

# Silverton Country Historical Society

*Established in 1974*

*Over Forty Years of History in the Making*



*Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street*

## War Time Experiences of Dr. Wayne Grodrian Oral History by Amy McKinley, May 2000

In about May of 2000 Amy McKinley was an eighth grader at Mark Twain Middle school. During her English block class, the students were told they could get extra credit for going to visit a veteran. Amy agreed that she should get some extra credit. She decided to talk to Dr. Wayne Grodrian, so she and her grandmother, Barbara Dettwyler, went to see him. She assumed she would be the only 8<sup>th</sup> grader who was able to hear his story in his dining room and personally be told all about his experiences.

She writes: My grandma picked me up from school and off we went to see Dr. Grodrian. Grandma and I arrived at his door and he met us with his two dogs. He said we should go to the dining room table. Grandma and I were surprised. He had a globe of the world, some old newspapers, and a huge map of Guam. I sat nearby as did Grandma. I handed him a list of my questions and he handed them back to me and the story began to unfold.

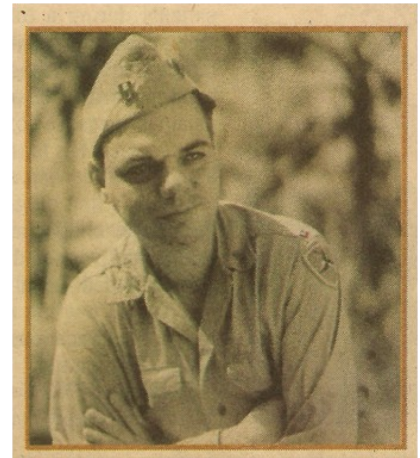
Amy learned that he went to Indiana University, where he was a medical student, He was subject to the draft as a freshman, so in his second year he signed up in Army; at the end of medical school he changed to the Navy. He had to learn difference between Capt. in the Army and Capt. In the Navy. The lowest ranking officer in the Navy is Ensign, then Lt. Jr. Grade, Sr. Grade, Capt. and Commander. He had one class in Medical school on how to be an Officer and a Gentleman.

His class schedule said “no summer school vacations.” He graduated early in December, and started a one-year internship in Tacoma Washington. He married Mary Ann the year before graduating-- his oldest daughter was born in San Diego, February 1943 when he started active service. Great Lakes Naval Station was where he was then stationed. In the beginning he was looking at left ear drums for 6 weeks: “It was boring; later we were able to change to looking at continuous lines of men--about a half a minute per man.”

After Great Lakes, he was sent to San Bernardino’s Point Mugu to a shore unit that was building a temporary breakwater for ships to safely unload.

“I was then sent to the Marine Corps and was taught about tropical medicine. We had intense courses on medical treatment that we had not previously had. We also dug trenches, carried 50# packs and so on. I was next sent overseas as a replacement for 2 years on a front line group. We went to Guam.” (Amy adds this Geography lesson: he told me to look for Hawaii and then Guam on the Globe. Guam is almost 2 times as far as Hawaii from U.S. and is about 6 miles wide and 20 miles long.)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Corps was fighting the war in Guam. Guam had been a protectorate of the U.S. and had been taken over by the Japanese after Pearl Harbor. The people were pretty Americanized. He met a man living in Guam who he’d gone to school with who was a grandson of a Navy man.



## Curator's Corner

A very good friend of mine and of the museum, passed away last month. Doris Hartley was the secretary at Mark Twain and Robert Frost for many of the years that I was teaching in Silver-



ton. There are many stories that I could share about the various messes that Doris helped me out of and the wonderful insight that she shared with the students and parents as they kept her company on the famous blue bench at Robert Frost. Most of all she cared deeply about our town and the history that both she and her husband Tom shared with our museum--the Porter School bell being just one of their many donations. A few weeks ago her daughters, Jan and Karen, were looking over her

things and found several Mark Twain annuals along with staff photos of both Mark Twain and Robert Frost. I am always amazed at how many times folks come to the museum to research friends, family and teachers and the annuals are the first place they look. The gift of these annuals have already been used and we are very grateful to the family for them.



On October 8<sup>th</sup> Chris and I were happy to host a visitation from Robert who is the collection manager for the Keizer Historical Museum. They came to pick our brains on how we collect, preserve and catalogue our donations. A tour was at the top of their list so that they could get a feel of how we are able to display our collections. It became really clear that we share the same problem in both museums and that is storage space. Another issue that we discussed was what items and how many items are we able to accept. Where to store the 'extra' donations that are not on display is also a mutual issue. They do have a rented storage unit and we have the basement. The issue with both of those sites comes when each museum needs to set up a new display. Robert, their collections manager, and I had a discussion about the diversity of our collections. He is struggling with the 'story' that their museum tells when it comes to the diverse population throughout history.

I have also been thinking about our own story and will be working or at least trying to find a way to include the many diverse population stories that Silverton can show in our collections. While I was hosting I had a couple who have moved here a little over a year ago and they were asking about how Silverton has changed over the years. When did the Russian immigration begin? How long has the Latino population been part of Silverton? And of course, what is the story of our First Nation/Native American population? Visitors often ask these questions and for many of us, even those who have lived here most of our lives, we aren't always able to answer satisfactorily.



The Museum will be closing for the winter beginning November 12th so we can rearranges some displays and give the rooms a thorough cleaning.

We will still be available for questions, helping with research and conducting tours. Call us at (503)873-7070 or email us at [silverton.museum@live.com](mailto:silverton.museum@live.com).

See you in the Spring!

*Continued from Page 1*

There was a city of about 5-6 thousand people. It had a good harbor and there were air fields on the island--it was important to get the island back from the Japanese who had occupied it for over two years. The Japanese were mean to the people of Guam and in turn the people hated the Japanese. The battle was pretty much over when Dr. Grodrian got there. They were the "mop up group" and they trained in the rugged terrain. The (Seabees) made large airports, where there were huge bunches of bulldozers--acres of them packed tightly together. Cherry pickers were used to unload heavy equipment.

The Marine Division established a hospital for the people of Guam. They certainly needed it as there was only one doctor there, and there were very few supplies. Clothing and other things were needed as well.

Dr. Grodrian continues: "Guam--Why did we go there? Fighter planes could only be in the air about 5 hours; they couldn't send bombers directly from the US to Tokyo, so we needed a closer base for our aircraft. We had to take the island. There were 22,000 Japanese on the island and the Marine Corps had 6,000 marines to take on that many Japanese." He only saw about 5-6 Japanese prisoners; they were in pretty bad shape and had turned themselves in.

Amy continues: Dr. Grodrian then went to Iwo Jima (half way between Guam & Japan) He showed grandma and I an actual battle map, which was pretty interesting. Iwo Jima is four miles long from one end to the other and two miles from here to here ). He explained that on the map there were dots that showed gun placements (mortars and cannons). At the bottom of the island is an active volcano.

Dr. Grodrian: "The island had sharp pin head cinders, and then there is a steep bluff to a flat plateau--one end full of steam vents, mud pits, and things that smelled awful. The ground was yellow from sulfur--rugged awful area. There were some palm trees along the shores. It was a hell of a place to be.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine division, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, went in first. The 4<sup>th</sup> division cut off the volcano, the 5<sup>th</sup> division and the 3<sup>rd</sup> division came across the beach and came up the center. "I was with the motor transport division, big trucks and some ducks (they go in the water as well as land--have gears on back for water, and tracks for land) The division was equally divided between drivers and repair men. Sometimes I came on hostile fire, I was responsible for small groups with one core men. I later went to the beach and helped the wounded. I crossed the air field often and mortars would fire at me. We would speed up, slow down and drive crooked. It took about ½ minute from the time a Mortar was shot until it hit. I saw a lot of wounded!

We injured very many...all in all there were only about 800 Japanese that surrendered. 21,000 Japanese killed. At the end of war, many Japanese soldiers jumped off the cliff in northern end. The island was not big enough for all the dead; we took all our American dead with us. The Japanese fought a lot from the caves, we would drop ammunition in the caves to kill the Japanese. We were there 6 weeks with no drinkable water, had to convert salty sea water to drinking water."



Dr. Grodrian noted: "The raising the flag on Mount Suribachi, the picture isn't what it seems, it was actually done three days after the actual flag was raised. The picture was posed--the first flag was done by the people that got there.

We lost 8,640 Marines, as many people as live in Silverton and Mt. Angel (at the time Amy went to see Dr. Wayne Grodrian, in 2000).

*Continued on Page 4*

*Continued from Page 3*

“We went back to Guam to train for the invasion (s) that was to take place on Japan. We were 6 weeks away from landing on Japan when the war ended. We were extremely glad that the bombs were dropped. It was estimated that had we not dropped the bombs 1 million men would have been killed. I felt fortunate that we ended the war when we did. The Japanese had 3 bombs of their own and we would have been in bad trouble. I came back from war, went to Illinois and helped discharge people...wasn't very much fun.”

---

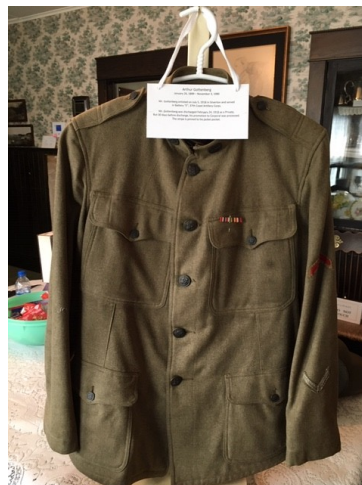
Dr. Grodrian's Navy uniform with his Medical Corps ribbons is on display at the Museum.

---

---

### Veterans' Display

Again this year in honor of Veterans' Day, we are sharing some items from our collection of military uniforms. We are extremely proud to continue this very humbling display and sincerely hope you are able to come visit us.

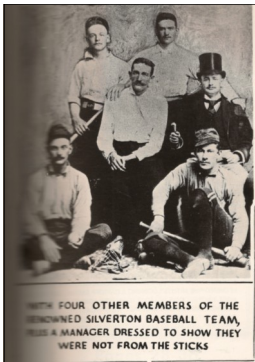


The uniform pictured here belonged to Arthur Gottenberg who was in WWI. Come read his story and the story behind the many others who served.

### October First Friday at the Museum

For the month of October, as baseball season winds down, we were pleased to feature Homer Davenport's baseball themed illustrations that he produced for Albert Spalding's 1911 history of baseball, "America's National Game."

Davenport, a baseball aficionado since his teen years in Silverton, was a close friend to Spalding. Spalding hired Davenport to illustrate the book with 17 cartoons, including the gold embossed cover of the early editions. The book details the early history of the sport, (as interpreted by Spalding). Much of the story is told first-hand, since Spalding had been involved in the game, first as a player and later as an administrator, since the 1870s. In addition to his personal recollections, he had access to the records of Henry Chadwick, the game's first statistician and archivist.

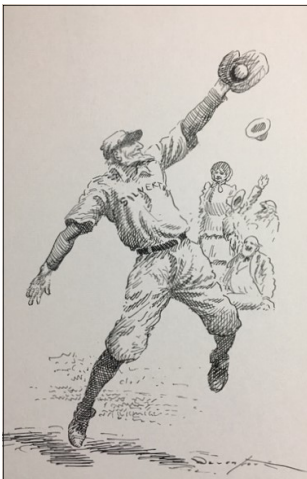


The evening was enlivened by visitors from the Scotts Mills and Aumsville Museums. Board members shared the trials and joys of running a community museum.

Treats were Cracker Jacks and root beer!



There will be one more First Friday opening, Friday November 1st, 6 to 8 pm. Come enjoy a movie night with your friends: two classic Silverton films from the 1920's.



Former Silverton Red Sox player, Jack Hande, mingles with museum visitors!





428 SOUTH WATER STREET  
SILVERTON OR 97381

OFFICE PHONE 503-873-7070  
EMAIL US  
SILVERTON.MUSEUM@LIVE.COM

*Celebrating Over 40 Years in the Community*

**WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.ORG**

**Thank you to our new and renewing members,  
our generous donors and to anyone who has  
given anonymously to the Museum or any of its projects.**

**You're the best!!**

Fred and Nola Parkinson  
Nancy Rose  
Rick Lewis  
Ken Blust

Leslie Caldwell/Patrick Dwyer  
Patty Walker Riley  
Ricky and Kelly Burbidge  
Justine Fogarty

Jim Toler

**Donation in Memory of Doris Hartley**

John and Barbara Senger  
Judy Lowery  
Ron and Jane Jones  
Carolyn Hutton

**Donation in Memory of Gregg Sheesley**

Ron and Jane Jones



**We are so grateful for the support of all  
our members and donors!!**

**Your S.C.H.S. Board**

Victor Madge	President
Norm English	Past-Pres.
Gus Frederick	Vice-Pres.
Chris Schwab	Secretary
Tracy Duerst	Treasurer
Judy Lowery	Curator
Kathy Hunter	Membership
Fred Parkinson	
Ruth Kaser	
Corey Christensen	
Russ Gould	

**If you received an  
overdue notice with your  
newsletter, we appreciate  
your prompt response.  
Thank you!**