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Figure 1: *Mexican* bracero *"guest workers" harvest sugar beets near Stockton, May 1943.* Braceros *were brought to the United States to resolve American farm labor shortages during WWII, but what was originally intended as temporary became a long-term fixture of California agriculture. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Dispossession, Exploitation, and Deportation: Economic Ties Between California and Mexico

Arkaz Vardanyan

California is an agricultural powerhouse distinct from the rest of the United States. The Golden State's unique climate and geography produce a diverse cornucopia of livestock, grains, vegetables, root crops, nuts, and fruits. But another unique factor has been California's complicated history with Mexican labor ever since American annexation. The *Californio* ranchers of old and the Mexican stoop labor of today have played an outsized and unsung role in creating California's "green gold." The United States government has also had a hostile

(*Continued on Page 3*)

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The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of up to around 20 pages dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

See our web site for all the Branding Irons, photos, Corral meetings and so much more!

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Editor's Corner . . .

Well, *that* was short! After returning to in-person meetings in September last year, the Los Angeles Westerners were forced yet again to hunker down to let a new wave of Greek-lettered virus variants pass overhead. But pandemic or no pandemic, the *Branding Iron's* presses are still churning and hot!

This Winter 2022 issue's lead article is by our newest student fellow Arkaz Vardanyan. It details the history of California and Mexico's economic interconnections. Frank Brito recounts the eventful life of his "submarine infantryman" friend Fred Davis, and Living Legend Abe Hoffman has some choice words to say about bad history writing.

If you missed our *only* Corral meeting this winter, you can read a summary by yours truly. Joe Cavallo has also contributed a book review on Native American medicine, which is quite topical for these times!

Many thanks to the contributors who help make *The Branding Iron* a quarterly that we can all enjoy. Give yourselves a hand! If you have an article idea that you wish to share with readers, feel free to get in touch.

Happy Trails!

John Dillon
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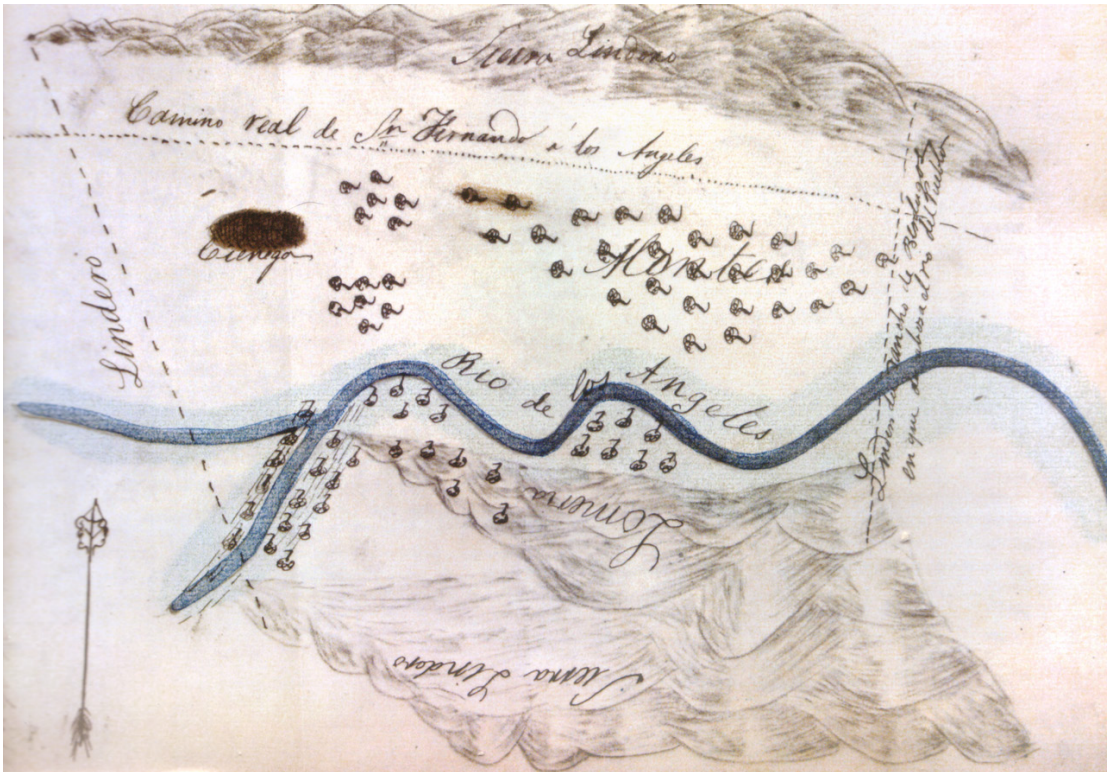

Figure 2: *A typical, hand-sketched map, or* diseño, *of a Mexican land grant in what is today Los Angeles County, California. Note the lack of scale, nor references to degrees of longitude or latitude. Borders were determined by landmarks, which sufficed in sparsely-populated Mexican California. In contrast, later American property deeds demanded geographical exactitude. In the ensuing clash of surveying standards,* Californio *land titles were challenged for being imprecise at best, or "fraudulent" at worst. Public domain internet image.*

relationship with migrant workers, while benefiting from the spoils of their work. Mexico's returns pale in comparison, and this unequal exchange has resulted in negative repercussions for the United States as well, by exacerbating racism, xenophobic legislation, and poverty for American agricultural workers. The agricultural history of California and Mexico has overwhelmingly favored the Golden State, as will be explored in the following tale of land dispossession, labor exploitation, and mass dislocation.

California's agricultural potential was first recognized by Spain, who beginning in 1769 established a series of Roman Catholic missions that doubled as agricultural properties. These tax-exempt Church lands were secularized beginning in 1833 during the Mexican period, and distributed to *Californio* landowners, who established a thriving cattle ranching industry. Yankee traders routinely stopped on the coast of California to exchange manufactured goods for hides, or "California banknotes." Unfortunately, the United States' early interactions with Mexican California did not stay peaceful for long. President Polk's administration sought to complete America's "Manifest Destiny" to reach the Pacific Ocean by "[s]evering California from Mexico and annexing it to the United States...provid[ing] covert leadership to organize American immigrants in California to revolt and declare an independent republic."[1] Even before the Mexican-American War, the United States "sen[t] expeditions to explore the region during the 1840s" out of preparation to annex California in the future.[2] America's covert preparations were unwittingly aided by Mexico's rocky relationship with its

most distant northern province. *Californios* resisted "Governor Micheltorena and the Mexican soldiers who arrived under his command to protect California, but were known for pillaging instead," and they ultimately "eject[ed] Micheltorena from the territory."[3] Consequently, California was practically undefended by the Mexican Army at the time of the war's outbreak in April 1846. Despite a spirited resistance, the *Californios* were unable to prevent American conquest. The final surrender paved the way for the eventual dispossession of *Californio* lands, inaugurating Mexico's unequal relationship with American California.

Californios expected to retain possession of their Mexican land grants following American annexation. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2nd, 1848, stated that "property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected," among other provisions protecting the rights of former Mexican citizens now in U.S. territory.[4] But this sense of security did not last.

The promises of the peace treaty contradicted personal accounts like Guadalupe Vallejo's, which reported on the manipulative nature by which the U.S. took *Californio* lands piece by piece. He asserted that "American settlers...took advantage of laws which they understood, but which were new to the Spaniards, and so robbed the latter of their lands."[5] Because of the ambiguity of Mexican land grant boundaries, *Californio* property was challenged by the more precise and depersonalized American bureaucracy. *Californios* had to navigate the courts and a language barrier to prove the validity of their titles in a process that consumed years or decades. This left the grant-holders "completely at the mercy of shrewd lawyers and sharp speculators," and many were forced to sell land to pay for legal fees, even if they "won" recognition of their property rights.[6] The American legal offensive transformed California's social and cultural landscape, as "land speculators and settlers pressured the new authorities to privatize the communal aspects of the Hispanic land system."[7] As the law was abused to American convenience, land continued to change hands. The rights guaranteed under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were circumvented through legal loopholes and otherwise ignored to "[aid] to settle the towns and public lands."[8] In fact, a series of California Supreme Court decisions ignored the Treaty, including Cohas v. Raisin (1853), which concerned "the seller of an 1847 alcalde grant su[ing] the buyer on the latter's unpaid note" without "any discussion of Hispanic law," allowing reinterpretations of property laws concerning the pueblos (or originally Mexican land).[9]

Dissolving the land-use traditions that were integral to Mexican Californian life created opportunities for a few Anglo-Americans to capitalize on the land's commercial potential. They proved their worth as private property, as "pueblo lands had been leased over the years for petroleum exploration, shale mining, golf club facilities, hotels and restaurants."[10] Dispossession of *Californios*' Mexican land grants for American use became the mode through which Anglo-Americans would exploit the land.

California cattle ranching was eventually eclipsed in the latter half of the nineteenth century by agribusiness, with citrus becoming especially profitable. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants provided cheap farm labor, but the early twentieth century brought a transition to Mexican migrant labor. A few Mexicans may have pursued the Californian dream, but "people migrated not to find some new prosperity, or what we often call a brighter future. The purpose of their actions was survival."[11] Lofty ideals within the Golden State were not enough to stimulate migration. Factors including "deprivation in Mexico, the dislocation and violence of the Revolution (1911–20), and the opportunity to work in the north provided the 'push and pull' for Mexican immigration to the United States," drawing Mexicans into California.[12]

Mexico's part in this effort involved the dismantling of traditional land rights and their transfer to foreign-owned corporations under Porfirio Díaz. As small holdings in Mexico were acquired by corporate entities, peasants who "had occupied much of these

Figure 3: *Prospective* braceros *behind barbed wire in Nuevo León, Mexico, awaiting transportation to California, 1956. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.*

public lands for generations" were dispossessed.[13] Mexico also did not give significant assistance to domestic agriculture, leaving laborers with little land and no proper irrigation to support their efforts.[14] Dissent simmered as economic inequality increased in Mexico. At the same time, the United States thrived. European immigrants settled in droves in the "northeastern seaboard and the manufacturing belt of the Midwest," contributing to the rapid growth of American industrial centers.[15] This outstanding industrial growth made the domestic Mexican economy look feeble by comparison. Predictably, many Mexicans migrated to nearby California for economic opportunities. Most were ignorant of the cool reception they would receive.

Mexican migrants were widely employed in California agribusiness, but they were not accepted by Anglo-American organized labor, which had a track record of delaying change for nonwhite workers. Mexicans, "until the 1930s,...seldom worked in the same industries as Anglos and were segregated into menial occupations when they did."[16] A sense of racial superiority resulted in the relative invisibility of Mexican laborers' needs, relegating them to an exploitative industry without the support to survive on more than low wages. When Mexican laborers did take matters into their own hands, they were alienated from white labor. For example, the American Federation of Labor—the largest union in the country—refused to charter the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association in 1903 because of simple racism: it didn't want two despised minorities as members.

California growers and state officials reacted to Mexican migrant labor with mixed results. The late 1930s were a time of both inflammatory tirades against and sympathetic claims for agricultural unions, regardless of race. Already forced to contend with racism in the U.S., Mexican laborers had to suffer alienation from their employers and their political allies. Ralph H. Taylor, executive secretary of the Agricultural Council of California in 1938, despised organized labor. Taylor labeled strikers "thugs," claiming they "fire[d] on police and terrorize[d] peaceful workers unwilling to accept their dictation," and "[we]re also capable of setting fire to grain fields."[17] California agribusiness often demonized unions by comparing their demands to fascist or communist agendas. Equating strikers to criminals furthered

Figure 4: *Portrait of a* bracero *in a California field, taken by Leonard Nadel in 1956. Note his use of the infamous short-handled hoe,* el cortito, *which forced farm laborers to do "stoop labor." This tool was inefficient and caused back injuries, but was preferred by employers because it made any workers who were standing—and not working—easy to identify. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.*

the ideal image of the farmer as a subservient cog in a well-oiled machine. This stigma impeded progress for Mexicans working in California, where they were excluded from sympathies offered to white laborers. Even so, some growers defended those Mexicans who did organize. Frank Stokes reported on the exploitation of Mexicans, stating they "are to agricultural California what the Negro is to the medieval South...[n]ot only as earners but as buyers they are looked upon as legitimate prey," and sold faulty, overused, and falsely-advertised equipment and essentials.[18] This predatory behavior ran so deep that the labor issues still caused severe injury and many deaths thirty years after Stokes spoke out on behalf of Mexican migrant workers.

The Bracero Program—named after the Spanish word for "strong arm"—was a guest worker agreement between the U.S. and Mexico to resolve American agricultural labor shortages during World War II, lasting from 1942 to 1964. It was billed as a win-win for both sides. American growers could maintain operations with temporary Mexican workers and return farm jobs to American citizens after the war, while Mexican *braceros* in the meantime could receive better American wages to send home. Droves of Mexican farm workers came to California on this program's promises. They were frequently let down, with *braceros* unfortunately treated "as commodities, as objects, as chattels."[19] Lack of federal oversight led to *braceros* often receiving far worse pay and living accommodations than their contracts stipulated. Ten percent of their wages were withheld as collateral to be repaid only after their return to Mexico, but many *braceros* were not informed of this caveat, or could not retrieve this tithe from the black hole of Mexican bureaucracy. Ultimately, the Bracero Program wasn't even a *temporary* wartime fix. American agribusiness developed an appetite for cheap Mexican farm labor, and successfully lobbied for the program's extension for another two decades.

The exploitation of *bracero* labor could also be deadly. One infamous tragedy in 1963 occured in the Salinas Valley, California, when a Southern Pacific Railroad freight train near Chualar crashed into a flatbed produce truck carrying fifty-seven men working for the Earl Meyers Company labor camp. Fatalities totaled thirty-two *braceros*.[20] Carelessness about the safety of the *braceros* created the risk that led to this work accident. Dehumanization underscored the U.S. government's lack of concern for the plight of agricultural laborers. Official regulations in 1963 "classified farmworkers as 'types of loads' for vehicles along with metal, wood, and hay," allowing buses unsafe for human passengers to be packed tightly with *braceros* as though they were "human cattle."[21] In the

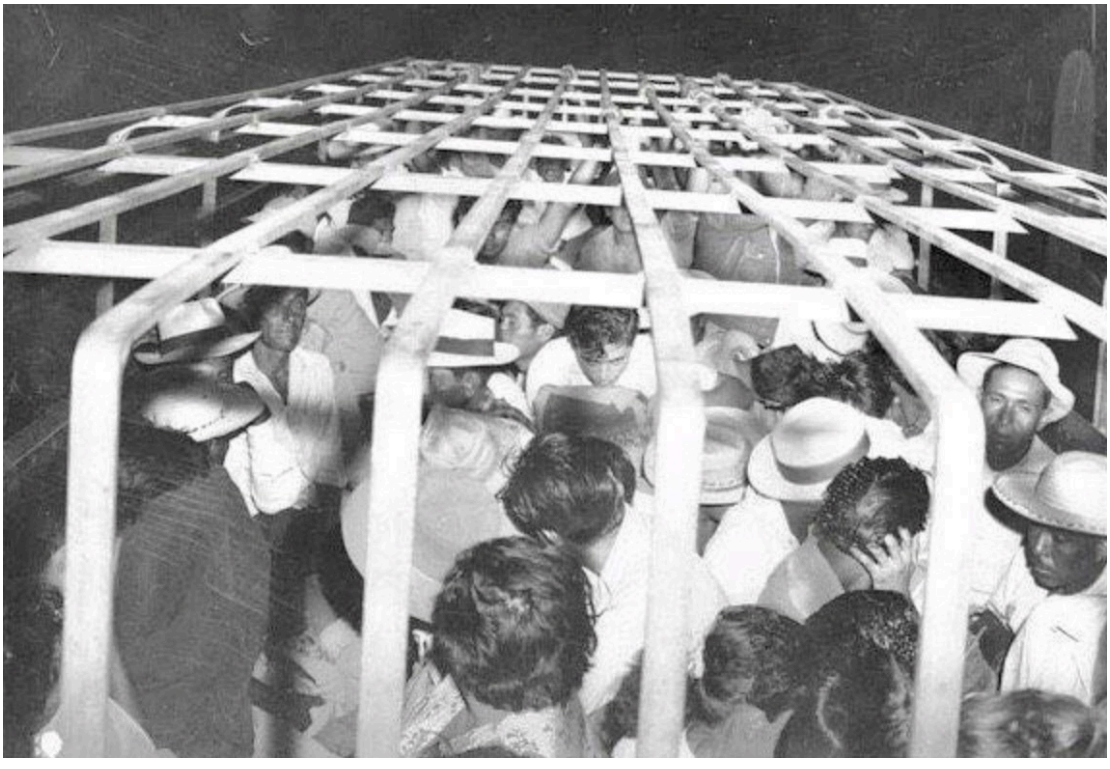

Figure 5: *A truckload of Mexican migrants awaits deportation during Operation Wetback, 1954. Public domain internet image.*

words of historian Lori A. Flores,

> "'[V]alued as laboring bodies, mere arms detached from intellect or political will,' *braceros* lacked a personhood while working in the United States that, in the case of Chualar, they only acquired through death. Salinas agribusiness demonstrated through this public spectacle that it could memorialize the dead while still exploiting the living."[22]

Mexican farm workers were essential to California agribusiness in the 20th century, but they were just as easily disposable when it was politically convenient. Dehumanized during their time in California, Mexicans made easy scapegoats, and were targeted in two large deportation drives in 1931 and 1954. Although these deportations occurred two decades apart, they reveal Mexico and California's interconnections. As American concerns about immigration waxed and waned from changes in the political sphere, regional biases in legislation intended to mitigate migration into the United States became apparent.

During the Great Depression, William N. Doak, Secretary of Labor, "made no effort to single out any specific ethnic group, but most of those affected turned out to be Mexicans living in southern California, home for half the state's 368,000 Mexicans."[23] Immigration concerns commonly intertwined with labor anxieties, so Doak campaigned to solve mass unemployment by scapegoating undocumented immigrants. Some immigrants taken into questioning "agreed to depart voluntarily and were taken to the Mexican border by truck, while the rest were held for formal warrant proceedings."[24] Great pains were taken to alleviate American hardship during the Great Depression, and "Doak's anti-alien drive not only failed to solve the unemployment problem; it created new tensions and accelerated hostile attitudes."[25] While California attracted and benefited from Mexican labor, the state's Anglo-American

residents and businessmen conditionally repelled immigration when national attitudes dictated. The Bracero Program followed the first big deportation drive, showing the government's constant vacillation towards migrant labor. Hostility and deportation swelled again in 1954, with a second deportation campaign literally called "Operation Wetback," which had dramatic effects on Mexicans on both sides of the border.

The U.S. government organized Operation Wetback, but it did not operate in a political vacuum. Mexico sought to cooperate with the U.S. Border Patrol on the Bracero Program by "demand[ing] that in exchange for participating in the facilitation of legal immigration through the Bracero Program, the United States needed to improve border control and return to Mexico those who surreptitiously crossed into the United States."[26] Collaboration between the two nations escalated from there in an effort to prevent Mexicans from leaving their nation illegally—thus weakening the Mexican economy—and denying undocumented immigrants American jobs.

Before Operation Wetback, "[t]he number of apprehensions made by the U.S. Border Patrol in the Mexican border region rose from 279,379 in 1949 to 459,289 in 1950 and 501,713 in 1951."[27] These numbers eclipsed the 1931 deportations in Southern California, with "[p]overty south of the border and relatively high wages north of the border sustain[ing] a constant flow of undocumented Mexican immigration."[28] American and Mexican governmental efforts collided with great disadvantage to Mexican workers. Economic survival led many Mexicans to violate the laws of both their native-born country and the country to which they migrated. Laws became more stringent on both sides of the border. Even as Californian agriculture absorbed Mexican labor, its officials collaborated with the U.S. and Mexican federal governments to expel the supposed immigrant threat with mixed results.

Mexican migrants have become permanent fixtures in California, as a result of America's readiness to employ them for cheap farm labor. In 1992, "82% of California SAS [Seasonal Agricultural Services] workers were born in Mexico, only 8% in the U.S.," and "49% have family incomes below poverty level."[29] These numbers demonstrate the preference of employers and the prevalence of Mexican labor in California. Therefore, agricultural labor issues in the state, especially seasonal services (which employs migrant labor), involve Mexicans on a grander scale than workers of any other national origin.

California, especially since WWII, has been the unrivaled agricultural powerhouse of the United States, and quite possibly the world. However, California owes much of this economic success to an imbalanced exchange with Mexico. For the past 170 years, California agriculture has unfairly favored the state's Anglo-American population (the farm owners) over its Latino people (the farm workers). First the *Californios* were swindled out of their lands, and were almost completely dispossessed by the end of the 19th century. Then Mexican-born farm workers came to dominate agribusiness, until by the middle of the 20th century they had almost completely replaced Anglo-American farm laborers. Attitudes towards Mexican migrant workers vacillated, from being considered indispensible cheap labor during the Bracero Program, to expendible scapegoats in Operation Wetback. At the same time that the exploitation of Mexican labor made California rich, Mexican agriculture languished, and that country today remains one of the world's largest food importers.

The latest chapter in this evolving story, beginning in the 1980s, has seen Central American immigrants increasingly take the place of Mexican farm workers. Many of these earlier immigrants, after more than three generations in California, have left the fields for the cities, suburbs, and even the colleges and universities. But bitter memories, unknown to most Anglo-Americans, remain among the descendants of the *Californios*, the *Braceros*, and long-time Latino residents of the Golden State.

Notes

1. Haas, 1997: 336.
2. Haas, 1997: 337.
3. Haas, 1997: 337.
4. "Selected Articles from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 97.
5. "Guadalupe Vallejo Reminisces About the Ranchero Period," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 95.
6. "Henry George Censures Land Monopoly, 1871," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 119.
7. Reich, 2001: 358.
8. Reich, 2001: 361.
9. Reich, 2001: 363.
10. Reich, 2001: 369.
11. Monroy, 1999: 88.
12. Monroy, 1999: 75-76.
13. Monroy, 1999: 77.
14. Monroy, 1999: 80.
15. Monroy, 1999: 91.
16. Michael Kazin, "The Rise of the Labor Movement in California," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 178.
17. "Ralph H. Taylor Rallies California's Growers to Protect Their Interests, 1938," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 278.
18. "Grower Frank Stokes Defends Mexican Farmworkers' Efforts to Organize, 1936," in Chan and Olin, 1997: 276.
19. Flores, 2013: 125.
20. Flores, 2013: 126-27.
21. Flores, 2013: 133.
22. Flores, 2013: 137.
23. Hoffman, 1973: 207.
24. Hoffman, 1973: 214.
25. Hoffman, 1973: 218.
26. Hernández, 2006: 427.
27. Hernández, 2006: 440.
28. Hernández, 2006: 440.
29. U.C. Berkeley, 1992

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Figure 6: *Fred Davis (left) and Abe Hoffman (right) at the USS* Pampanito*, now a museum ship in San Francisco, on April 26, 2011. The* Pampanito *is one of eight surviving* Balao*-class submarines, identical to the USS* Tilefish*, on which Fred Davis served during WWII. Brito photo.*

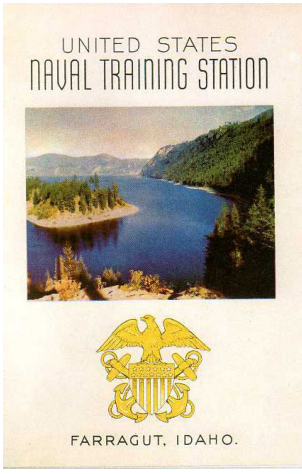
Fred Jones Davis, the "Submarine Infantryman," 1925-2020

Frank J. Brito

"Submarine Infantryman" Fred Jones Davis passed away on August 27, 2020 at age 95. Why the strange military title? More on that later. Fred was a typical Southern California kid from rural Ontario. He enjoyed shooting rabbits and quail in nearby vineyards and other outdoor pursuits in the rock-strewn channels of riverbeds. This was long before freeways, houses and airports were built.

On December 7, 1941, at age 15 and listening to the radio, he heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed. His first question to his parents was, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" After learning the dire condition of our U.S. Navy after the Japanese bombing, Fred bided his time until his junior high school year waiting to enlist. In the Autumn of 1943, he asked his mother for permission to join the Army. After some reluctance and because Fred threatened to quit school, his mother finally agreed and he took the bus into downtown Los Angeles to enlist. The Army recruiting sergeant asked him his age. When Fred said, "Seventeen," the sergeant said, "Get outta here and go down the hall to the Navy." He walked over to the Navy office which offered a special 3-year enlistment program for 17-year olds called a "Kiddie Cruise." Fred signed up and was told to wait for his induction orders which would follow shortly. They arrived in December and he returned downtown for travel to basic training.

When his group was notified that



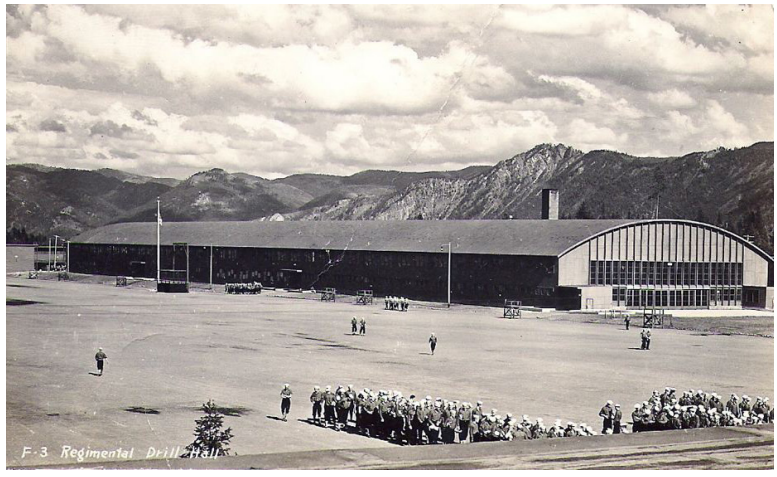


Figure 7 (left): *Pamphlet cover for the Naval Training Station at Farragut, Idaho.* ***Figure 8 (right):*** *The Regimental Drill Hall at Camp Farragut. Note the Rocky Mountains in the background, very unlikely terrain for any recruit to encounter in a submarine. U.S. Navy photos.*

transportation was ready, Fred was dressed in Levi trousers and a thin shirt. He asked a gruff petty officer, "When do we leave for San Diego?" The petty officer replied, "San Diego? You guys are going to Idaho." Fred and his fellow enlistees boarded a train north and debarked at Coeur D'Alene, Idaho in 20-degree weather. They climbed on a bus and drove farther north to a new Navy base called Camp Farragut on Lake Pend Oreille just south of the Canadian border. Fred said, "God, it was cold and all I had was a sweater and other light clothing." "I was a Southern California kid and never experienced anything like this."

Camp Farragut (Figures 7 and 8) had five or six individual training sites with big parade grounds called "Grinders." Water training included going out on the lake in whaleboats in mid-winter. Though temperatures often dropped below zero, Lake Pend Oreille never freezes because of its large swells and depth. It is the largest body of water in Idaho. A recent visit to Camp Farragut revealed that the grinders are still there, now with a modern state park and museum honoring the camp. The last remaining Navy building is the old concrete brig!

After basic training, Fred was sent to gunnery school and became expert in small arms and large caliber gunnery. Upon completing this school successfully he earned an official Seaman's Rate (also called a "Right Arm Rate"). Sailors with technical specialties wore their rates on the left sleeve. Before leaving for their next assignment, the gunner's mates were assembled and listened to a pitch from a chief petty officer looking for submarine service candidates. When Fred learned the submariners got the best food and received an extra $25 dollars monthly, he said, "Sign me up." Fred said that he was a youngster and later, on his first combat patrol, wondered how he could have been so dumb to fall for that proposition. Twenty-five extra dollars was a lot of money in 1943 and the dollars danced across his eyes leading him to Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut.

Submarine School was especially difficult, with classes on weapons, propulsion, ballast, hydraulic, electrical and mechanical systems. Cross-training on these systems was mandatory. The most difficult physical training exercise was in the 100-foot escape tower. At its bottom, the sailors climbed into a small chamber wearing a portable breathing device. It was sealed and they had to open a top hatch which filled the chamber with water. They then climbed a rope 100 feet up through a cylindrical water tank to simulate an escape from a sunken sub. Many sailors panicked and failed the course. Fred said his many years on Southern California beaches

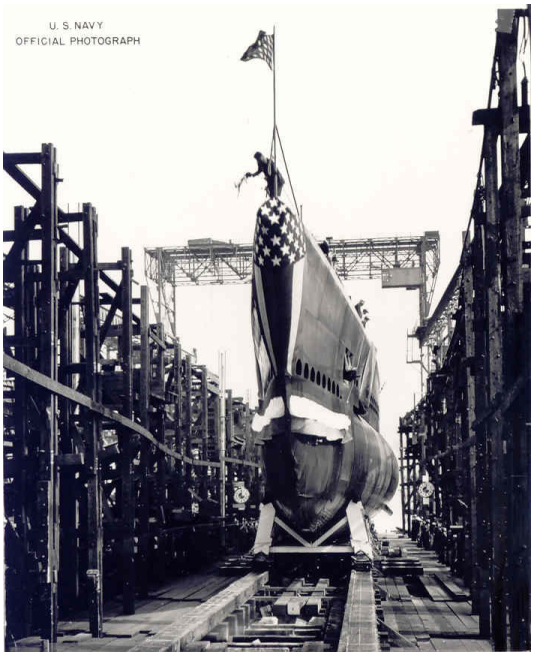


Figure 9: *The launch of the USS* Tilefish *at Mare Island Shipyard, California on October 25, 1943. U.S. Navy photo.*

prepared him well for this training.

During one class on aircraft identification, the lights were turned off and photos of aircraft were shown on the screen. Many students chose this time to nap. Suddenly the lights were turned on, and the students were ordered to a classroom and given a test on what was just shown. Fred said that out of the 100 or so in this classroom, only two passed and the rest were either thrown out of school or recycled into a beginning class with a stern warning. He said, "Luckily, I stayed awake and passed."

After training, Fred was assigned to Mare Island Naval Shipyard near Vallejo, California. There he became a member of the initial crew of the newly constructed USS *Tilefish* (SS-307) (Figures 9 and 10). In the drydock next to the *Tilefish* was the USS *Tang* (SS-306) and Fred remembers watching her being launched into the Napa River Channel. When the *Tang* was sunk off the coast of China during the war, he remembers thinking that he was lucky he didn't enlist a few weeks earlier.

World War Two submarine veterans have thousands of stories to tell, so I'll relate only a few. Fred endured many depth chargings, deck gun battles, torpedo attacks, and hours of sitting silently at 300 feet depth while being "pinged," with sweat rolling down his face. Off the coast of Japan one night while charging her batteries on the surface, the *Tilefish* struck something metallic. Fred was not on watch, but lying down in his forward bunk and heard a loud "Clang!" which continued at intervals all along the port side until it stopped. From the control room, the captain yelled up the conning tower, "What the hell was that?!" The deck watch officer yelled back, "Sir, that was a mine; it didn't explode!" Hostile nations had agreed that contact mines would be tethered to chains and if one pulled loose, it automatically deactivated. This did not always happen, intentionally or unintentionally, and many loose and active mines damaged and sunk shipping after floating far away from their tethered locations.

On one occasion during daylight, they were on the surface when the alarm was given to submerge immediately. Fred's station was at the rear hydroplanes—like airplane wings, commonly called the "stern planes." When the main induction (air intake) was closed, the captain called out, "Take her down smartly!" Fred said, "Smartly meant to me, get the hell down quickly, so that's what I did." The bow plane operator did likewise and the boat went down like a bullet. After much yelling by the COB ("Chief of the Boat"), the captain, and everyone else, corrective steps were taken and the boat stopped diving at 600 feet and leveled off. The official log shows no such depth, but Fred said the depth gauge near him had pegged. He said, "We were two young guys scared spitless and with the boat groaning and creaking, we climbed back up to 400 feet and avoided the enemy above. He continued, "Thank God for those Mare Island welders."

Submarine duty was arduous and stressful. During one refitting at Hunters Point, San Francisco, the crew was ordered to the dental facility for routine care. Fred said he and three sub mates had just come back from a harrowing patrol and were in their dental

Figure 10: *USS* Tilefish *(SS-307) at sea, sometime during WWII. She and her 119 fish-named sister ships of the* Balao *class were the most produced submarines in U.S. Navy history. The* Tilefish *was decommissioned from U.S. Navy service and transferred to Venezuela, where she served as the ARV* Carite *until cannibalized for spare parts in 1977. U.S. Navy Photo.*

chairs. They were ecstatic to go on liberty after their teeth were cleaned and filled. In the dental chairs, they were acting as "loony as squirrels." I asked him to be specific, but he said, "We were just crazy as hell." The dental officer asked the submariners if he could have another doctor look at them. They agreed and a few minutes later, another medical officer (a psychiatrist) came in, questioned them and then said, "I think you men need some time *on land*. How does that sound?" Fred and his mates all agreed and they were transferred to medical leave on shore. In a few hours, the *Tilefish's* Captain Keithly and the COB found them in San Francisco and angrily ordered them back to their temporary barracks. Medical leave was cancelled and Fred and his friends, restored to sub duty, left for their next patrol when the refit was completed.

During another refit in San Francisco, Fred left his submarine for a two-week home leave while the *Tilefish* was being repaired and resupplied. He went into downtown San Francisco and tried to get a train ticket to Southern California to visit his parents in Ontario. The station agent told him the trains were all booked for official military use only. He then tried the Greyhound Bus Terminal and found there also were no tickets available because soldiers and sailors on leave had booked all the buses for days ahead.

He returned to the submarine base and went to the PX and bought several cartons of Lucky Strike cigarettes and put them in a laundry bag. Cigarettes were in very short supply for civilians and almost unobtainable. The military had first priority and they were plentiful for soldiers and sailors.

Fred got a ride back to Highway 101,

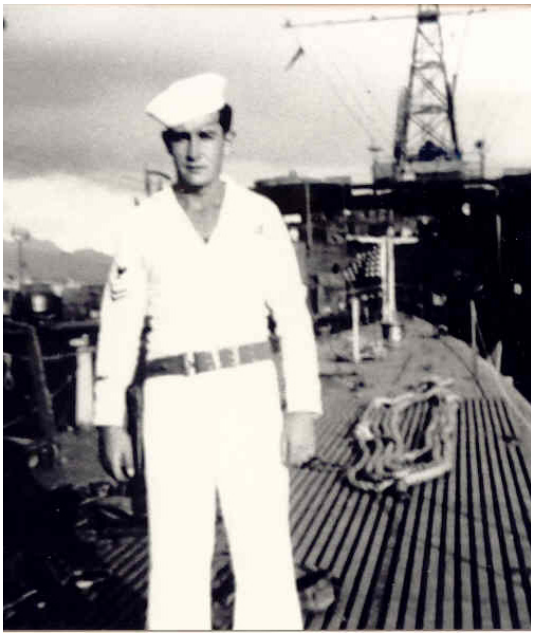


Figure 11 (left): *Fred Davis aboard USS* Tilefish. *Davis Family collection.* ***Figure 12 (right):*** *Fred with his Bronze Star. U.S. Navy Photo.*

stuck his thumb out and held up a pack of cigarettes. He soon hitched a ride to San Jose and using the same strategy in incremental southbound trips, found himself in Ontario a day later. Fred and his family enjoyed his leave and he returned to the *Tilefish* by the same method going north in time to sail away on another patrol.

During another two-week refit at Midway Island in the Pacific, Fred and other sailors found themselves with little to do except drink warm, weak beer and play baseball. Hard liquor was available only to officers. Sometimes the torpedomen would brew a potent alcoholic mixture of torpedo fuel and fruit juice. It was very strong, illegal, and was always followed by a wicked hangover.

Usually avoiding this form of recreation, Fred wandered over to look at the B-17s take off and land at the Midway airfield. He engaged in conversation with the airmen and learned they were short a gunner for a reconnaissance flight looking for Japanese submarines and other enemy shipping. Learning he was a gunner's mate, they invited him to man a .50 caliber machine gun on the next flight. He did not have to report aboard the submarine, as it was under the control of a relief crew until the refit was completed.

Fred flew with B-17 crews several times and told a fellow gunner's mate about his aerial efforts to relieve boredom. His friend joined other aircrews on their sorties over the Pacific. One day, Fred did not show up at the airfield and an aircrewman came looking for him as they had an opening for a gunner on an upcoming flight. He asked a senior petty officer for Fred, explained why he was needed, and the petty officer reported this to the *Tilefish's* Captain Keithly.

Keithly quickly put an end to his crew members flying with the bombers and chastised Fred for doing such dangerous volunteering on his recreation time. Thousands of dollars go into training a submarine crew member and their value was so great that exposing them to other unnecessary dangers was strictly prohibited. Submarine manpower losses were the highest of any military service in WWII and qualified replacements were slow coming out of school because of the difficult and intense training.

Crew cohesion, teamwork, and obedience to orders were critical aboard any submarine. The COB was a Master Chief and in charge of the boat's enlisted men and assured

the captain that all men were trained or trainable and that there were no irritating, obstinate, clumsy, or incompetent men aboard. Irrespective of being destroyed by the enemy during your mission, a submarine was an inherently dangerous vessel and there were countless ways to perish by operational error or accident.

Fred reluctantly told me of one incident he was involved with in order to prevent such a tragedy. In Honolulu during Rest and Recuperation (R&R) between combat patrols, the submariners were staying at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. In WWII, the hotel was leased to the Navy for sub crew relaxation because their duty was so difficult and dangerous. The COB came to Fred and said he learned that one of the *Tilefish* crew transferred off the boat and had been replaced by another. The COB knew this replacement from previous duty or from "scuttlebutt" and felt he would not fit in with the crew. He told Fred, "This man will *not* be aboard when we sail. Do you understand?" Fred replied, "Aye, aye, Chief."

A few days before departure, the relief crew was dismissed and the regular crew came aboard to prepare the *Tilefish* for her next patrol. The COB gave Fred a quart of bourbon and said, "I want you to have a party with (he named 3 or 4 sailors) to make sure [the unwanted man] does not sail with us." Fred acknowledged the order, took the bottle and gathered the named crewmen. They all sat on the deck, drinking and telling jokes. After they became intoxicated, one joke punch line was delivered and as they all laughed, Fred elbowed the unwanted sailor off the deck. He fell onto the extended hull and dislocated his shoulder. The following day, a suitable replacement was found and the COB told him, "Good work, Fred."

During the *Tilefish's* 6th combat patrol, the atom bomb ended the war and the boat was given credit for 5 ½ patrols. Discharged in April 1946, Fred returned to Ontario, California, and walked into his high school. He asked the principal what the requirements were to graduate. The principal asked to see his war records and learned of Fred's training and awards (Dolphins, Combat Pin, and Bronze Star). He said, "Start the September semester, take these few classes and you will graduate. Also, you left with some library fines for overdue books, so please pay them." So, in September 1946, Fred was a 20-year-old Navy combat veteran sitting alongside 18-year-old classmates with whom he earned his high school diploma.

In 1947, Fred thought he would like more formal education, so he enrolled at Chaffey Community College in Rancho Cucamonga, not far from home. He graduated and matriculated to San Jose State College (now University) in San Jose CA. He entered the ROTC Program and the GI Bill paid for his education. He also received a stipend for ROTC training. Life was good and he enrolled in Judo classes, earning a Brown Belt, the second highest rank under famed judo instructor Yosh Uchida.

Fred graduated as a Penology major and received a 2nd Lieutenant's commission in the Army. As a Distinguished Military Graduate, he took a regular commission in the Military Police. At this point, he could have obtained a reserve commission and taken a civilian job. He interviewed at the Terminal Island Federal Prison in Southern California for a position as a deputy warden, but fate stepped in and he felt more motivated for a military career. Asking for advice, one of his ROTC instructors told him, "You can be an officer in the Military Police, but if you're going to be in the Army, be in the *real* Army and go Infantry." Prior to leaving for the Basic Officer's Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, Fred married his long-time sweetheart, Phyllis Havill.

Fred took the instructor's advice, changed his branch to Infantry and was enrolled in the various basic and advanced infantry officer schools. These led to an Infantry Company Commander's position during the Korean War, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge and his second Bronze Star. Fred did not talk much about his experiences in Korea except for two episodes. He was standing outside a bunker when the scream of an incoming shell alerted him that it was too late to duck. It exploded nearby and killed some soldiers and a large piece of shrapnel hit his flak vest, knocking him down. He said the bruise was

Figure 13: *1st Lieutenant Fred Davis somewhere in Korea, probably in 1952. Davis Family collection.*

enormous, but thereafter wore his vest religiously and ordered his men to do the same. I asked him if this didn't qualify him for a Purple Heart and he said, "I didn't bleed, so I didn't report my injury or even think about it."

Before traveling to Korea, Fred was given home leave and was advised by a returning officer to purchase a small revolver to keep in his trouser pocket at all times while there. In an Ontario hardware store, he bought a J-Frame Smith & Wesson .38 Special with a 1 7/8" barrel, tiny even by 1950 standards. Fred carried this revolver at all times in Korea. One night, he was standing in a chow line in the dark when he noticed a Korean soldier he did not recognize waiting for chow. He approached him and the Korean ran off. Fred said he chased him firing his revolver, but didn't know if he hit the escapee. Fred said he was later told it was a hungry North Korean and that it was common for their poorly-supplied, malnourished soldiers to attempt to steal GI rations.

Returning home as a captain, he was assigned as an ROTC instructor at U.C. Berkeley. Two years later Fred was assigned as the advisor to the Queen's Guard, the elite Thai Army unit. In Thailand for over a year as a major, he met the King and Queen of Thailand and participated in their army unit exercises. His counterpart in the Thai Queen's Guard was Colonel Prakan. He and Fred had several polite disputes during these combat practices.

During one live-fire training exercise, Fred noticed that the Thai machine guns were deployed in a crossfire pattern that would have injured and killed Thai troops. Fred yelled, "Stop the exercise!" which greatly annoyed Colonel Prakan who was ready to deliver the firing orders. Prakan demanded to know why the exercise was stopped and Fred walked him to the machine gun positions aimed directly toward the Thai troop positions. Life-saving corrections were made and the training resumed. Several other poor judgments were made by Colonel Prakan during Fred's assignment and his pride was severely injured when he was corrected by Fred. At the change of assignment ceremony when a new U.S. Army advisor replaced Fred, Colonel Prakan gave the going away speech. One of his opening comments was, "We don't like you, but we respect you." Fred thought this was the funniest goodbye

he had ever heard.

Fred was then assigned back to combat in Vietnam as the commander and Lieutenant Colonel of the South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces (Ruff-Puffs). His command caused more enemy casualties than the South Vietnam Regular Army. For this service he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal. After Vietnam, Fred was assigned as the Aide to Major General Gilman Mudgett, first in Alaska, then when General Mudgett was assigned as Sixth Army Commander at the Presidio of San Francisco.

During a formal reception with visiting generals, one of them saw the Submarine Combat Pin on Fred's uniform and asked sharply, "What the hell is that pin?" Fred was indignant and told the general, "Sir, that is my Submarine Combat Pin and I am entitled to wear it!" The wearing of insignia, awards, and decorations is very formal, controlled, and precise in the military, and this general had never before seen this badge. The general excused himself, conferred with General Mudgett and apologized to Fred. After hearing this story, I asked Fred why he didn't also wear his dolphins over his Combat Infantryman's Badge. He said, "No room." Davis retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1969 at the Presidio of San Francisco. Fred was later told by a fellow officer that there was only one other Army officer entitled to wear both Navy Submarine and U.S. Army combat decorations.

Fred's third career was as a successful banker with United California Bank, easily transitioning into civilian life dealing with individual and business banking needs. He retired again in 1991 for good, becoming active in his hobby of marksmanship at a local range. He was also a California History buff, and made numerous visits with me to local historical sites. He always wore a plain blue baseball hat with his two beloved badges: U.S. Navy Submarine Dolphins in front on top and his crossed gold U.S. Army Infantry Rifles beneath. During visits to historic sites, he was often asked what the badges meant. He responded, "I was in the Submarine Infantry." If he received a dubious look, Fred always explained his unique military service.

Figure 14: *Fred Davis enjoying his peaceful retirement at home with his dog in 2011. Brito photo.*

After retirement, Fred and I made several trips to the USS *Pampanito* (SS-383) Museum in San Francisco (Figure 6). It was a *Balao*-class sub, nearly identical to the *Tilefish*. Occasionally, he took a few friends, including Abe Hoffman and family, on these visits. Fred would point out features inside the sub and offer anecdotes about his wartime experiences. Without exception on every visit, he collected a group of visitors fascinated by his stories. They would press forward to hear Fred describe Navy combat life on the *Tilefish*, and he always amassed the largest crowd in the crew's mess whenever he related his experiences. He was often asked if he was a docent, and always replied, "No, in WWII I served aboard a submarine just like this." There was mutual vocal astonishment and then collective thanks were given. Strangers, some from foreign countries, expressing their thanks for his service and sacrifice, were always the best part of these visits. Fred was modest about the acclaim, but appreciated their praise.

Rest your oar and your rifle, Gunner's Mate 2nd Class/Lt. Colonel Fred Jones Davis, you are greatly missed by family, friends and country.

History *versus* Conspiracy
Or,
Popular *versus* Scholarly Research

Abraham Hoffman

"The coronavirus pandemic was a hoax created by Democrats to embarrass the Trump Administration." "The Chinese created the virus in a secret lab with the intention of using it as bacteriological warfare against the United States, but inadvertently let it out across Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Europe."

Add to these spurious claims the hundreds (if not thousands and thousands) of conspiracy theories on the internet, and gullible people might just believe that some "unknown" power—the Mafia in league with the Freemasons, Zionists, the CIA, the Tri-Lateral Commission, the Illuminati, OPEC, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power—is out to control the world. But don't worry—Jack Bauer, Jason Bourne, or James Bond will save us at the last moment, never mind that they are fictional characters.

On a more serious note, some conspiracies continue to exist years or even decades after research has exposed them to be untrue. Wildly exaggerated claims sometimes seem plausible on the surface, even though they have been debunked through serious scholarship. A case in point is The Owens Valley-Los Angeles water controversy.

A recent example of this obsolete conspiracy being resurrected appeared in the June 2020 issue of *American History*, a magazine published in print and online by *The History Net*, a company that publishes a number of "popular" history magazines. These magazines differ from academic journals in that they have no footnotes or bibliography. An exception to the rule would be *American Heritage* where fact checkers make certain the articles are factually correct.

Take, for example, the article "When LA Unions Fought for the Right to Strike, One Weapon was Dynamite," by Kenny Kemp, an author whose web site bills him as a "Storyteller." The subtitle of the article says, "The bombing of the Los Angeles Times exposed a business plot to steal water supply and make the rich richer."

Kemp relates how Harrison Gray Otis led a campaign against labor unions that culminated in the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* building on October 1, 1910, killing twenty people and injuring many others. Kemp essentially retells a story that is well known in Los Angeles history but, as noted, he's a storyteller. Herbert Shapiro wrote "The McNamara Case: A Crisis of the Progressive Era," in the Fall 1977 issue of *Southern California Quarterly*. Shapiro, unlike Kemp, is a historian, and he documents his article with end notes demonstrating his research. A more recent example comes from Aaron Tate, author of "The *Los Angeles Times* Bombing and the McNamaras Trial," in the June 2020 issue of *Branding Iron*, published by the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners. Tate's article is documented with end notes and a bibliography of sources consulted.[1]

Although Kemp devotes most of his article to the *Times* bombing, he also attempts to tie that event to the mayoralty race of 1911 in which Job Harriman, a prominent Socialist attorney, received more votes than did incumbent Mayor George Alexander in the primary election. A runoff was scheduled for December 4—four days after the beginning of the trial of the McNamara brothers. Harriman was also serving on the defense team that was headed by famed attorney Clarence Darrow. Reformer Lincoln Steffens also served on the team.

Darrow believed the McNamara brothers were guilty and would receive death sentences. Unknown to Harriman, who was busy with his campaign, Darrow persuaded the brothers to change their pleas to guilty. Instead of a lengthy trial that would provide a forum for labor union arguments, the trial ended on the day it started, December 1.

Voters, disillusioned by Harriman's claims of the brothers' innocence, chose Alexander to serve another term as mayor.

In addition to this fascinating turn of events, Kemp also claimed that "former Mayor Fred Eaton, Los Angeles Water Department [sic] head William Mulholland, and other power brokers were privy to inside information about L.A.'s future. To grow and prosper, the city in the desert needed water."

To characterize Mulholland as a "power broker" is way off the mark. In fact, Mulholland was unhappy with the work of the Suburban Homes Company, a consortium headed by Otis, his son-in-law Harry Chandler, and other leading businessmen. Kemp continues, "Touting a nonexistent federal plan to develop Owens Valley, Eaton and Mulholland conned farmers there into relinquishing their water rights. In 1906, the federal government formally declared it had no plans for the valley. Los Angeles officials quickly announced plans to build a gravity-flow aqueduct to carry valley water to L.A. The December 1911 city election was to include a referendum to authorize issuance of millions of bonds to fund the waterway... *Times* editorials warned Angelenos that a single drought stood between them and desolation. Knowing that under a scheme still under wraps the city would soon be annexing the San Fernando Valley, Otis and his coconspirators secretly bought up land there."

"Storyteller" Kemp's tracing of this history contains numerous factual errors and conflates two different episodes into one. The Reclamation Service plan was not "nonexistent." The agency conducted a preliminary survey of the northern Owens Valley; Mulholland's plan was to divert water from the Owens River in the southern end. Kemp omits a larger context for the Reclamation Service that ran surveys in a number of western states and territories, but its budget precluded adoption of many of them. The Reclamation Service and city officials agreed in November 1904 to yield to the city's plans, a decision approved by President Theodore Roosevelt, a personage not mentioned in Kemp's article.

Kemp argues that Eaton and Mulholland

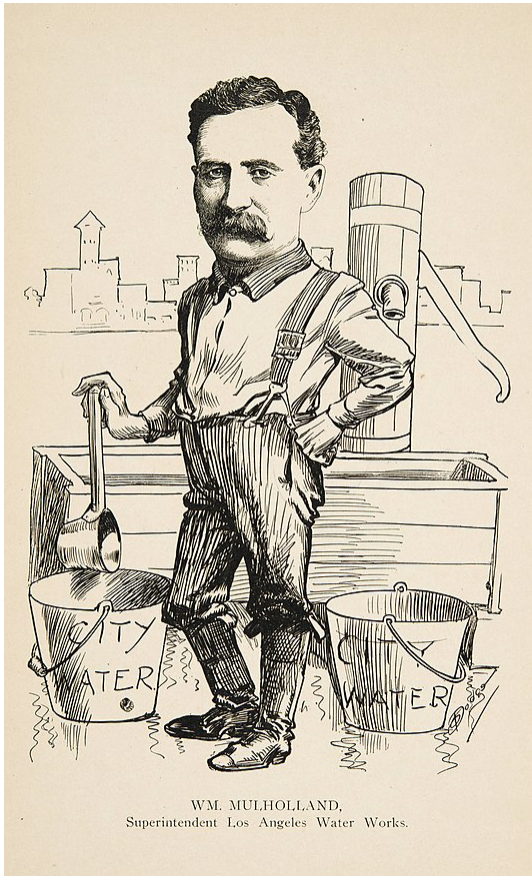


Figure 15: *Caricature of William Mulholland, circa 1911. Public domain internet image.*

"conned farmers there into relinquishing their water rights." This is simply not true, as is evidenced by Gary Libecap's important book *Owens Valley Revisited*, published in 2007, in which Libecap demonstrated that the city paid farmers for the water rights, and no coercion was involved. The "inside information" alleged by Kemp actually took place in 1904, a year after Otis headed a company to develop San Fernando Valley land. By 1911 the effort of a second company, the Suburban Homes Company, was not a secret at all. Kemp confuses two different companies at two different times. The scheme was not "still under wraps" in 1911 as the company was extensively advertising San Fernando Valley land with barbecues and invitations to the public to come and visit the acreage. Bond issues were overwhelmingly approved in 1905 and 1907, not in 1911 as Kemp states.

Figure 16: *Aftermath of the* Los Angeles Times *bombing on October 1, 1910. Public domain internet image.*

Another point: Los Angeles is located in a "semi-arid" region, not a true desert. It has an average annual rainfall of around fifteen inches, sometimes less, sometimes more, and occasionally a lot more. Historian John W. Robinson effectively demonstrated in his book *Gateway to Southern California* that Los Angeles, far from being isolated in an inhospitable desert, was strategically located to serve as an economic hub for the region, with rail and road connections coming through Tejón, Cajón and San Gorgonio Passes.

Regarding the claim that a "single drought stood between them and desolation," the city had endured many earlier drought periods, so the *Times* warning was a specious one. City officials needed the Owens River not because of drought but for the future needs of a rapidly growing city. The bombing of the *Times* building, a tragic and controversial event, did not "expose a business plot to steal water supply and make the rich richer." Kemp evidently relied on a minimum of research and a few biased sources that unfortunately he didn't cite. Biased and superficial works such as *Los Angeles* by Morrow Mayo (1933) and *Southern California Country* (1946) by Carey McWilliams have long been superseded by serious scholarship.

The editors of *American History* magazine should hire some fact checkers to validate the accuracy of the articles the magazine publishes. There's nothing wrong with writing popular history for a popular audience. But *everything* is wrong when writers fail to get the facts straight and indulge in baseless, nonexistent conspiracies.

Note

1. And, of course, I have extensively researched and published on this same topic. The lead essay in Hoffman, 2018, "Water Famine or Water Needs: Los Angeles and Population Growth, 1896-1905," appeared in the Fall 2000 issue of *Southern California Quarterly* and was awarded the prestigious Wheat Award for Best Article.

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Westerners International Living Legends

For more than fifty years outstanding members of Westerners International have been singled out for recognition by their peers. Individuals who have contributed to WI through long service, leadership, recruitment, publication, lecturing, problem-solving and in other ways both in the United States and abroad have been honored as *Living Legends.* Each was nominated by his or her fellow WI members of their own corral or posse, and each nomination was approved by the WI Home Ranch prior to conferral of the honorific. The list of all Westerners International Living Legends, in reverse chronological order, is as follows:

No.	Year	Name	Corral or Posse(s)
66	2019	Robert A. Clark	*Los Angeles, Huntington, Spokane, and Cross Timbers*
65	2018	Harvey Pratt	*Indiana Territory*
64	2018	Robert J. Chandler	*Los Angeles and San Francisco*
63	2018	Jerome R. Selmer	*Los Angeles*
62	2017	Gary D. Turner	*Los Angeles*
61	2016	Abraham Hoffman	*Los Angeles*
60	2016	Francis J. Weber	*Los Angeles*
59	2015	Burnis Argo	*Chisholm Trail*
58	2014	Ester J. Murray	*Pahaska*
57	2013	Fred Egloff	*Chicago and Southwest Vaqueros*
56	2011	Bob Ihsen	*San Dimas*
55	2011	John Creech	*San Dimas*
54	2010	Vern Erickson	*Fort Abraham Lincoln*
53	2010	John W. Robinson	*Los Angeles and San Dimas*
52	2010	Edward J. Fraughton	*Utah*
51	2009	Watson Parker	*Black Hills*
50	2009	John Ellingson	*Spokane*
49	2007	Bruce Fee	*Prescott*
48	2003	William G. Bell	*Potomac*
47	2003	Glen Dawson	*Los Angeles*
46	2003	Richard H. Dillon	*Los Angeles and San Francisco*
45	2002	Joe S. Sando	*Albuquerque*
44	2002	Alvin G. Davis	*Llano Estacado*
43	2001	Robert J. Utley	*Yale*
42	2001	John Marohn	*Tucson*
41	2001	Albert W. Bork	*Prescott*
40	1999	David Dary	*Kaw Valley*
39	1999	Randall Johnson	*Spokane*
38	1998	Wallace E. Clayton	*Tucson*
37	1998	John Willard	*Yellowstone*
36	1998	José Cisneros	*El Paso*
35	1997	Ormly Gumfudgin	*Los Angeles*
34	1997	Al Shumate	*San Francisco*
33	1994	Jim Murphy	*Tucson*
32	1993	Bob Lee	*Black Hills*

No.	Year	Name	Corral or Posse(s)
31	1992	Merrill J. Mattes	*Chicago, Denver, Omaha, and San Francisco*
30	1991	Harrison Doyle	*San Diego*
29	1989	Jeff Dykes	*Potomac*
28	1988	Otis H. Chidester	*Tucson*
27	1985	Leland D. Case	*Tucson, Stockton, and Chicago*
26	1984	Donald R. Ornduff	*Kansas City*
25	1983	Dick Dunlop	*Chicago*
24	1983	C.L. Sonnichsen	*El Paso and Tucson*
23	1982	Harry Blair	*Black Hills*
22	1981	Peter J. Powell	*Chicago*
21	1981	Harold Shunk	*Black Hills*
20	1980	Donald E. Worcester	*Fort Worth*
19	1980	Ernest L. Reedstrom	*Chicago*
18	1979	Gerald F. MacMullen	*San Diego*
17	1979	John R. Bethke	*Chicago*
16	1978	Jerome Peltier	*Spokane*
15	1978	Charlie Evans	*Buffalo Bill*
14	1978	George Virgines	*Chicago*
13	1977	Joseph Rosa	*English Westerners*
12	1975	Nellie S. Yost	*Buffalo Bill*
11	1975	Richard Coke Wood	*Stockton*
10	1974	Iron Eyes Cody	*Los Angeles*
9	1974	Frank Thomson	*Black Hills*
8	1974	Fred Hackett	*Chicago*
7	1973	John F. McDermott	*St. Louis*
6	1973	Nolie Mumey	*Denver*
5	1972	Don Russell	*Chicago*
4	1972	George B. Eckhardt	*Tucson*
3	1971	Peter Decker	*New York*
2	1971	Arthur Woodward	*Los Angeles*
1	1970	John G. Neihardt	*Chicago*

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Compiled by Brian Dervin Dillon, Los Angeles Corral, 1-17-2022.

Monthly Roundup . . .

Figure 17: *A festive Gary Turner and his daughter Tami. At the rear, Westerners' mascot Old Joe stands silent vigil. Jim Macklin photo.*

December 8, 2021

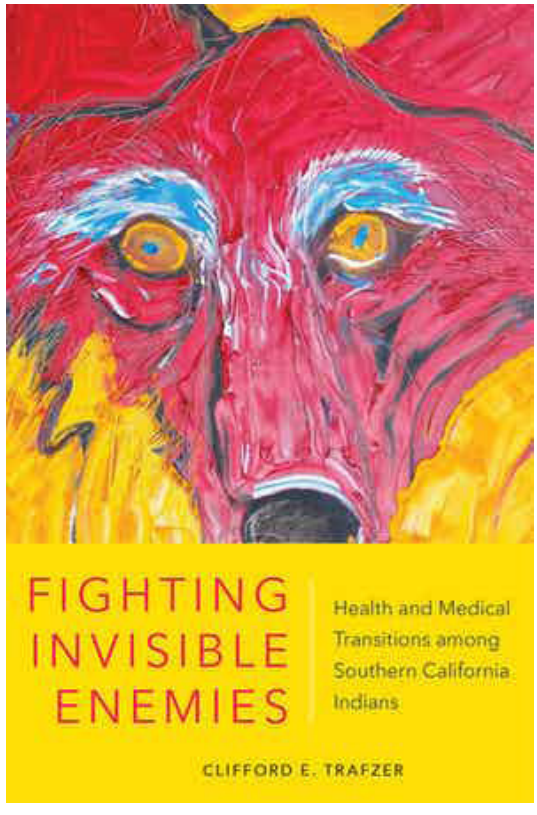
Gary Turner

The December Roundup was the last meeting of 2021, and of the Westerners' brief return to in-person gatherings before Omicron forced a new wave of pandemic restrictions. Blissfully ignorant of this future, our meeting was animated with festive cheer, cherries jubilee, and philosophical questions like, "Are we alone in the universe?" The night's speaker, Gary Turner, offered his answer by sharing his personal journey down the rabbit hole—or rather, *up the tractor beam*—of UFOlogy. Since the dawn of prehistory, humanity has looked to the heavens as the realm of gods and fate, and devoted lifetimes to divining the wisdom in the stars. Pilgrims to Roswell, New Mexico, have retraced this ancient process of mythmaking, with extraterrestrials becoming today's celestial beings. Scientific certainty has made the night sky cold and lonely by removing its sense of mystery, but with a little imagination, it can still, indeed, be *out of this world*.

— John Dillon

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

FIGHTING INVISIBLE ENEMIES: Health and Medical Transitions Among Southern California Indians, by Clifford E. Trafzer. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman (2019). Hardcover with illustrated dust jacket, 377 pages. Chapter end notes. Bibliography containing archival, government, newspaper, and oral interview citations. Index. Photographs, map illustrations, and tables. Preface and Introduction. $34.95.



Fighting Invisible Enemies explores Native Americans' gradual acceptance of Western medicine as they worked within their ancient ways of healing. It is written with the backdrop of how Native Americans were mistreated, suffered, and died. Author Clifford Trafzer cites many sources in his journey through history. He focuses on the many difficulties of Native Californians in the last 150 years. Much is included on federal government missteps and historical conflicts.

The transition from Native American shamanism to Western medicine is covered extensively, as is the resulting amalgamation of the two. Trafzer considers the many diverse environments of Native Californians—desert, mountains, valleys, etc.—and how limited Western medicine was in such a milieu where Western doctors could not minister easily. Many diseases that had to be fought, such as smallpox and tuberculosis, were among the "invisible enemies." The misunderstanding of germs and how they could spread disease was a long and difficult educational effort. Whole chapters are devoted to this, not just identifying these "invisible enemies" but also to the difficulties of setting up health care, medical services, nursing, hospitals, education and the resulting ugly transitions that Native Americans have experienced. Fighting tuberculosis, for example, is covered extensively.

Along with health, there is some discussion of limited Native Californian employment opportunities, and how this led to mistreatment, poverty, and poor living conditions. This indirectly contributed to health crises and premature death. Even in the education of children, poor school conditions contributed to outsized youth mortality. The Reservation system is extensively described as the government's answer to how to provide Native Americans with good living conditions but which in fact, were failures. Such failures were noted as the reason why Indian cultures were destroyed. The author calls the Reservation system, "forced assimilation" and "cultural genocide" on several occasions, identifying the American Congress and Government over the years as being at fault. Lack of funding by the government and depriving the Indians of the help they were promised by various Presidents and Congress caused immense Indian suffering.

One of the significant ways Indians became malnourished was that they were forced from their traditional lands and were deprived of their way of life during the time covered in this study, even up to the present

day. Then no longer able or even permitted to live as they had previously and forced to live on reservations, they became malnourished and died.

The author refers to the theft of Indian lands, and to their aboriginal land rights as always having been ignored by the government. They were moved from one place to another, only to have those lands taken away, too. Many Indians refused to move and died as a result. Treaties and agreements were broken, and Indians were left with little or nothing. Much death occurred in these forced transitions. Tribes were decimated and even wiped out. The author claimed that the government failed in its fiduciary duties to provide health care for Native Americans. It was an assault on their homeland, their culture, their way of life, and their health.

Efforts had been made to destroy their cultural traditions, too, in order to promote assimilation, to "civilize" and to Christianize the Native Americans. Many of the details, mostly negative, of how this was done are recounted, and dates, historical events, and significant people, are covered. To be fair, positive acts of doctors, governmental leaders and others which were beneficial to Native Americans are mentioned. The book is well-written and is worth reading to understand this part of America's history and its relation to its Native peoples.

Although Trafzer's study covers its subject carefully, it brings out nothing new. Mistreatment of Native peoples has long been documented. For example, a serious discussion of this subject was made by the Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville as far back as 1835 in his masterpiece *Democracy in America* (Part I, Chapter 10). The conflicting ways of life of Native peoples versus the Europeans and the Euro-Americans was thoroughly detailed by de Tocqueville who also described the reasons why Native peoples were different and the attendant difficulties. Native people fought against European intrusion and were conquered. Other world conflicts have ended with the defeated being mistreated. Much of world history is the result of wars and their outcomes. Is it any more than wishful thinking to have hoped for a different result here in California? On the opposite side are peacemakers, teachers, and missionaries who came to the New World in the hopes of helping Native peoples. Many gave their lives to that end. But this noble effort is demonized and condemned by Trafzer.

Trafzer understandably offers no light at the end of his dark historical tunnel and the reader is left wondering what hope there is for Native people today. Overall, he takes a sour grapes approach by pointing out that the Native Southern Californians had their lands taken away, that they faced assimilation and conversion, and sees that as a tragedy because of the loss of their culture and way of life. Yet understanding the cruelty of American history as it relates to Native peoples hopefully should bring about constructive improvement in the lives of Native Americans today. But what form that improvement may take remains unclear.

— Joseph Cavallo

Special Issue *Branding Iron*, Coming Soon!

Batter up! Start your engines! Hike! Pull! We have another special issue of *The Branding Iron* coming up in Spring 2022, and its theme is SPORTS! All Westerners and friends are invited to share histories and personal stories about athletes, teams, venues, or anything else about anything competitive in the West. Team sports, individual sports, motor sports, adventure sports—all are welcome!

To be considered for publication, please submit your articles by May 15th, 2022. Please observe a minimum article length of a half page, single-spaced. Illustrations are welcome and encouraged.

For submissions and inquiries, please contact *Branding Iron* editor John Dillon at John.Dervin.Dillon@gmail.com. Thank you all, and Happy Trails!