

Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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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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A World War II Veteran Remembers

By Richard Arthur Young



I was sent to Camp Taccoa, Georgia, where they were forming the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment. It was long marches, hour long runs up and down the mountains, plus calisthenics, on top of the regular Army basic training. They washed out so many men who were not in shape for this rugged training that it took several months to bring the Regiment up to full strength numerically.

About this time, Dave, my brother, joined the Air Force and was able to get into flight training, which took him to air bases and flight schools across the country.

Part of our basic training was to qualify on the rifle range. About a week before going to the range, I had gotten into some poison oak on a training march. It was mostly on my face and my eyes were almost closed. I could just barely see the target at 500 yards. They told me I could wait until later but I decided to try it and was able to qualify.

From basic training we went to the Fort Benning Jump School. After completing that training, and making five parachute jumps, we were given our highly prized Paratrooper Wings. We finished our training and maneuvers, along with five additional jumps, at Camp McCall, South Carolina. Then it was furlough time and luckily, Dave was also home on furlough.

We went overseas in mid-July of 1944, landing at Naples, Italy. Several months prior to this time the Germans had been withdrawing from North Africa and Italy. When we arrived in Naples they were about 100 miles above



From left to right, Richard Young, his father, Jerry Young, his stepmother, Alice Young, his sister Daisy Young, his sister Elizabeth and her husband, Bingo Haskell, and his brother, David W. Young
Source: The Young Family Collection

Rome. They put us on the front lines there for about two weeks to break us in with some combat experience, and after that we were pulled back in preparation for the invasion of Southern France.

We hit some resistance on our invasion jump, but it was very light compared to the Normandy invasion a month earlier in Northern France. The Germans slowly withdrew to their heavily fortified line in the mountains above Sospel.

We had dug our fox holes for some protection. They shelled our position several times a day. I had written a letter to Dave and laid it on the ground outside my fox hole, but

a little later shrapnel from an artillery shell tore it up pretty bad. I put it in a new envelope and explained to Dave the reason for the holes. He got quite a laugh from that.

The Navy shelled the German bunkers with big guns but the shells just bounced off.

We were on the holding line for several weeks while the regular infantry and tank units bypassed this fortified line of the Germans, moving into central France, with the enemy still in retreat. Later they put our Regiment on the line as regular Infantry in Northern France. The Germans shelled our position quite heavily that day, but my knee became a non-combatant

casualty. It was okay in the morning but by late afternoon it was swollen and I could hardly walk on it. This was, undoubtedly, my first bout with my "sugar-itis" that has plagued me the last 47 years. So they sent me back to the hospital – all the way to England. I was out of action for about six weeks, but had a good time in England and Scotland. While I was in England, our unit also saw action when the Germans broke through our lines at the Battle of the Bulge in December of '44.

They kept us in reserve for the final push into Berlin for a possible airborne landing if the Armored Division met heavy resistance, but the German war

machine was crumbling and offered very little resistance so they didn't need us.

After Germany surrendered, on May 7, 1945, they gave us the option of joining the Army of Occupation in Germany or of going back to the States on a 30-day furlough and then on to

the Pacific. I was so eager to get back to the States I didn't give it a lot of thought – I just wanted to get out of there, even if it meant going later to Japan. About halfway across the Atlantic, on September 2, we heard the good news that the Japanese surrendered, and within a couple of weeks I was a happy civilian

again.

There was a rental basic training plane at the Elsinore Airport similar to what Dave had flown in his early training. He took me up in that plane over the Murrieta area and it was a fun ride, but I was glad we didn't have to jump from that plane.

In Memory of Richard Arthur Young
(April 5, 1924 ~ November 11, 2016)
Laid to Rest in the Riverside National Cemetery
Eulogy by David D. Young

Veterans Day was originally Armistice Day, commemorating the World War I surrender at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the year. It is fitting that Richard died on Veterans Day, 2016, at age 92.

Richard Young was born in Los Angeles in 1924, ten days before Metro Goldwyn Mayer was founded in Hollywood. The following month, J. Edgar Hoover was appointed to head the FBI.

He grew up both in Los Angeles and Murrieta. His mother died when he was seven years. The Pearl Harbor attack occurred when he was 17. Two days after his 19th birthday, he enlisted in the US Army.

While being processed at Fort MacArthur in Los Angeles, he decided to get extra pay by being a paratrooper. He was part of the first group in history who

during wartime jumped out of planes into an active combat zone.

He started training at Camp Toccoa, the camp made famous by the Band of Brothers. His unit of assignment, the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, would distinguish itself in a significant manner. During a physical fitness qualification test, already two years into the war and with tens of thousands of young men already tested, his team broke all previous physical fitness qualification records. To this day, the 517th holds a unique distinction. In spite of decades of heroic men achieving airborne rating status, the 517th remains the only unit in history completing training at Fort Benning without a single washout.

He fought in five battles. He jumped into France the night of the allied invasion of Southern France. He fought heroically



Richard Young on furlough visiting his parents' home in Murrieta.
 Source: The Young Family Collection



"This picture was taken Aug. 14th the afternoon before the jump. We checked our equipment and chutes that afternoon. We went to the airport late that night and boarded the planes at 2:30 a.m. We were up in the planes two hours jumped her in Southern France. It was dark and misty when we jumped. I really couldn't see a thing until I was only a few feet above the ground. I really thought I was going to dig a hole when I hit the ground as I was really weighted down with ammunition and equipment but much to my surprise I made a soft landing. Left to right—Young, Lewis, Fred, and . . . (last name missing)

in the Battle of the Bulge, earning the Bronze Star for running into a field of fire to save wounded peers. It was at this time he went 72 hours without sleep in freezing wet weather. His assigned D Company during the battle met and pushed an S. S. Nazi armored division over a river and into retreat.

In the aftermath of Germany's surrender, he had the option of remaining in Europe to be in the Army of Occupation or traveling back to the states, having 30 days of rest, and then joining the Battle of the Pacific and the planned invasion of mainland Japan. He chose the later. A few days out of New York the first atomic bomb dropped; at the time of his entry into New York Harbor steaming past the Statue of Liberty the war was over. He was in New York City when Alfred Eisenstaedt took his now famous photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse.

Post-War, Richard attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, later transferring to Columbia Bible College in South Carolina. It is there he met his future wife.

Richard returned to Southern California where he would remain. Purchasing a motorcycle at an army salvage auction, he later got a job at Rapid Blueprint Company transporting blueprints on his bike. It was through that work connection that he became aware of the house at 1337 near Downtown Los Angeles. It would be at that location that he raised his family and his children have most of their memories.

Richard later worked as a security guard, first for Systems Development Corporation in Santa Monica, then with the Los Angeles Times.

Richard leaves his wife, Jean (McGee) Young, three children, Robert (wife Maria Bernadette), David (wife Colleen) and Arlene Miller (husband Pat), eleven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



Museum Update

By Annette Jennings, Museum Director

The ADA ramp construction has started and will be completed soon. Special Thanks to Waste Management and Larry Cottingham for continued support on this project. The window coverings have been installed, thank you to Murrieta's Lowes for the donation and installation. Annie Borel donated three file cabinets and Carol Si-

erra donated one, this will help with our archiving. We are starting to display some artifact in the cases. The Museum Grand Opening information will be announced in January 2019.

I would like to thank everyone who has donated this past year, without all of you this Museum wouldn't be possible.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!





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Next Monthly Board Meeting:

Monday, January 8, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

All members welcome to attend

THE MURRIETA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS,
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MURRIETA PUBLIC LIBRARY:

CAMP PENDLETON: STORIES OF THE LAND & MARINES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



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