymore.

This morning someone stole my raincoat and campaign hat. Only \$7 worth.

Might (probably will) get K.P. for a poor looking bunk. Be home Sunday.

Bill likely went home for Christmas and was back on base in early January.

Jan. 8, 1941

We are still doing drill but yesterday we had lectures on chemical warfare and today we were instructed in putting on a gas mask. I couldn't help laughing in mine when I looked around. These masks are lots different than the one dad had. There wasn't much to putting one of them on.

We had a moving day today. All in our squadron are in our barracks now. I got a small room with 2 other guys. Now we can come and go as we please (almost) and not catch hell.

There seems to be no chance of getting home till after recruit training is over because we can't get more than a 36 hour pass.

Officially we are in our second week of training while I've been here a month. We have not been paid yet so will probably have to wait till the last of this month for some dough.

I saw a minor crackup the other day. A plane came in and I guess its wheels locked. It just tipped up on its nose.

I've used 8 stamps since I got back and received 2 letters. I'm on the losing end.

Jan. 13, 1941

I finally got paid...a whole \$14. Boy, am I rich. I think I'll go to Frisco Saturday or Sunday. I might go see Sis [*Miriam Huntington Coon*].

There are only 4,000 men here. Yep, I am still G.H.Q. [*General Headquarters*] and will be for another month. Then I think we'll go to Portland. I don't like that.

I bet Raymond [*Armstrong, a close friend of the family*] will like the

army but tell Earl he had better not join. I'm crippled in one toe and sore all over. The corporals work in shifts so they can keep us going. We had gas mask drill in a chamber of tear gas. I passed all right. Today we start with the pistol.

I got a letter from Grandma H. and she wanted to know why dad got kicked out of the guard. When I was standing in ranks the other day, a kid from Tierra Buena marched past. I haven't been able to locate him.

I got to lead our squadron in physical training the other day. Maybe I'll be a sergeant at the end of 6 weeks (oh yeah).

Jan. 21, 1941

Went to San Francisco and wasted my money. I saw Earl Carroll's vanities and some guy with a trained dog. It was pretty good. [*Earl Carroll was an American theatrical producer, director, songwriter and composer who produced and directed numerous Broadway musicals, include eleven editions of Earl Carroll's Vanities.*]² We've been aiming and dry firing pistols these last few days but we can't shoot them until the range dries out. We only have 3 more inspections. Then we'll be finished with recruit drill.

The leaders give us a chance to get some rest now. It's not certain yet whether we go to Portland or Riverside. They gave us an alpha math test yesterday. I don't know what I got but I hope it's enough so I can go to school.

There is talk now that all of us recruits will be advanced and put in charge of the new draftees. I hope so. The corporals and sergeants get pretty good dough.

They cracked up three planes in one day last week. Poor taxpayers.

Will you send my annual [yearbook] down if dad ever gets paid. I'll forget what all the kids look like pretty quick.

Instead of Portland or Riverside, Bill was sent to Lowry Field in Denver. Its primary mission throughout its existence was Air Force technical training and it was heavily involved with the training of United States Army Air Forces bomber crews during WWII.³

Jan. 29, 1941

I borrowed some of the train's stationary to write on. As I write this, I'm on my way to Denver and we are at Elco right now. There is sure a lot of snow here.

We were through Marysville at nite but I was asleep. We were held up by a slide at Portola but they wouldn't let me go see Shirk [Shirley] and Randy [Schnabel]. Tell Earl I went right by where we hunted and the snow was deeper than heck.

Well, here I am at Lowry Field, Denver. The snow is about 6 inches deep all around. It is colder than heck. We were issued Mackinaws and overshoes to keep us halfway warm.

They gave us passes just as soon as we got here so we can go and come when we want. This field is about 12 miles from downtown Denver.

School probably starts Monday.

Feb. 8, 1941

Lowry Field, Denver

How is everybody and my hound. It sure is cold here. We stood inspection for two hours today in 20 degree weather.

I've been going to school this last week and do they pour it on. We

had chemical warfare and are on bombs and explosives now. We take up small arms (we shoot skeet) and electricity, bomb racks, machine gun sights and gun synchronizing. The course is three months long and by that time an A.M. test is coming up. The air mechanics tests are made up here so we have a good start on passing it. I found out that the average man going to this school has been in the army for about a year and 4 months.

I haven't been into town yet so I don't know much about it. We had gas mask drill and a bunch of us goofed up and were blinded by tear gas.

Frozen, Bill

Feb. 18, 1941

Our service records haven't come through yet and today we were supposed to sign the payroll so it looks like we don't get paid for a while.

We don't have to march here. I just wear calluses on my behind sitting down so much. We are studying electricity and electrical controls now. We just finished small arms and in the course we had to shoot some skeet. I outshot our whole class and the instructor (there is a mess of Kentucky squirrel hunters, and Tennessee feudsters in our class, too).

Next Friday we start field work.

My recruit squadron has been placed in the 20th pursuit group and are headed for Trinidad. I'll probably be there soon.

If you get rich, I wish you would send my blue slacks, black shoes, some shirts and a couple of ties. Send my necktie clip too.

Is Earl still milking at Grandma's [Dean]? I got a letter from Grandma H. and she told me not to get in with a bunch of toughs. I saw a coyote run

across the flying field today - must be a wild country.

March 5, 1941

Received your letter the other day and the clothes today. Thanks a million. I never got paid last month but I just got through signing the supplementary payroll. So now I can go to town.

This school is getting boring as heck. For the last two weeks we've been studying machine guns. I got to shoot a .30 and .50 yesterday and today we were showed the workings of the 20 mm and 37 mm cannon.

Wrote to Raymond and got a letter from him and he didn't seem over enthused over the army. I might get home in about 2 more months. Raymond said they hiked 35 miles. I'm glad I'm in the air corps.

Every night and morning an old rooster (ringneck) cackles out by the runway and makes me wish I was home shooting at them.

The weather is sure cold and I don't mean maybe.

I suppose I'd better get back to studying machine guns or go to bed, one or the other.

Bill finally got off the post for some R&R. He saw a movie, "Andy Hardy's Private Secretary," starring Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Kathryn Grayson, Ann Rutherford and Fay Holden, and said, "it sure was a kick." ⁴ And as a sports fan (he played baseball and basketball) he was delighted to attend a game.

March 17, 1941

I went to the opening of the AAU Tournament yesterday and saw a lot of basketball. The Athens Club of

Oakland won 77 to 21. The Olympic club plays tomorrow so I'm going to see Hank Luisetti play. [*Angelo "Hank" Luisetti was a college men's basketball player who developed the running one-handed shot and became one of the most dominant players in college basketball history. He was a member of the Olympic Club in San Francisco and was also a Naval officer during World War II.*]⁵ Minneapolis had a good team but I think Oakland can beat them. It only cost \$.56 for 10 games.

Grandma H. sent me some stationary, stamps and candy the other day. I was sure glad of it because we just got paid Saturday for the first time since I left Hamilton.

I don't know now whether I'll get back to California for a while. We started on heavy bomb racks today and I am completely snowed under. Maybe I'll get it before the course is over. I might be drafted for an instructor here but I sure hope not. If I don't snap out of these bomb racks, I won't have to worry though. We have passed the halfway mark in this course now. I wish it was over with.

April 1, 1941

Am now taking the course of synchronizing. It pretty nearly has me swamped but our particular class is getting as much in 3 days as the rest are getting in 6. I got through bomb racks but I don't see how I did it.

There were about 4,000 men here when we got here but there is nearly 7,000 now. I got paid yesterday and go on the \$30 payroll this month. I've given up the idea of going back to school because it doesn't seem possible to save any money. It takes about all the dough to buy my junk, fix clothes and go to a show now and then. I will

probably get a little more when I get to work somewhere.

Did Raymond tell Harry about being company bugler?

We go down on the line Thursday which ought to be a break in the monotony of study. The 25th isn't so far off now. The latest is that we get to come back to good old California.

We can't leave the post on weekdays now so I guess I'll have to study the method of setting up a synchronizing system.

April 7, 1941

Received your letter today and I guess I haven't much to say. People can't live forever and it was good that Grandma [*Huntington*] could go like that.

I sort of expected it. She wrote about 2 weeks ago and she sort of hinted that she didn't think she would last long. That was right after she fell and couldn't hardly see or hear. How did Grandpa take it. I imagine he will not last long either.

We celebrated Army day here today and a couple of majors did some exhibition flying. They were certainly good.

I think I'll be home about the 10th of May or thereabouts.

April 21, 1941

The weather has been terrible. It's been snowing and raining for the last three days. The latest report is that we graduate next Friday as per schedule. However, I don't know for certain when we get out. Our time is finished in the classroom and we go down on the line next week. I'm on the \$30 payroll now and that extra \$9 comes in handy. I'll come home for 15 days as soon as school is out.

I've been assigned to the 35th pursuit group at Hamilton Field. I wanted to get in bombardment and be a gunner but I guess that is out now.

They washed one of my pals out of the school Thursday. They let him go through nearly a month of school after he flunked and he was all set on graduating with us. We sure felt sorry for him.

April 28, 1941

The 25th of April has come and gone and we are still going to school so I guess that rumor of two extra weeks wasn't originated in the latrine after all. The new date of graduation is May 9. I don't know how soon after that I'll be home because I have to wait for travel orders from Hamilton Field before I can leave.

I signed for private conveyance [*to go home*] and you have to pay your own fare but when you return to your outfit, you are paid 3 cents per mile plus ration money. It's 1400 miles to Frisco so I ought to get around \$50 for coming home. However, it only costs around \$25 to come home by private conveyance.

The instructors here don't know what to do with us students - there is no work for 270 men on about 15 planes.

The list of men staying for instructors came out today and I was sure glad I wasn't on it. The roll call in class has me down for a PFC, but I think someone made a mistake somewhere.

Had some excitement here yesterday. A KP pusher and a KP got in a fight. The KP was smaller but he beat heck out of the boss. He bit a chunk out of the pusher's neck so the pusher grabbed a butcher knife and took after him. Shorty got out his

pocket knife and started to duel but the affair was stopped there. We have a new hero now.

Saw some of the newer planes last week and if Uncle Sam could produce a lot of them, we wouldn't have anything to worry about as far as invasion or war goes.

April 29, 1941

There is supposed to be a big day when we graduate. Two or three guys make a speech and the post commander hands out the diplomas and shakes our hands. After all the ceremonies are over, everyone proceeds to get stewed. It's more or less like graduation from school, so I gather.

Our classes are down on the line and we may get to shoot skeet again next week.

May 7, 1941

We graduate Friday and are supposed to leave here Saturday or Monday.

Today we shot pistols, loaded and fused bombs, filled chemical tanks and watched some of the crack flyers fly about 10 feet off the ground. They laid a smoke screen by airplane for us and it was really a screen. You could have hid a regiment in the smoke caused by dropping 40 gallons of smoke solution. We shot skeet yesterday and we get to shoot the rifle tomorrow. The day after that we graduate (I hope).

I get a 15 day leave plus 3 days traveling time. So I ought to be home for about 2 weeks. I have to be back at Hamilton in time for the air mechanics course which is held June 2nd. We are on field rations now so I'm looking forward to some good cooking.

May 11, 1941

This is Mother's Day so I guess I'd better drop a line. Hope everyone is fine.

We (me too) graduated all right and now I have a big diploma. Hope it carries a lot of influence.

Expected travel orders yesterday but did not get them. They will be given sometime during the week. I'll be home pretty quick so don't be surprised if I drop in someday.

We shot the rifle Thursday and I shot one of the best groups there. That was just luck though. I didn't do so hot with the pistol so I won't brag about that.

*Bill went home on furlough. Memorial Day, 1941 was the last time the whole family was together.*⁶

June 4, 1941

Got here about 10:30 Sunday nite and was situated Monday. I'm in the 21st Pursuit Squadron working in the armament shop. I have been temporarily placed as crew chief on plane 46. That means I have charge of the plane and it's my job to see that all armament is OK on it. [*The 21st Pursuit Squadron was wiped out in the Battle of the Philippines (1941-42). The survivors fought as infantry during the Battle of Bataan and after their surrender, were subjected to the Bataan Death March, although some did escape to Australia. The unit was never remanned or equipped.*]⁷

I'll probably be on KP and guard duty next.

We were given yellow fever shots Monday so we can look for most anything now. Yesterday we moved out into the field (a cow pasture about 5 miles from here) under simulated

wartime conditions. We pitched camp, slept overnight and came back here today.

June 12, 1941

Dad won't brag about this - I'm now on the garden detail. I never did anything wrong either - one day I wasn't busy in the shop so the boss said the C.O. wanted some work done for him. Now it's turned out to be permanent. However, I don't think I'll be on it much longer (I hope anyway).

Pa must be feeling young yet playing ball. He'll probably be manager. I am playing soft ball for the 21st. I've played 2 games in Petaluma under the lights. We are supposed to be there in the town league. There is another game Monday.

There isn't much chance of me

getting any promotions for a while yet. Our squadron is complete except for 3 privates.

June 19, 1941

I'm getting action about my garden detail but that's all. The top-kick put me on guard for one day. Then this morning I was taken off guard and put back on the lawn to stay there until our outfit comes off maneuvers. I wanted to go with the bunch because they are going to be at Chico for a week starting Monday morning. But I have to hold the fort until they get back and then I'm supposed to go back to the armament shop. I ought to get to - they tell me I pass the AM test with 88 - the highest grade in the armament section. I'm almost certain of getting \$72.



Afternoon

Learned for sure that I passed the AM and our 21st is to go to Oroville but I still have to stay here. I just asked the first sergeant about going but he said "no soap."

Has my new cousin arrived yet?
[*This was Randy Schnabel, Jr., and he was born June 23.*]

Will probably be home around the 4th of July.

That's right about the 88% I got - highest in the armament section. I even beat all the sergeants. The squadron gave me a new pair of baseball shoes.

Postcard of bridge across Feather River at Oroville Ca.

Postmarked June 24, 1941

Dear Folks,

I got to come finally. I'm camped just about a mile from the Feather River Bridge west of Oroville. If I get the day off tomorrow (Wednesday) I'll try to get home. Drop up and see the place up here if you can.

Throughout the summer and fall Bill looked forward to buying a car and going hunting with Earl.

July 15, 1941

Dear Sis,

I get along pretty well on \$30 but I guess you have a few more expenses than I have. I'm waiting for the end of this month to collect my \$138.00. I want to buy my car about then because it doesn't look like I'll get to go hunting with Earl. We're supposed to leave for Klamath Falls (maneuvers) August 2nd.

I went to San Francisco Saturday and went to the hospital to look up

Betty. She was on duty but Gertrude happened to come down stairs while I was there. We had some grub and went back to see Betty. Dick came along then so I took off. I went back Sunday and we went to the show, out to the zoo and back. Betty and I took in "Barnacle Bill" [*a 1941 feature film starring Wallace Beery and Marjorie Main.*]⁸ It was exactly the way Pa acts - Wallace Berry and Pa are sure alike in their actions.

July 25, 1941

I finally got off lawn detail so now I'm down working in the armament shop. Boy, it's sure great to be doing what you want to instead of some darn one-track detail.

Tell Earl that I'm trying to get a pass for the 4, 5 and 6th. I'm not certain yet whether I can get it or not so I will write later and you can let him know.

How is Shirk and her kid? Are they still at the Skinner place and is Randy working in the peaches?

I think I'll see Briggs before I buy a car in hopes that he'll give me a little better deal than these guys around here. Also I'd rather deal with someone I know.

Sept. 11, 1941

I'm still working on the Colonel's lawn - the other guy must be taking a vacation in the hospital.

Tell Earl when you see him that I probably won't be able to go hunting the rest of this month. I spent all my dough on clothes (which I can't find any use for at present) and I won't be able to get a pass anyway because I'm on special detail.

I bought a pair of slacks and a blue coat. That coat - wish I hadn't got

it now. It's too bright but guess I'll wear it anyway.

Just heard a rumor about going to Michigan.

Oct. 10, 1941

I've been getting typhoid shots lately so it looks like we're leaving the US. (We are.)

Here's what I want - a letter saying that I have your consent to take up this flying sergeant stuff. Just say our son W.W.H. has our consent to take the enlisted men's flyers training course... the sooner the better. Address it to examining board Enlisted men pilots. Send it to me. I got my letter of recommendation from Miss Barth so only need one more.

Nov. 5, 1941

I'll sure be glad to see some land for a change. We left Hamilton field the 29th and went over to Fort McDowell on Angel Island. [*In the late nineteenth century, the army designated all of Angel Island as "Fort McDowell" and expanded facilities that had been established during the Civil War. During World War II the need for troops in the Pacific far exceeded prior needs and the facilities were again expanded.*]⁹

We left Frisco the first of November and have seen nothing but water since then.

We are sure on a swell ship - the President Coolidge - the chow is better than GI. [*The SS President Coolidge was a luxury ocean liner that in 1941 was converted to carrying troops in the South Pacific.*]¹⁰ * They have an

* The ship served as troop transport until October 26, 1942, when it was disabled by an

orchestra that plays for us at meal times and the whole ship is just like a big hotel - it's better fixed up than most of them. There is a swimming pool on the boat and they have a theatre on it too.

We can see flying fish all the time and once in a while a shark. Those flying fish can fly about a hundred yards.

The weather has been both good and bad - we're having rain storms right now.

We get to get off in Honolulu for a few hours and then we head for the Philippines. I guess we get off the boat at Manila.

Be sure and write. It will probably take a month or more for a letter to catch up with me.

Nov. 27, 1941

Guess it is about time to settle down and write a few lines while I can. We're over here in the Philippines and starting to work. All the big shots believe we will move from here in the near future but we still don't know where. Maybe Australia but I can't see why we should go there.

We got here last Thursday after putting 20 days on the water. Boy, if I didn't get tired of seeing nothing but ocean and more ocean. We were off the main shipping lanes so we saw only one boat on the water til we started going through the straits. We stopped at Guam for one of our companion ships to take on water. There were two transports and a cruiser in our group.

We were given 7 hours shore leave at Honolulu. I didn't see much

American mine and sank at Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu. It is now the largest and most accessible shipwreck from WWII used for scuba diving.

worth while there but it was much better than what I've seen of Manila.

The weather is hot and rainy but it's cool at night and it's easy to sleep which is really a good point for this place.

We have had quite a time getting used to this money over here. It's pesos and centavos and our dough is worth twice as much.

I supposed this will have to do as a Christmas card because I understand that the mail don't get to the states until the 24 of December.

December 23, 1941
Telegram

WARREN HUNTINGTON
SUTTER CALIF

AM SAFE HAPPY HOLIDAYS
WILLIAM HUNTINGTON

Aside from that telegram at Christmas, the Huntington family did not receive any letters written by Bill between November 27 and February 22, so they have no written record of what was happening. But John Burns, a pilot in Bill's squadron, wrote a daily diary and described his experiences. The squadron was assigned to Nichols Field in the Philippines.

On December 8, Burns wrote, "War started."¹¹ He then described his squadron being ordered to move to Clark Field but on the way they were called back because of an expected attack by the Japanese on Manila. They patrolled over Manila but instead the Japanese attacked Clark Field. The squadron did move there later that day.¹²

On December 12 the Japanese came again to Clark Field, dropping bombs from only 900 feet because of

the cloud cover. Many of the bombs failed to detonate and were later exploded by demolition crews.

Throughout December Burns wrote of boring days with nothing to do and other days of raids by the Japanese, although no more at Clark Field. He also wrote of missing mail and having memorized his last letter.

On December 22 the Japanese landed its main invasion force in the Philippines. On December 24, U.S. personnel were ordered to the Bataan Peninsula for a final effort at resistance while they awaited reinforcements. During January Burns again reported a mix of "nothing to do today" and bombing raids by both sides. The 21st Pursuit Squadron was for a time divided for different duties, some remaining with the planes and others serving as infantry. Based on Bill's comments about combat, and that his "hunting trips have been... helpful," we can guess that he was assigned to infantry. On January 28 the squadron was relieved by a "crack unit of professional infantry." This gave the 21st some needed rest.

In early February men of the 21st Squadron assisted in removing Japanese who had taken refuge in caves. The work was described as "unpleasant." The squadron was then assigned to Bataan Field and once again began its flying duties.

On February 15 Burns wrote, "From the time we left Manila for Bataan until now has been pretty near hell."

Following is Bill's last letter home, and it was not received by the Huntingtons until July, 1942.

Feb. 22, 1942

Dear Folks,

Just a few lines to let you know I'm all right is about all I can manage now. I would sure like to hear from you but it's impossible right now.

We are working hard here and are eating pretty good. I guess that's all that is important - good chow. I had a slight case of dysentery but it has been cleared up by our medicos.

I hope this gets through to you and passed the censors OK.

We've had a rough time of it since the war began but I guess everything will turn out as God wills. Our gang has been in combat twice. I killed five of those J— s.o.b.'s and possibly two more. My old hunting trips have been especially helpful in these woods.

There isn't much to write about so I'll repeat that I'm still going strong. At nights we get to wishing that we were back in good old Sutter County but wishing don't always make it so.

The weather here is just like California except we are sweating out the rainy season. The rainfall is about 60 inches.

And I sure do wish I was home.

PS Say hello to Grandma, Tood [Edward Dean] and Earl for me and also E.S. at long bridge if you should ever see her.

It's interesting that Bill reports "good chow," because other sources say the Americans were running out of food. Food stored in Manila had not been transferred to Bataan even though "all the pre-war military plans called for a last stand to be made in the peninsula."¹³ Prewar rations were 70 ounces per person per day; by mid-March they were cut back to between

14 and 19 ounces, 1000 calories, starvation level when the conditions endured by the soldiers required 3500-4000 calories per day to maintain their health. On March 20, John Burns wrote, "One day's food for 250 men - 14 loaves of bread, 15 cans milk, 17 cans salmon."¹⁴ Near the end of March extra rations were ordered for the pilots, who were becoming too weak to fly. Other men were hunting in the jungle for their own food - "wild bananas, animals they caught, e.g. lizards, rats, monkeys."¹⁵

From about mid-February until the end of March there was a lull in the ground war.¹⁶ But on April 3 a reinforced Japanese army assaulted the Americans. On April 9, 1942, the American and Filipino troops on the Bataan Peninsula surrendered to the Japanese. Mr. and Mrs. Huntington were notified that Bill was missing in action.

In late 1943 Captain Samuel Grashio arrived in the United States after having spent more than a year in captivity, participating in the only mass escape from a Japanese prisoner of war camp (Davao Penal Colony), and then living and working with guerillas on Mindanao Island before boarding the USS Bowfin, an American submarine, and sailing to Australia.¹⁷

Within days of his return he was flooded with letters and phone calls from families asking for information on their missing soldiers. But the State Department instructed Captain Grashio not to share any details of his time in the POW camp because of the fear it would cause further problems for the remaining prisoners. Finally the War Department authorized him to reply to the requests, but he was given a set of stock paragraphs and required to select

*one and quote it verbatim when responding.*¹⁸

*Mrs. Huntington was one of those who wrote to Captain Grashio. Then a 2nd lieutenant, he was in the 21st Pursuit Squadron with Bill. When Mrs. Huntington finally received a response from Captain Grashio in April of 1944, she wrote to her daughter, "I had given up hope of hearing from Captain Grashio."*¹⁹

Captain Grashio's letter of April 15, 1944, said, in part:

In giving you what information I can with respect to your son, I must urge upon you the necessity for treating this information as strictly confidential. It should, under no circumstances, be revealed to anyone not directly concerned and especially none of it should appear in the public press. A violation of this confidence could and probably would result in serious disadvantages to the very ones you and I are most concerned with helping. Carelessness in this respect can so greatly increase the hardships that they must necessarily undergo that I cannot too strongly emphasize the importance of silence on this subject.

Having known you[r] son and what a wonderful job he performed during the Battle of Bataan, I sincerely wish to congratulate you and feel as though you should be extremely proud to have such a courageous boy [as] William. Regardless of the job he was given to perform, he always did it willingly and efficiently.

The last time I had the pleasure of seeing your son, William, was at the time of the surrender, on April 9th. At that time he was alive and in good health. Due to the fact that many of the boys in the 21st Pursuit Squadron were brought to different camps than

the one I was imprisoned in, I lost all track of many of them.

*Although by April 1944 the ban on sharing information had been lifted, it appears Captain Grashio may have used some stock phrases in this letter. For example, it is not likely that Bill was actually "in good health." As noted earlier, food had been short for many weeks. In addition, "at least three quarters of the men were weak from malaria," and many also suffered from beri beri, dysentery, and/or hookworm.*²⁰

*Captain Grashio was sent to Camp O'Donnell while Bill went to Cabanatuan Concentration Camp.*²¹ *After two months Captain Grashio was also sent to Cabanatuan, likely shortly after Bill died.*

The next the Huntingtons heard was when they received the following letter, dated May 21, 1945:

Dear Mrs. Huntington:

My deepest sympathy goes to you in the death of your son, Private William W. Huntington, while a prisoner of war of the enemy.

You may have some consolation in the memory that he, along with his comrades-in-arms who died on Bataan and Corregidor and in prison camps, gave his life for his country. It was largely their magnificent courage and sacrifices which stopped the enemy in the Philippines and gave us the time to arm ourselves for our return to the Philippines and the final defeat of Japan. Their names will be enshrined in our country's glory forever.

In your son's death I have lost a gallant comrade and mourn with you.

Very faithfully,
Douglas MacArthur

This was their first notice that Bill had died. The letter was reprinted in full in the Appeal-Democrat on May 31, 1945. The letter was followed by this telegram, a month later:

June 21 1945

I am deeply distressed to inform you corrected report just received states your son Staff Sergeant William W Huntington who was previously reported missing in action died fourteen June nineteen forty two in Phillipine Islands. The Secretary of War asks that I express his deep sympathy in your loss and his regret that unavoidable circumstances made necessary the unusual lapse of time in reporting your sons death to you confirming letter follows. J A Ulio
The Adjutant General

Details didn't arrive until September of that year, in a letter from the Assistant Adjutant General at General Headquarters for the Armed Forces in the Pacific.

4 September 1945

Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy for the loss of your son, Staff Sergeant William Huntington, who died on the 14th of June, 1942, from dysentery at Cabanatuan Camp, Phillipine Islands, while a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

The casualty reports received contain few details. They were of necessity meager, due to the inability of the persons confined by the Japanese to prepare and keep the necessary records. We do know, however, that he is buried on Luzon, Phillipine Islands.

Events moved slowly. It wasn't

until May 1948 that the Huntingtons received confirmation that their request to have Bill buried in a permanent overseas American Cemetery was received.²² And finally, in November of 1949, the letter arrived telling the family that Bill had been permanently interred in Fort McKinley U. S. Military Cemetery in Manila, in Plot J, Row 4, Grave 19, with a cross as a headstone.²³

15 November 1949

Dear Mr Huntington:

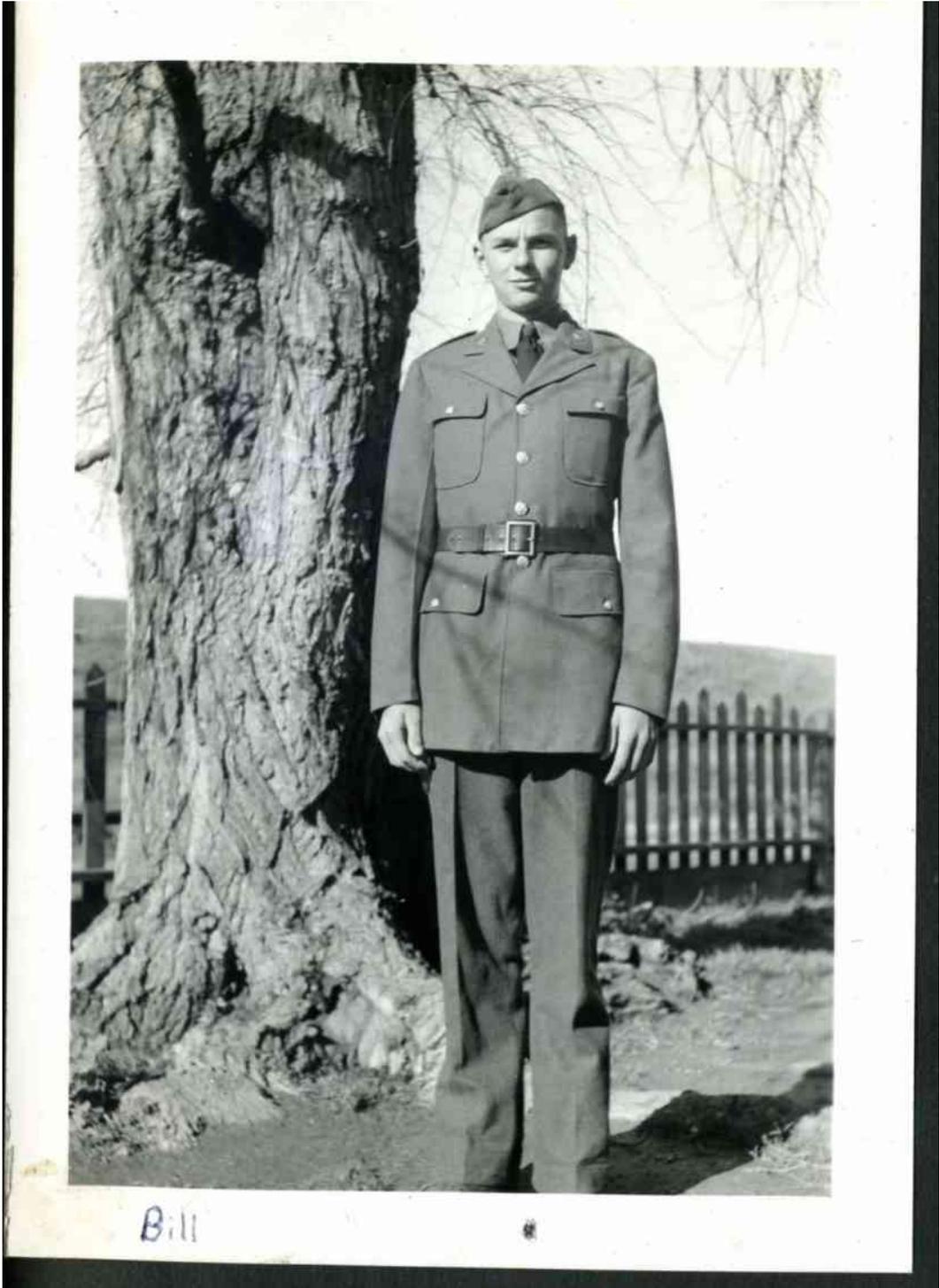
This is to inform you that the remains of your loved one have been permanently interred, side by side with comrades who also gave their lives for their country. Customary military funeral services were conducted over the grave at the time of burial.

After the Department of the Army has completed all final interments the cemetery will be transferred, as authorized by the Congress, to the care and supervision of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Commission also will have the responsibility for permanent construction and beautification of the cemetery, including erection of the permanent headstone. The headstone will be inscribed with the name exactly as recorded above, the rank or rating where appropriate, organization, State, and date of death.

You may rest assured that this final interment was conducted with fitting dignity and solemnity and that the grave-site will be carefully and conscientiously maintained in perpetuity by the United States Government.

The Quartermaster General

The next Bulletin will continue the story with the letters of Harry Huntington.



Bill Huntington, 1941

Notes

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- ⁶ Dorothy Huntington. letter to Miriam Coon. undated.
- ⁷ "21st Pursuit Squadron," *Wikipedia*, date unknown. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/21st_Pursuit_Squadron> (28 November 2009).
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- ⁸ "Barnacle Bill (1941 film)," *Wikipedia*, date unknown. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnacle_Bill_\(1941_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnacle_Bill_(1941_film))> (28 November 2009).
- ⁹ "Angel Island, California," *Wikipedia*, date unknown. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel_Island_\(California\)#Fort_McDowell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel_Island_(California)#Fort_McDowell)> (28 November 2009).
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- ¹⁰ "SS President Coolidge," *Wikipedia*, date unknown. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_President_Coolidge> (28 November 2009).
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- ¹¹ Bartsch, William H. "I wonder at times how we keep going here": the 1941-42 Philippines diary of Lt. John P. Burns, 21st Pursuit Squadron." *Air Power History*. 2006. accessmylibrary. <<http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-157097840/wonder-times-we-keep.html>> (November 4, 2009)
- ¹² Grashio and Norling, 6.
- ¹³ Grashio and Norling, 13.
- ¹⁴ Bartsch.
- ¹⁵ Rick Peterson, *Back to Bataan: A Survivor's Story*, 2001. <http://www.bataansurvivor.com/content/the_road_to_bataan/6.php> (28 November 2009).
- ¹⁶ Return to Freedom, 24.
- ¹⁷ Grashio and Norling, 108-142; "American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor." *The Quan* 54 no. 4, (January 2000): 8. <<http://philippine-defenders.lib.vv.us/QuanNews/quan2000s/January2000.pdf>> (28 November 2009).
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- ¹⁸ Grashio and Norling, 144.
- ¹⁹ Dorothy Huntington. letter to Miriam Coon. undated.
- ²⁰ Grashio and Norling, 24.
- ²¹ Grashio and Norling, 53.
- ²² Richard B. Coombs, Major, QMC, Memorial Division. letter to Warren Huntington. 11 May 1948.
- ²³ H. Feldman, Major General, The Quartermaster General. letter to Warren Huntington. 15 November 1949.

Coming Events

January

- 16 Membership meeting at the Museum, 2:00 p.m.
Program: Photography & the Collector: Identifying and Preserving Your Collection by Allan Lamb
Dessert to follow
- 22–Mar. 14 *Past Tents: The Way We Camped* exhibit at the Museum

February

- TBA Past Tents program at the Museum
TBA Big Read event at the Museum
Chocolate Truffles on sale at the Museum

March

- 19–April 11 Yuba City High School student art exhibit
23 Hike in the Sutter Buttes

April

- 24 General Membership luncheon
17–18 Wear & Remembrance Vintage Apparel Fair at the Veterans' Hall
23–May 14 River Valley High School student art exhibit
Spring Vacation Children's Program

Dust Bowl Migration Project

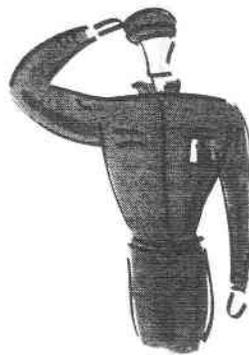
Did your family migrate to California from the Dust Bowl? Do you have stories, photos or other information about their journey?

We would like to hear from you!

Please contact Vicki Rorke at
Vicki_SCHS@sbcglobal.net or
916-852-8144 Evenings
or leave a message with the
Community Memorial Museum at 530-822-7141

U J G G D U S T B O W L A A I B
 S A V F M A C A R T H U R I P Q
 R M A W X N O T G N I T N U H V
 S I F E G D I L O O C A X X T E
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American	Basketball
Chocolate	Coolidge
Dean	Denver
Dustbowl	Hamilton
Harry	Huntington
Japanese	MacArthur
Margit	Miriam
Philippines	Remembrance
Schnabel	Sutter
Thompson	William



DUSTBOWL

AMERICAN

Membership Meeting

Saturday, January 16

at the

Community Memorial Museum

1333 Butte House Road

Yuba City

530-822-7141

2:00 p.m.

Program:

Photography and the Collector:

Identifying and Preserving Your Collection

by Allan Lamb

Homemade desserts follow the program

Everyone is welcome! Bring your friends and family!



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