

News from

The Monterey County Historical Society

August 2006



Bataan Memorial Dedicated



BATAAN MEMORIAL

On April 8, 2006, The Bataan Memorial at the Boronda History Center was dedicated to the one hundred and five brave men of Company C 194th Tank Battalion of the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys.

Mills construction team worked diligently, even on rainy stormy days, to meet the April 8th deadline. The dedication was a tremendous success with approximately 250 people in attendance.

Following is the dedication speech given by Eugene Ferris, which describes the importance of Memorial:

Company C 194th Tank Battalion Memorial Speech given at the Bataan Memorial Dedication

Copyrighted by Eugene Ferris

On the morning of February 18th 1941, one hundred and five brave men of Company C 194th Tank Battalion of the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys marched four abreast down Main Street, through what is now called Oldtown Salinas, toward the train station. They were on the first leg of a journey that would take them into the annals of military history for



Eugene Ferris giving the dedication (photograph by Peggie Rosner).

which they will forever be known for their bravery, suffering and enormous self sacrifice. As they marched through Salinas toward the train depot the rain fell and the town people waved them farewell and Godspeed. For many of those remarkable men, this would be the last time they saw the faces of their hometown neighbors.

After completing training in Fort Lewis, Washington, they boarded a ship on September 8 1941, in San Francisco Bay and set sail on a voyage of more than 6,000 miles to Clark Air Base, Luzon, Philippines Islands.

On December 7th 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor without warning or provocation. While the world's attention was fixed on the smoldering scenes from the Hawaiian Islands, that Monday morning (Manila Time), the men of Company C were facing a sustained Japanese attack from the air

that destroyed nearly all the planes of the U.S. Far East Air Force.

Shortly thereafter, an invading Japanese ground force began operations on the island. These were the first ground battles fought between American and Japanese forces during World War II, and the 194th Tank Battalion was the first United States armored unit to face off with the Japanese. Through sheer bravery and selfless sacrifice, the men of Company C and other U.S. Army and Philippine units held the enemy at bay, and during those numerous battles and skirmishes inflicted a heavy price on the Japanese forces. The tenacity and bravery of the men of Company C was a harbinger of the American spirit that the world had not witnessed and the Japanese had not fully considered. The men of Company C were put on half rations to stretch the diminishing resources of the unit. With no backup force or



Bataan Survivors who attended the Bataan Memorial dedication. Seated L to R: Leon Elliott, Harold Vick, Frank Muther, Larry Rotharmel, Norman Rose, Augie Gillis, Roy Diaz, Lorraine Diaz (Roy Diaz's wife) (photograph by Peggie Rosner).

re-supply capacity, the men of Company C and their Philippine brothers in arms fought a 124-day bloody running battle for control of the island, and finally Bataan.

Their supplies, medicine and ammunition at almost zero and their physical condition weakened by lack of food, they knew that another prolonged engagement with a well-supplied, well-armed enemy would end in slaughter.

Relying on the assurances of treatment of prisoners of war as laid out in the Geneva Convention, the officers ordered the men of Company C and other U.S. forces to destroy the remaining workable equipment and weapons to prevent them from being used by the enemy, and to step forward to the waiting Japanese forces on April 9th 1942.

The Japanese assembled the men of Company C along with the remains of other U.S.

Army units and many brave Philippine nationals who had served shoulder to shoulder with the American troops. The treatment of the prisoners was brutal and merciless from the beginning.

Starting on April 10th 1942, they were force marched to San Fernando along the Bataan Peninsula, eventually reaching Camp O'Donnell prison camp. These men were denied the basics of food and medicine. The notorious chapter that will forever mark their place in history was just beginning. For more than sixty miles, no provisions were made for the ailing, wounded, or weak. The tropical sicknesses that ripped through the ranks of the weakened men were made ten fold worse by the inhumane starvation and beatings at the hands of the enemy. The order was "march and keep marching." The accompanying Japanese guard revealed a brutality and cruelty that took



Gathering around the monument after the dedication (photograph by Peggie Rosner).

the lives of many men along that infamous march. Approximately 70,000 Filipino and US soldiers started the journey, 54,000 reached the camp. The town of Salinas lost more men per capita in that march than any other town in the United States. That march became known at the time, and will forever be known as:

“The Bataan Death March”

Accounts from survivors reveal that if the march momentarily stopped, getting dirty drain water from a road side ditch would run the risk of being shot on sight by one of the guards. If a prisoner collapsed from dehydration and weakness in the tropical heat, he ran the risk of being bayoneted or beheaded on the spot. Many of the survivors of the march owed their lives to fellow soldiers who aided and carried them part of the way. This humanitarian act of kindness cost some of the marchers their own lives at the hands of the guards.

The men of Company C who survived the months of battles, rationing of food, brutality of the Japanese guards, appalling conditions of the prison camp and the array of tropical sicknesses were split up and sent to various locations throughout the Philippine Islands. They were later put in the holds of unmarked “Hell Ships” and sent to Japan and China to be used as slave labor for the Japanese war effort.

As the tide of American victories throughout the Pacific spelled an end to the Empire of Japan, the members of Company C suffering in camps throughout the war years concentrated on just surviving day to day. Shortly after the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the remaining men of Company C got the news that the war was over, the Japanese had been defeated and they would be going home. For many, the war’s end came too late. The journey home for many of the survivors was by plane because of their poor physical condition.



Martin Jefferson restored the tank. When the tank was received, the only part savable was the front cab, which was in sorry condition. Martin restored the cab, and built the entire back of the tank (photograph by Barbara Brown).

Of the 105 men in Company C who left Salinas, 6 were lost in combat, 50 lost their lives in the Death March, harsh conditions of prison camps, Hell Ships and labor camps. Just 47 returned to their families. The remains of those lost, 56 men, lie at the bottom of the sea or interred in soil far from the Salinas Valley. This memorial is dedicated to all the 105 men who marched proudly down Main Street on that damp February morning in 1941. Their story must never be forgotten. This memorial honors their bravery, their sacrifice, and the enormous price they all paid to free the world from tyranny and oppression.

Six soldiers in Company C were awarded Silver Stars. The whole Company received two United States Presidential Unit Citations and the Philippines Presidential Unit Citation. In addition, the members all received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

Thank you, gentlemen. Your deeds are not forgotten.

THIS NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED TO FRANK MUTHER

Frank Muther, a long time friend of the Monterey County Historical Society, a dairy farmer, and one of the 47 survivors of the Bataan Death March died shortly after the dedication of the Bataan Memorial. Frank was one of the committee members who tenaciously worked to make the memorial a reality.

In upcoming *Newsletters*, we will be printing Frank's diary. The diary tells of his life in the beginning, his enlistment in the National Guard, and the Battle for Bataan. It truly is a heart wrenching story of a time long past but a time that should never be forgotten.

(A photograph of Frank, taken at the dedication, appears on the back cover.)

THANK YOU!

The Monterey County Historical Society Honors the following whose hard work and dedication made the monument possible

Burton Anderson
George Elliott
Jim Elliott
Eugene Ferris
Martin Jefferson
John Maness
Frank Muther
Harry Rhodes
Gus Scourkes

LANDSCAPING AND ROADWAY

We look great! The roads are in, the parking lot done and the landscaping completed (see back cover).

A special thank you to Bokay Nursery for assisting us in the landscaping around the adobe by obtaining donations of plants and sod. The Bokay crew who did the landscaping went beyond the call of duty. Thank you to Harvey Sandoval, Supervisor, Jorge Rodriquez, Jose Tapia, Ramon Tapia, Sergio Tapia and Esteban Viorato!

If you are our way, please drop by and see our improvements. We will be having a BBQ sometime in September. Watch your mail for your invitation, the announcement and invitation.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Bob Wilson
Elizabeth Pereira
Ray A. Verzasconi
Tim & Kris Johnson
Michael & Susan Iverson
Louie Grossi
Robert Forrest
Jane S. Ord
Estrella A. M. Guzman

ALBERT JENSEN AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

The Albert Jensen Agricultural Scholarship, administered by the Monterey County Historical Society, has this year proudly awarded a \$10,000.00 scholarship to Lauren Huggins. Born and raised in Salinas, Lauren is the daughter of James Huggins, who was an employee for the Monterey County District Attorney's Office, and Judith Huggins, who has worked as a dental hygienist in the Monterey county area for thirty years.

Laura is our first scholarship recipient, and will be entering her fourth year at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Her major is Animal Science, with a concentration in pre-veterinary medicine, and a minor in Agribusiness. She carries a 3.5 GPA and is on the Dean's Honor List. She has owned and worked with horses and other barnyard animals her entire life. Her love of these animals has directed her to seek a degree in large animal Veterinary Medicine.

Lauren is currently working in a management position at the Cal Poly Ranch.

The Society will continue to annually renew its support towards Lauren's educational endeavors as long as she maintains a 3.0 GPA.

Albert Jensen, a long time grower in Salinas, who willed to the Society a Scholarship Endowment, made the scholarship program possible. In his will, the provisions were that the Scholarship be given to a student whose major was agriculture and to finance the student(s) through the life of their academic career.

Albert was described by his son Al Jensen as a man of integrity and honesty. He spoke little of himself or of the many kind deeds he did through the years. He was a man of his word where a simple handshake sealed a contract long before signage.

We are proud to be the administrators of the Albert Jensen Agricultural Scholarship and we are sure he would be smiling today to see the wonderful young lady, Lauren, who will benefit from his generosity by giving back to the community and agriculture.



L to R: Chuck Erickson, MCHS Treasurer and Chairman of the Scholarship program; Al Jensen, son of Albert Jensen; Carol Alleyne, MCHS President; Lauren Huggins, recipient; Judith Huggins, Lauren's mother; James Huggins, Lauren's father, and Sally Bagley, Lauren's aunt (photograph by Peggie Rosner).

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WEBSITE

Don't forget the website at:
<http://www.mchsmuseum.com>



The placement of the Bataan Memorial and the newly landscaped grounds at the Boronda History Center (photograph by Peggie Rosner).



Frank Muther speaking at the dedication. During his speech he told about the day the American planes flew over the prison camp after the defeat of Japan, signaling the prisoners that they were Americans by dropping a carton of cigarettes into the camp (photograph by Peggie Rosner).