

# Fairview Register

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## President's Message

### A Family Affair

Earlier this year in January I had a phone conversation with Jane Zwier who had a request. Jane and her husband Bert were from back East and would be spending the winter in San Diego with their daughter Jill. Jane's mother Talena Van Drunen would be traveling by train from Chicago in a couple of weeks to join the rest of the family. She would be arriving at 8:30 A.M. in Los Angeles on Saturday, February 16. Jane said her mother was very interested in seeing memorabilia about the Santa Ana Army Air Base (SAAAB) and would it be possible to drop by the museum with the family on the day of her arrival.

I said of course and that I would make myself available for whatever time was convenient for them. Jane went on to explain that her mother was married to Willard P. Van Drunen, who was an instructor at the SAAAB in 1943. He and his wife were married in 1944. He later went on to pilot a C-46, and he passed away in 2007.

On February 16<sup>th</sup> they arrived at the museum. Mrs. Van Drunen, her daughter Jane, Jane's husband Bert and two adult granddaughters, Jill and Beth. I introduced myself and directed them over to the area which is dedicated to the SAAAB. I told them some specifics about the base and pointed out items of special interest. Like a dry sponge soaking up water, all of them took in everything they could see and hear. They were totally fascinated with the photos, memorabilia and other information about the base. Mrs. Van Drunen was never on the base, so she was very delighted to see what we had in our collection. She had brought with her Mr. Van Drunen's ID card, pins and wings to show me. We talked for a long while, sharing thoughts about the base and life during the war. There was never a dull moment or a lull in the conversation. I learned that Mrs. Van Drunen had written a book entitled "Life With My Soldier". She made a donation to the SAAAB, and they left with a copy of "THE SAAAB STORY" by Edrick J. Miller. The visit was as much a memorable experience for me as it was for them.

Bob Palazzola

## Costa Mesa Historical Society Presents

### **Life in the Fast Lane:**



### **Hot Rods, Land Speed Records and Beyond**

**Speaker: Richard Parks**

Sunday, March 17, 2013

Doors open 2pm ~ Program at 2:30pm

Free Admission, Refreshments for All

*Costa Mesa Historical Society Museum*

1870 Anaheim Avenue

Northwest Corner of Lions Park Complex

Join us on Sunday afternoon as Richard Parks discusses a short history of hot rodding in Southern California, the transition from street racing to Bonneville and drag strips, the need for safety in racing, and finally the importance of preserving its history for posterity.

Richard is the oldest son of Wally Parks, land speed racing enthusiast and founder of the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) in 1951.

Grab a friend and come learn what "life in the fast lane" really means! For event information, contact us at 949-631-5918, visit [www.costamesahistory.org](http://www.costamesahistory.org) or go to [facebook/costa mesa historical society](https://www.facebook.com/costa-mesa-historical-society)



Promoting and preserving Costa Mesa's history is our mission.

## Costa Mesa in Wartime & Life in the 1940's

*Mrs. Donald (Edna) Gibson arrived in town in 1919 and lived here until 1943. This is the conclusion of her story of life in Early Costa Mesa. For ease of reading, Mary Ellen Goddard's interview questions have been incorporated into Mrs. Gibson's responses.*

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Discussing life in Costa Mesa during World War II, Mary Ellen Goddard asks: "Do you remember during the war a watch posted at the pump plant by the Aircraft Warning Service and nightly patrol of the reservoirs and stand pipe. Was that a very serious business around here?"

Mrs. Gibson recalls: It really was. We had to have everything dark. On our door we had to have no lights that would show. All the windows had to be blackened. And we had to work at night, so we had to have black screens on our windows. My husband was a guard – a local guard – and anyone who was found driving a car with lights or had lights on in their house was reported. He had to go and ask them to please keep it dark. Instead of delivering milk at night, we delivered it early in the morning. We had to do it without lights when it was dark. That wasn't easy for the boys to deliver milk without lights in the morning in the dark. I think there was a light inside the car that would turn on to pick out their milk, and they had to use a flashlight. It was very difficult for a dairyman, having to stop at all those houses and so forth along the way. Night driving on the highways was not allowed. If anyone did, he had to have no lights. And there were too many accidents, too dangerous. So there was very little driving.

Life in the Pacific Coast communities was different from the rest of the nation. There had been sightings of little submarines out along the coast, and there were too many Japanese here. They found a Japanese family up on the mountains that were giving signals to these boats and they were caught [*Editor's note: Never proven*]. There were Japanese youngsters in our school, but they were such nice kids. They weren't guilty. But, of course, they had to be taken off. All the Japanese were taken away. I felt sorry for those that were so good and had to lose everything they had and move. It was a sad point in our history. Our youngsters had such good friends among the Japanese. We had customers that were Japanese, and they were so nice. We felt awfully bad about that.

World War II and the Santa Ana Army Air Base had their effect on the area and on us. Since the war came and so many were going into the service including my sons, we had to sell our dairy. The boys were our only help, especially with delivering milk, and it was hard to get help.

Both my sons applied for the service. Arthur got into the Air Force – the Navy Air Force. Marvin applied, and they turned him down because he wasn't aggressive enough. He said "I'll show 'em. I'll go into the Army Air Force." And he did. They accepted him. So my sons had to go to training. Every night for three months they went to Santa Ana Junior College and took airplane navigation. Marvin went first. He went to the Santa Ana Army Air Base in Costa Mesa for three months. Or maybe it was six months. Anyway, he was nearby so he would come home on weekends. Or we could go and see him. Then he had to move; and he went first to Hemet, and then to

Bakersfield, Phoenix, and to Louisiana before he went overseas. Arthur was called up later. He started attending Junior College in Santa Ana when he told us, "Now that I'm in Junior College, they'll take me. Just watch them." I don't think he'd been in there three months before they took him into the Navy. He went to someplace in Wisconsin. Before he sailed, before they went away, they were home, both of my sons came home. Together, one more time.

By 1943, we moved to Upland. We sold our home and moved to Upland because we had to have something to do. We bought an orange grove and a home nearby. Our daughter and her



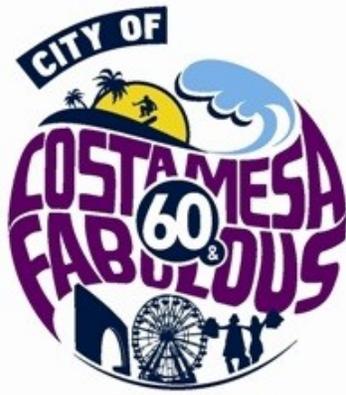
Gibson Family circa 1942. Left to right: Arthur, Edna, Doris, Donald, and Martin.

family joined us. Eventually we bought a second orange grove. We had two ten-acre orange groves. My husband handled the cultivating and irrigating himself. He had to hire someone to help with pest control. It was pretty expensive, but he was willing to make a go of it if I would.

When it came time to harvest the oranges, the packing house would send out pickers. They would pick the fruit when it was just ripe enough to be sweet. We had good quality oranges. We grew mostly Navels and some Valencias. The Navels were the first to ripen, maybe in January and February. The Valencias would ripen in May and June. Back when we were in Costa Mesa, the lemons we grew on the grove at 21<sup>st</sup> Street would be picked according to size. When they grow to ring size they are picked, then stand and mellow for a while before they are shipped. We had good lemons, too. We saw good prices for our fruit.

After my son Marvin returned from the war and graduated from Junior College, he started working for the Post Office in Costa Mesa. First he was a clerk and at that time Norris Mel-lott was Postmaster. Norris was succeeded by his daughter, Doris Wilcox. Later, Hazel Gill became Postmaster. She was very good to Marvin; he helped her, and she promoted him to Assistant Postmaster. Marvin held that position until he came down with polio. He was out for more than a year. Eleven months in the hospital, and when he finally went back, Marvin was in a wheelchair at first. Then came the crutches, and he always had to use them. It just about broke his heart when Hazel Gill died. With all of the changes in the post office, Marvin couldn't keep up. He took a disability pension and retired in the late 1970's.

Looking back, I spent many years of my life working very hard. I was always so busy. First we had lemon groves in Costa Mesa. Then we bought cows and ran a dairy. When we sold the dairy, we came to Upland and bought orange groves. No matter how tough things got, we managed somehow. It's been a good life.



## 2013 is the 60th Anniversary of Costa Mesa's Incorporation!

There will be special events going on around town all year to celebrate our history, including:

- \* **Arts in the Park at the Estancia Adobe May 11**
- \* **The Fish Fry May 31-June 2 joined by the Community Run**
- \* **CM Historical Society Open House June 9**
- \* **60th Anniversary Kick-off Street Fair June 28-30**
- \* **Costa Mesa Night at Angels Stadium**
- \* **Early California Days at the Estancia Adobe in October**
- \* **Scarecrow Festival Weekend before Halloween**
- \* **And many more!**

**Many Volunteer opportunities are available. For more information, go to the City of Costa Mesa web site and click on 60th Anniversary. Committee meetings are open to the public.**

*Tess Bernstein*



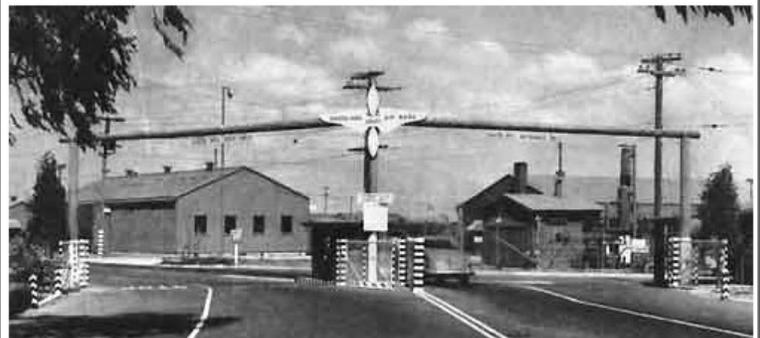
## SAAAB Celebration 2013 At Orange Coast College

**Saturday, April 13**  
-OCC Student Center -

Doors open 11:30am  
Lunch at 12pm  
Program at 12:45pm

Luncheon Speaker:  
Jonna Doolittle Hoppes,  
Granddaughter of General Jimmy Doolittle,  
Author of "Calculated Risk" and "Just Doing My Job"

*Cost is \$25 per person*  
Anyone interested in attending  
should contact Elizabeth Parker  
at O.C.C. (714) 432-5707  
Reservations must be made by March 31st



*Santa Ana Army Air Base 1942-1946*

## What's Happening

- ◆ **Sunday Speaker Series:** Sun. April 14 — Orange County Storm Water Program: *The Ocean Begins at Your Front Door*. Doors open 2pm; Program at 2:30pm. Costa Mesa Historical Society Museum, 1870 Anaheim Ave., Northwest Corner of Lions Park. Free admission/refreshments.
- ◆ **Battle of Costa Mesa:** Sat. April 20 & Sun. April 21—Civil War Reenactment at Fairview Park, 2525 Placentia Avenue. Sponsored by the American Civil War Society, the event features uniformed Union and Confederate soldiers, guns, cannons, mounted cavalry, food, period music and ladies' tea, field hospital, camps, vendors and more. For more info, go to [www.acws.net](http://www.acws.net)

◆ **Like us on Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/costa-mesa-historical-society](http://www.facebook.com/costa-mesa-historical-society)



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**Costa Mesa Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1764  
Costa Mesa CA 92628**

**— *Membership Form* —**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Categories**

<b>Annual</b>		<b>Special</b>	
Individual	\$ 15.00	Historical Society Life Member	\$ 1000.00
Family	\$ 20.00	SAAAB Wing Annual Member	\$ 10.00
Student (under 16)	\$ 5.00	SAAAB Wing Life Member	\$ 50.00
Contributing	\$ 50.00		
Business & Professional	\$ 100.00		
Public Agency	\$ 100.00		
Benefactor	\$ 250.00		

Make your checks payable to the Costa Mesa Historical Society.  
The Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, operates under the Corporation Laws of the State of California.