

Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 4. Issue 6.

November 2019

It is our mission to identify, preserve and promote the historic legacy of the Murrieta Valley and to educate the public about its historical significance.

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Murrieta Valley Historical Society

Email:
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Bob Cruz, Army Medic, WWII By Russ Ritenour

Bob Cruz was born in Corona, California, the son of Mexican immigrants. His early life was spent working in the fruit and citrus orchards. When he was in the 4th grade his dad died. Bob then had to quit school to support himself. Later on, when he was 17, Bob joined the Army and was trained as a medic. Before he was deployed overseas, his mother gave Bob a picture of a saint which she said would protect him. Bob still carries that picture today.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Bob landed in Normandy along with 150,000 troops forming the largest invasion force ever placed into battle in one area.

He was assigned as an ambulance driver, never carrying a gun, transporting dead and wounded off the beaches back to the ships. From there he went inland into the middle of many of the major battles fought in France, Belgium and Germany. He transported wounded American and German soldiers alike from battlefield staging areas to field hospitals, saving hundreds, possibly thousands of lives. Sixteen medics in his unit before him died in ac-



Bob Cruz (1923-2012)

tion. Bob was shot at many times but was fortunately was never hit.

On April 29, 1945 he was with the 42nd and 45th Army Divisions as they discovered and liberated thousands of political prisoners from Dachau Concentration Camp.

He prepared the freed prisoners by de-lousing, providing clothing, and orientation for preparation of transportation out of the area to safety.

Once the surviving prisoners were liberated and moved out, the surviving captured German soldiers were themselves interred in Dachau prison. For the next three

months Bob's responsibility was to attend to the medical needs of all the people in the camp, Allies and German prisoners alike. He was able to quickly learn the German language. As a result, he was able to communicate very effectively with the German prisoners. In appreciation for his medical attention given them, the German soldiers made and gave Bob a wallet from contraband materials, embossed it with the name Dachau 1945, and his initials. This wallet, his battle soiled ID dog tags, medals and a flag that flew over the US Capital is now kept encased in his home.

He served in Europe for three years during and after the war. Later, he was personally acknowledged for his service in

a letter from former US president, Harry S. Truman. When Bob got discharged from the Army and returned home, he was given a personal parade of honor by the Hispanic community of Los Angeles. His military accomplishments were written in a feature article in *La Opinion*, a large LA Hispanic newspaper. Shortly afterwards, he met and married his sweetheart, Mary Sotello, who has been his wife for 60 years.

After the war, Bob tried to obtain some of his missing medals through the Veteran's Administration. Unfortunately, fire in a government military records warehouse in the early 50s had destroyed his records. He tried for five years, but to no avail. About two years ago,

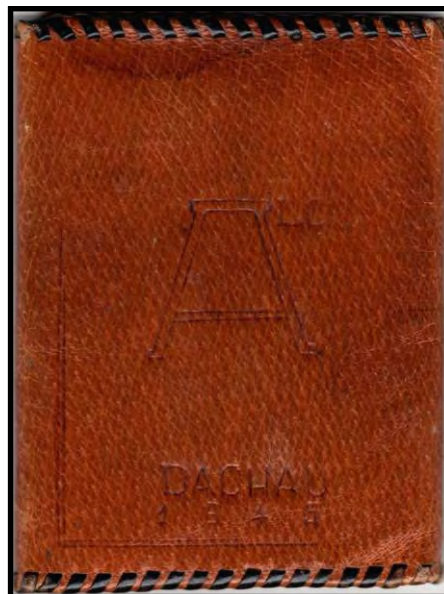
through an extensive computer search, I was lucky enough to find another source of his records for his medals.

Bob represents a generation that surely saved Britain, France, our country and possibly the world from Nazi dominance. He is one of millions who bravely served both in the military and at home. They all deserve our personal respect and gratitude. Of all those who served, 419,000 never returned home alive or at all. We owe them all our profound gratitude.

It is an honor to know one of the millions of the WWII generation who fought for us, a war hero, a kind and humble man and a dear friend, Bob Cruz, and Mary, his loving wife for 60 years.



"I'm not a person of many words, but all I can say is that I am very proud to have served my country and to have made it back." Bob Cruz



This wallet was made by German soldiers imprisoned at Dachau in 1945 in appreciation for Bob Cruz's medical services he gave them.



In Memory of Donald Douglas

Donald Douglas was born in 1941 in Clinton, Missouri. He lived in Osceola, Missouri until 1953 when his family moved to Camarillo, California. Don graduated from Fillmore High School in 1960 and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1965.

He served in the U.S. Navy for four years. He then worked for the YMCA as the Chief Financial Officer for 18 years, retiring in 1994.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Thomas H. Douglas. He is survived by his sister, Connie Owen (Bob), two children, Donna Douglas (Tim) and David Douglas (Dianne) and three grandchildren, Cheyenne, Donovan and Brianne Douglas.

Don married Rea in 1991 and she has two children, Carrie Barron (Reese) and Jeffrey Martin (Trisha).

Don and Rea loved owning an antique shop called, Little House of Treasures, located in the Historic Downtown Murrieta District. They resided in Temecula, California at the time of his death.

He will be interred in the Riverside National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations may be made in his memory to the Murrieta Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 1341, Murrieta, California, 92562 or Cambridge Hospice, 9229 Utica Ave, Suite 100, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730.



In Memory of

Gilbert "Skip" Raymond Bezanson

June 28, 1941 ~ October 13, 2019

Attended Murrieta Grammar School

Graduated from

Elsinore Union High School in 1959

US Air Force Veteran, member of the Murrieta Volunteer Fire Department.

Owner and Operator of

Ray's Murrieta Café (1973-2006)

To be interred at the

Elsinore Valley Cemetery



THE MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INVITES YOU TO THEIR FIRST

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, December 14
4 - 7 PM | Refreshments Served

LOCATED AT THE HISTORIC HUNT HOUSE,
41810 JUNIPER ST, MURRIETA, CA 92562

The Hunt House was the location of the City's annual Food Drive. In honor of this tradition, please bring in a canned food item in good condition.

MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 1341, MURRIETA, CA 92564
(951) 387-4862 | MURRIETAHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

MUSEUM *Hours*

THURSDAYS 1 - 4 PM

For groups and tours call (951) 387-4862

Museum Update

This past month the museum has been active with tour groups and a special exhibit. The ladies from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took a museum tour. They presented to the museum another restored quilt to be placed on display. About a year ago a box of donated quilts was given to the Society. Stake members have volunteered to restore the quilts for the museum, and several are currently on display.

Also members of Miss April's Dance Instructors took a recent tour of the museum.

The Historic Highway 395 Special Exhibit was on display from October 10th through November 7th. On Saturday, October 12th, the museum was open all day to coincide with the annual Murrieta Rod Run.

Pat Jennings and Jeffery Harmon have been busy scanning photos and documents from a private collection for the museum's archives.

Annette will be working with the Murrieta Public Library on the Annual Tribute to Murrieta Veterans Exhibit. The exhibit will be on display during the month of November.

President Jeffery Harmon is conducting a historic walking tour once a month. Tours of the Historic Downtown Murrieta are also available by appointment.

There will be a Christmas Open House at the museum on December 14th. Please see the flyer for more details.

Group tours for schools and organizations are available by appointment. We would like to specially thank our volunteers who have helped in museum operations. Thank you for supporting the Murrieta Museum.

 <p>Donate Now</p>		<p>Support Murrieta Valley Historical Society by shopping at AmazonSmile.</p> <p>When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate to Murrieta Valley Historical Society....</p> <p>SMILE.AMAZON.COM</p>
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<https://www.gofundme.com/murrietamuseum>



WASTE MANAGEMENT



Little House of Treasures
Antiques, Vintage Goods, Home Decor

Don & Rea Douglas

24980 Washington Ave.
Murrieta, CA 92562

951-304-1981/cell 951-970-3329
FB:LittleHouseofTreasuresMurrieta

Murrieta Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 1341
Murrieta, CA 92564

Phone: 951-387-4862

E-mail:

info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org

Next General Board Meeting

December 2, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

At the Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

All members welcome to attend

THE LIFE OF *E. Hale Curran*

A Live History Performance with *Nindy Johnson*.
Hosted by the Murrieta Valley Historical Society
in partnership with the Murrieta Public Library

Monday, January 13, 6 PM
Murrieta Public Library,
8 Town Square

Born and raised in Murrieta for
99 years, E. Hale Curran served her
community with strength and
independence.

Through this live history performance
learn about Ms. Curran's time as
resident and owner of the Fountain
House Hotel, a postal worker,
and more.



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(951) 304-2665
MURRIETALIBRARY.INFO



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