

WINTER EDITION

# KUCKER FAMILY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Taylor James Galvin



## In Memoriam

Chief Warrant Officer Three **Taylor James Galvin** died August 20, 2018 in Sinjar, Iraq while piloting a helicopter that crashed a counterterrorism mission in support of the Operation Inherent Resolve coalition to help defeat the Islamic State. Taylor was the husband of Katherine Ambrose Rucker, and their marriage November 18, 2006 in Cedar Key, Florida was reported in the September/December, 2006 issue of the *Rucker Family Society Newsletter*. Their children are eleven year old Wyatt and ten year old Grace. He was born 22 December, 1983 in Phoenix, Arizona, the son of James and LuAnn Galvin.

ny, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment, known as the *Night Stalkers*, at Fort Campbell where he served as an MH-60M Fully Mission Qualified Pilot. He was a combat pilot with 10 deployments: three in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; three in support of Operation of Enduring Freedom; and four in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.



Galvin's military education was extensive and included Warrant Officer Candidate School, Aviation Officer Basic Course, Aviation Officer Advanced Course, the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) Level C (High Risk) Course, UH-60 Aircraft Qualification Course, UH-60 Instructor Pilot Course, 160<sup>th</sup>SOAR Officer Combat Skills Course, and the MH-60M Aircraft Qualification Course.

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Society Newsletter***

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Galvin's awards and decorations include one Air Medal with C device and three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Joint Service Air Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Achievement Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Meritorious Unit Award, three Army Good Conduct Medals, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War On Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War On Terrorism Service Medal, the NATO Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, three Overseas Service Ribbon, the Combat Action Badge and the Senior Army Aviator Badge. He was posthumously awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, and Bronze Star.



Katherine Ambrose Rucker's multiple lines of descent from Peter Rucker are listed below. The name Ambrose is highlighted to show how it has come down through the generations: Line 1—Katherine<sup>10</sup> **Ambrose** Rucker, William<sup>9</sup> **Ambrose**, Henry<sup>8</sup> Cowles, Jr., Dr. Henry<sup>7</sup> Cowles (m. Lillian<sup>7</sup> Eliza Rucker), Benjamin<sup>6</sup> Lindsay, Benjamin<sup>5</sup> Jennings, Isaac<sup>4</sup>, **Ambrose**<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup> Rucker. Line 2: Katherine<sup>10</sup> **Ambrose**

Rucker, William<sup>9</sup> **Ambrose**, Henry<sup>8</sup> Cowles, Jr., Lillian<sup>7</sup> Eliza (m. Dr. Henry<sup>7</sup> Cowles Rucker), William<sup>6</sup> **Ambrose**, William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger, George<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup> Rucker. Line 3: Katherine<sup>11</sup> **Ambrose** Rucker, William<sup>10</sup> **Ambrose**, Henry<sup>9</sup> Cowles, Jr., Lillian<sup>8</sup> Eliza (m. Dr. Henry<sup>7</sup> Cowles), William<sup>7</sup> **Ambrose**, Mary Ann<sup>6</sup> Dawson (m. William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger), **Ambrose**<sup>5</sup>, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, **Ambrose**<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>. Line 4: Katherine<sup>11</sup> **Ambrose** Rucker, William<sup>10</sup> **Ambrose**, Henry<sup>9</sup> Cowles, Jr., Dr. Henry<sup>8</sup> Cowles (m. Lillian Eliza), Sally<sup>7</sup> F. Parks (m. Benjamin Lindsay Rucker), Paulina<sup>6</sup> Davis, Elizabeth<sup>5</sup> Rucker MacDaniel, Lucy<sup>4</sup> Rucker Dawson, Benjamin<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

**Timothy "Tim" Ward Wood II**, age 78, September 6, 2018, at his home in Richmond, VA. He was born January 13, 1940, the son of the late William Price Wood II and Thyra Black Wood. Tim is survived by his brother, Price Wood; his nephew, Taylor F. Wood; and special friends, Sharon Wood and Nancy Bowman. He was predeceased by his nephew, William Erin Wood. He was the great-grandson of the T.W. Wood & Sons seed company family. He attended St. Christopher's, Thomas Jefferson and Fork Union Military Academy as well as St. Stephen's Church. Tim was a U.S. Army veteran. He loved to build bird houses, some of which can be found hanging at the Country Club of Virginia, where he was a member. He also loved history and was a member of the Virginia Historical Society. A graveside ceremony was held in Hollywood Cemetery on September 11. He was buried in the T.W. Wood family plot. This obituary

is from the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Sept. 9, 2018.

Tim Wood's Rucker lineages are: Line 1 - Timothy<sup>4</sup> W. Wood, William Price Wood, Jr., Sudie<sup>4</sup> Rucker, William<sup>4</sup> Ambrose, William B. (m. Mary<sup>4</sup> Ann Dawson), George<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>. Line 2 - Timothy<sup>10</sup> W. Wood, William<sup>9</sup> Price Wood, Jr., Sudie<sup>8</sup> Rucker, William<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, Mary Ann<sup>6</sup> Dawson (m. William B.), Ambrose<sup>5</sup>, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

■ ■ ■

**Mary Ruth Bennett Rucker**, 86, of Cornelius, NC passed away peacefully on December 21, 2017. Mary was born December 25, 1930 in Ada, OK the daughter of the late Robert H. Bennett and Lorenza Hammonds Bennett. Mary Ruth served as President of the South Piedmont Chapter Auxiliary of the Professional Engineers of North Carolina and was a charter member of Lake Norman Baptist Church where she served in many capacities. She also was the office manager for Dana H. Rucker & Assoc. for many years. Mary Ruth was currently a member of the Neighborhood Church, Huntersville, NC.

Along with her parents she was preceded in death by her son-in-law Chris Holcombe and sister, Sue Conner, mother-in-law, Lilla Campbell Rucker and father-in-law Dana Henry Rucker, Jr.

Mary Ruth is survived by her loving family; husband of 68 years, Dana Henry Rucker, III; sons, Robert D. Rucker and his wife Debbie of Weddington, NC, Joseph B. Rucker and his wife Judy of Garner, NC; daughter, Donna R. Holcombe of Huntersville, NC; grandchildren,

Kathy Grey, Joy Rucker, Dana, Jr and his wife Rebecca Rucker, Joseph, Jr. and his wife Jenny Rucker, Summy Rucker, Aaron Rucker, Michelle Holcombe, Jessica Holcombe, Brooke Holcombe; great-grandchild, Lauren Rucker.

Mary Ruth's husband, Dana Henry Rucker, III's Rucker lineages are: Line 1 - Dana<sup>9</sup> H. Rucker III, Dana<sup>8</sup> H., Jr., Dana<sup>7</sup> Henry, William<sup>6</sup> Ambrose, William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger (m. Mary Ann<sup>5</sup> Dawson), George<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup> Rucker; Line 2 - and Dana<sup>10</sup> H. Rucker III, Dana<sup>9</sup> H., Jr., Dana<sup>8</sup> Henry, William<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, Mary Ann<sup>6</sup> Dawson (m. William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger), Ambrose<sup>5</sup>, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

■ ■ ■

**Dr. Ralph Weller Rucker II** passed peacefully on July 7, 2018. He was born the third child of Dr. Ralph Weller Rucker I and Laura Allen Rucker on May 25, 1942 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Dr. Rucker grew up in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, attending College High. He later attended the University of Oklahoma and then medical school at Northwestern University School of Medicine. He convinced the love of his life, Sherry Lee Allen, to marry him in 1966. He completed his medical training in Houston, TX. He served as an Army physician in Korea until 1972. Serving for over 17 years as a pediatrician, pulmonologist, and neonatologist at Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC), where he pioneered the CHOC Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and pulmonary programs.

Ralph and Sherry retired to

Haskell, Oklahoma in 1991 where he established the Rucker Ranch, raising cattle and 'growing' his family. There, he continued his passion for numismatics, the Civil War, endless reading, ranching, gardening and his grandchildren. He and Sherry are members of the First United Methodist Church of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He was also quite active with the Stone Bluff Senior Citizen Center in Haskell, Oklahoma.

Those who mourn his loss include his wife Sherry Rucker; brother Clinton Allen Rucker of Los Angeles, California; son Ralph Weller Rucker III and daughter-in-law Jennifer Rucker of Dallas, Texas; son William Allen Rucker and daughter-in-law Wendy Rucker of Haskell, Oklahoma; daughter Robyn Rucker of Haskell, Oklahoma; son-in-law Brian Arant and daughter Dr. Rebecca Rucker Arant of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Ralph was the proud grandfather of 11 grandchildren: William II, Callie, Ralph IV, Jackson, Trent, Brody, Skylar, Avery, Connor, Jessa and Cole.

He was preceded in death by his father Dr. Ralph Weller Rucker I, his mother Laura Allen Rucker, sister Louise Rucker Connor, and sister Rosalind Rucker Dick.

Dr. Weller was a member of the Rucker Family Society, though he was not a Rucker descendant.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Strong Ancestors** **By Loretta J. Sable**

I was researching my Rucker line through my grandmother Tabitha Gentry Porter (1885-1966). I must say these ancestors



were a hardy bunch! I started my research by taking a look at Grandma Gentry, though we called her "Mamie." She married a Swedish immigrant farmer named Eric Gustav Swenson who died suddenly in 1924.

He was away on a ranch in Montana and had a medical emergency and died. Gentry was a widow at 39 years of age. She had to liquidate the farm in Oklahoma so she sent the two older boys (Harold and Paul) to Uncle and Aunt's horse ranch in Montana and younger son, Carl age seven, to live with Gentry's brother and sister in-law in Fullerton, California. Mamie Gentry Porter later came to Fullerton and got a job. Yet in all these trials, she was always upbeat, looking at the "sunny side of life!" She loved to make us grandkids laugh! One memory I have of her, was of her taking her false teeth out and her cheeks would sink in. Boy, we would giggle at this frightful sight!

Next, I looked at Gentry's mother, Mary Rosanna Rucker (1851-1929) who raised 12 children. Even in her old age, she kept track of all her children after they left home. Three sons died young; Paul died at nine years and Gabriel was murdered while traveling on a train to or from the oil fields of Mexico. The same year Gabriel died (1919), Thomas H. Porter died when a train struck his car. Rosanna survived a divorce from John Nathaniel Porter and managed living on her own while keeping a sense of humor along with a positive and "fightsy" spirit. Rosanna wrote her son James Rucker Porter when his wife Nelles died 2/21/1920, just months after los-

ing Thomas Harvie (June 18, 1919) and Gabriel Bernard (December 21, 1919). She comforts James Rucker saying, "God in His infinite wisdom saw proper for Him to take her. Nelles has been in great suffering for several years; she is through with it all and is now basking in the sun light of God's love, which should be a great consolation for all of us-She is having no more pain, suffering nor sorrow." - written Feb 28, 1920 from Tribbey, Oklahoma. Her family al-



Gentry Swenson, (right) "Having A Dress Up Party"

ways sent her letters of condolences and reminded her "all things work together for good" as well.

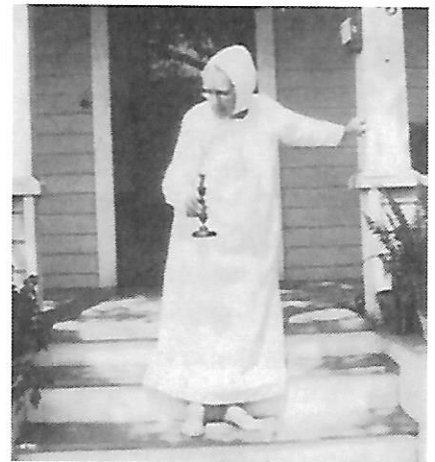
After Rosanna, I looked at her mother Mary Magdalene "Molly" Mayberry (1831-1851), who died 20 days after giving birth to Rosanna. Molly's husband, Dr. James McHenry Rucker (1822-1859) was left with Emma (1849-1916), a toddler and infant Rosanna (1851-1929). What a tragic circumstance! Yet, life goes on and he eventually remarried.

Molly Mayberry's parents were Rosanna Hardin (1798-1873) and Gabriel Mayberry (1795-1869). Rosanna Hardin apparently was first married to Hodges Rayburn and was married 1 year and had a son. The story has it

that Hodges went off to war and after a long period, was declared dead. So Rosanna married Gabriel. When Hodges returned sometime later, Rosanna told him she would stay with Gabriel Mayberry. This points out to her strong resolve and determination to move forward and remarry. Sad circumstances!

Gabriel Mayberry's parents were Mary Magdalene Carnes and Henry Mayberry (1753-1832). Mary was born in Germany, 1752. Her parents were Gabriel Carnes and Elizabeth Manuscript. Now it gets interesting; Gabriel was burned at the stake in Württemberg, Germany. He was a religious heretic. Mary and her mother Elizabeth Manuscript came over to America soon after. What a tragic historic period in Germany that required Mary and her mother Elizabeth to flee to the shores of America - land of religious, political, and economic freedom! This information was taken from Carnes German Bible in Tennessee State Museum.

As I look at this genealogy re-



Rosanna Porter hamming it up as "Ghost of Town", Fullerton, CA

search, I am struck at how strong these ancestors were in the midst of adversity. Loretta Swenson,

Paul Swenson, Gentry Porter, M. Rosanna Rucker, Molly Mayberry and James McHenry Rucker, Rosanna Hardin and Gabriel Mayberry, Mary Carnes and Henry Mayberry, being among them. Our genealogies may veer off the main Rucker line to Peter the Immigrant, but it shows you how different branches connect to the main root and were indeed a hardy bunch!

Loretta Sable's Rucker lineage is: Loretta<sup>10</sup> Sable, Paul<sup>9</sup> Swenson, Tabitha Gentry<sup>8</sup> Porter, Mary Rosanna<sup>7</sup> Rucker, Dr. James<sup>6</sup> McHenry, Bernard<sup>5</sup>, William<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup> Ruck-



Thurmond Porter holding Mother Rosa. He was 6'4" and she was 4'11"!

er.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Orlando Childs Rucker**  
By Anita Rucker Cottrell  
Edited by Michael P. Rucker  
and Bill Smith

Excerpted from an unpublished article titled "I Remember Topsy" by his daughter Anita Rucker Cottrell. Topsy refers to the

author's mother's feelings about their home, always sort of topsy-turvy

Father was deeply involved in the Near East Relief organization at the time of the Turkish oppression of the Armenians; he was a champion of Woman's Suffrage from its early days; he was strongly committed to Prohibition and even ran for governor [of Virginia] on the Prohibition ticket; and he spent many hours promoting the Chautauqua which each year brought concerts, plays and lectures and a program for children to a big tent on the school grounds. Mother backed father up right heartily in all good works, although when she had a little time off from mothering and housekeeping and there weren't a lot of peaches waiting to be canned or pickled, she would usually take a couple of us little ones in tow and head for the [Bedford] town library.

Woman's Suffrage speakers and Anti-Saloon League ladies always spent the night at our house and Father escorted them to the churches or other meeting places where they spoke. He saw more of the trouble from alcohol than people who did not have his wide speak of men who were all right on their small farms but who would come to town on Court Day, spend too much money on whiskey and beat their wives when they got home. Father had taught in country schools before he went to Roanoke College; so he knew the men and remembered their wives, who came to see him in distress.

Although he wouldn't touch egg-nog or a hot toddy, he has always pleased when cider got a little out of hand and he liked

very much anything that had what he called a "tang to it". This might be canned blackberries that had fermented by mistake or once even a homemade potion that had fermented by design. One fall he made some persimmon beer which turned out well. He spoke of it as persimmon liquid; and we understood.

Many people heartily disagreed with his prohibition views, but there were a few people in town who disliked him since he was unfailingly courteous and warm-hearted. In general, I'd say most people stood in awe of his dignity and his idealism. However, John Abbott, a brash young lawyer from Lynchburg who had just hung out his shingle in Bedford, discovered Father's inconsistency and couldn't resist. He went rolling into the drug store where the young set was having Coca-Cola and announced that he'd been out to Mr. Rucker's for some persimmon liquid. This remark was much repeated in town; but, so far as I know, Father never heard of it. Perhaps Mother told him; certainly his children didn't.

To travel and see the world was a longing with Father. He never had the money nor the time, with seven children to rear, one life going full tilt all the time anyway. He did get off to see the World's Fair in San Francisco with Dr. Joe, his first cousin and our beloved family doctor [Dr. Joseph<sup>7</sup> Anthony Rucker was the son of Moses<sup>6</sup> Peter Rucker and a grandson of the Anthony<sup>5</sup> Rucker, listed below]. He sent us a postcard, postage one cent, from the fair. It showed him in his usual gray suit, black string tie and panama hat, with a pleased smile on his face; he was

sitting on a large stuffed crocodile.

Orlando C. Rucker was born April 5, 1859 in West Virginia, the son of Ambrose Clifton Rucker and Sarah Jane Board. He lived and practiced law in Bedford, Bedford Co., VA. In 1891 he married Juanita Mary Miller (1864-1948), the daughter of Charles Henry Miller and Margaret Jane Earhart. Orlando and Juanita raised a large family of eight children (Margaret, Benjamin A., Orlando C., Jr., Anna, Dr. Anthony Warren, Ney Williams, Anita [author of this article – b. 20 Nov 1903, d. 15 Jan 2001, m. Leonard Slater Cottrell], and Brenda Elizabeth). Orlando C. Rucker died February 8, 1936 in Bedford Co., VA.

Orlando Childs Rucker's Rucker lineage is: Orlando<sup>7</sup> C. Rucker, Ambrose<sup>6</sup> Clifton, Anthony<sup>5</sup>, Ambrose<sup>4</sup>, Jr., Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>. *The subject of the following article, Dr. Anthony Rucker, is the son of Orlando C. Rucker.*

## **Dr. Anthony Warren Rucker**

**By Mozell Brown**

**Edited by Michael P. "Mike"  
Rucker**

He always called himself "a child of the Blue Ridge." He was born in Blacksburg, VA on Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1900 and loved the mountains which had been close to him though his early years. He said that his was actually a lucky day on which to be born as it was the same birthday as Thomas Jefferson (1743) and as it was "Good Friday" he was shielded from any bad luck that Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> might portend.

He first attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Va Tech)

in Blacksburg. Upon receiving his academic degree from VPI he attended Vanderbilt Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee where he received his medical degree. He spent the following two years as an intern at the Nashville City Hospital. Then he became a member of the staff at Davison County Tuberculosis Hospital, a position he held for another two years. There in Nashville he met, wooed and won the gifted and gracious Corneille McCarn. He was often heard to say that he could not believe his good fortune in this case. To those who loved this beautiful couple it seemed as if the good fortune was mutual, for their life together was a beautiful thing.

After his medical work in Nashville Dr. Rucker was attracted back to his beloved Blue Ridge Mountains. The couple relocated to Martinsville, Henry County, Virginia. He served as a doctor for that area for sixteen years. During this period his practice included obstetrics and many little ones were brought into the world by his kind and gentle hands. He loved children and as the years went by, he became more interested in pediatrics and decided to limit his practice to that branch of medicine. He went to Washington, D.C. for training in that field and then to Chicago for more pediatrics training. Upon completing that training, he relocated to Columbia, Tennessee where he specialized in pediatrics for the next sixteen years.

By this time, he was nearing retirement. But first, he wished to finish his practice in a location where a family doctor was really needed, and perhaps where he could be a little less active than

his practice in Columbia, Tennessee. Also, he still longed to return to his beloved Blue Ridge Mountains. After considering many places in Virginia, the place he chose was Greene County. There was no doctor living in the county and the University of Virginia Hospital was the closest medical facility and many residents traveled there for medical care. Those too ill to go to Charlottesville needed a local physician. He decided that this community was where he desired to be and this was the kind of practice he desired.

Dr. and Mrs. Rucker relocated to Greene County in 1962 and soon were regarded by the residents there as "home folks." The doctor also felt at home there because his ancestors had located there as pioneers several generations earlier and established the town of Ruckersville. He opened an office in Stanardsville, the county seat of Greene County. His practice there grew rapidly and when he was finally ready to retire finding a replacement doctor proved difficult. However, he refused to retire until there was doctor to take his place. His waiting room was always full during office hours and often the last patient was not seen until long after office hours had ended. Dr. Rucker never turned a patient away regardless of the hour; he saw them all, and was much loved for it.

Finding another doctor was not easy. Finally, the answer came in 1976 with the establishment of a clinic served by doctors and nurses from the University of Virginia Hospital. By this time, Dr. Rucker was 76 years old and finally closed his office. However, he still made house calls to those too ill to come to the clinic



or in the case of emergencies when the clinic was closed. He made home visits when necessary – night or day. He cured the sick, when possible and comforted the dying when a cure was not possible. He treated his patients with kindness and dignity, telling them the truth and helping them to understand and accept it.



Poster from the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (also known as the San Francisco World's Fair)

The Ruckers were members of Grace Episcopal Church in Standardville and other civic groups working for the betterment of the community. Dr. Rucker was disappointed that he was unable to take a more active role in the medical organizations to which he belonged, but circumstances prevented this. His age, and his obligations to his patients employed every bit of his strength and every hour of his time. He was seldom able to enjoy a game of golf, his favorite exercise.

Upon his eventual retirement, the local churches sponsored a reception for the Ruckers at the Grace Episcopal parish house. People from all over the county contributed gifts of food, flowers and money for a beautiful watch to remind him daily of the love they felt for him. A large proportion of the population of Greene County came to wish Dr. and Mrs. Rucker well – and a happy

retirement. It was joyous occasion made even more special since the Ruckers were not moving away, but would stay as a part of the community.

The indefinable qualities in the relationship of Dr. and Mrs. Rucker was poignantly expressed by Mrs. Rucker in the following poem written by Mrs. Rucker the first Christmas after his fatal heart attack in Ruckersville June 1, 1979.

Gifts

He loved the woods and walked there every day;  
Returning, he would some small treasure bring,  
Perhaps a perfect scarlet maple leaf,  
Or, just a feather from a blue bird's wing.

He would not know how my heart warmed with joy,  
Not only for the magic spirit-lift,  
But for the love that made him understand  
My kindred love that met his tender gift.

I thank thee Lord, for all the blessings given,  
Thy Holy Child – the stars that evenings bring;  
And lesser gifts – a hand to hold – a smile,  
A leaf – a feather from a blue bird's wing.

Corneille McCarn Rucker  
Christmas, 1979

It seemed to many that he left this life untainted by the world, having never faltered in his desire to use his knowledge and skill to ease the pain of those who needed him.

Rucker Lineage: Dr. Anthony<sup>8</sup> Warren Rucker, Orlando<sup>7</sup> Childs, Ambrose<sup>6</sup> C., Anthony<sup>5</sup>, Ambrose<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

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## Everyone Has a Squirrel in The Family Tree

By Loretta J. Sable

One way to cope with the tense times of life is to keep your sense of humor. In our family we have a Rucker descendant that pops up at every wedding, funeral, retirement party and anniversary for as long as I can remember. We know he was there because he signed the registry and left a present.

He never lets us dwell on the downs of life but always reminds us to "lighten-up." This 'relative' had quite the illustrious reputation; he was a war hero, never married, so at socials we always had stories about this relative. No family tree is without a squirrel who gathers his nuts.

My son was getting ready for his wedding and was way too tense about the Rucker side of the family not measuring up to the bride's side of the family. He was sure our side of the family might let loose a family skeleton to his embarrassment. Us Ruckers got wind of it and made sure Phlange Welder was invited.

The wedding festivities went on without a hitch. No pranks, embarrassing mishaps or faux pas. So, the day after the wedding, the Swenson-Rucker-Sable side of the family was meeting for breakfast for one last family reunion before returning home. The bride's mother pops in to give my husband Dave the wed-

ding cake stand to return to the bakery in Boone. And cousin Brad hands me a present to give to the mother of the bride to give to the newly-weds. It was from Phlange Welder. Yes, Phlange didn't forget to leave his present!!

It was weeks later after my son and daughter in-law returned from the honeymoon and I get this text from my son Nathan. They had opened the present from Phlange. They got a laugh. Phlange Welder gave them 2 Denny's coffee mugs. The bride thought it was funny. Bingo! Mission accomplished! Our family squirrel dropped his nuts on two unsuspecting family members and scores big time. This story will be repeated at future family gatherings for years to come. Every family tree has a squirrel that drops his nuts. Ours is Phlange Welder.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Benjamin Ambrose Rucker**

**By Benjamin, Jr., Martha**

**Rucker Diggle and James**

**Cowles Rucker**

**Edited by Michael P. "Mike"**

**Rucker**

It was the biggest land battle in which the forces of the United States of America had ever been involved. Officially known as the Ardennes Offensive, it immediately became as the "Battle of the Bulge." Captain Benjamin Ambrose Rucker was there in the middle of it. As a Civil Engineering graduate of Virginia Tech, he was assigned to supervise the construction of several vital bridges as the most important European battle of World War II erupted. Occasionally he was ordered to demolish bridges

important to the German troops. Many times, he shouted to his men "Get down! Take cover!" as German snipers tried to pick off his men. Yet, Rucker and his men prevailed in constructing some of the vital transportation links which ultimately led to the Allied victory in this, the most significant European battle of the war.

First, a bit about the battle: following the *Normandy Invasion* which began June 6, 1944, the U.S. and other Allied forces had progressed slowly, but inexorably, toward Germany. Town after town had fallen to the Allies. Hitler recognized the threat and decided on a remarkable gamble. He would commit the greater portion of his remaining forces to penetrate the lines of the advancing Allies. His goal was to split the American and British forces with an thrust through the dense forest of Ardennes. If successful, the German forces would the seize the port of Antwerp which was vital to the Allies.

Remarkably, on December 16, 1944, the Allies were taken completely by surprise as 200,000 German troops with about 1,000 tanks and assault vehicles and 1,900 artillery pieces, supported by 2,000 aircraft, suddenly appeared in the deep forests at a weak point in the Allies' lines. Initially, about 80,000 Allied forces, with about 250 tanks and 250 artillery guns, faced the onslaught. The Germans had created a "bulge" in the American lines. It was a desperate situation for the Allies but Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, was able to quickly throw additional men and resources into the fray. By the end of the month-long battle

some 500,000 German, 600,000 American and 55,000 British troops became involved. The Allied losses were perhaps as high as 90,000 men, 300 tanks and 300 aircraft. The battle lasted a full month, but in the end the Allies carried the day. The Germans lost about 100,000 men. An estimated 3,000 civilians also died, some during the fighting and some executed by the Germans for suspected support to the Allies.

Of interest in terms of Benjamin Rucker's war time experiences: he was initially trained to become a Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortress" bomber pilot. However, he was reassigned due to "medical reasons" (perhaps he could not pass the required vision test) to one of the engineering units dispatched to England. He worked on military facilities for the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron in preparation for "Operation Overlord" code name for the Normandy Invasion. The invasion began December 6, 1944 and Ben landed in Normandy about five days later to begin constructing bridges and facilities in France and Belgium to aid the Allied forces capture Germany.

As the Battle of the Bulge finally wound down, Captain Rucker was reassigned again. His superiors had noted that he had received a pre-med degree from Hampton Sydney College. There was a need to identify the thousands of American casualties. These experiences haunted him the rest of his life.

According to his son Benjamin A. Rucker, Jr, his father spoke very little of his actual experiences in the war which was typi-



cal of soldiers who had experienced the absolute "Hell of War". "My mother said it really changed him." However, there is no doubt that it was the heroism of many thousands of soldiers such as Benjamin A. Rucker which led to the Allied victory in World War II.

Benjamin Ambrose Rucker was born November 11, 1911 in St. Charles Clinic near Big Stone Gap, VA, the second child of Dr. Henry Cowles Rucker (see *Rucker Family Society Newsletter* Vol. 8, Nos. 2 & 3, Summer 1997 for an article about Dr. Henry Cowles Rucker) and his wife and 5th cousin Lillian Eliza Rucker. After several moves related to Dr. Rucker's assignments the family moved to Amelia County because Lillian's sister, Sudie Rucker Wood, and her husband William P. Wood, owned a farm there. Dr. Rucker and Lillian named their bucolic location Elk Hill Farm. Dr. Rucker then served as a highly respected doctor for the rural counties of Amelia and Powhatan for fifty years.

Dr. Rucker and Lillian had two children in addition to Ben. Henry Cowles Rucker, Jr. was born January 28, 1907, and Sarah Ann Rucker, November 17, 1916.

Benjamin and his siblings were reared at Elk Hill Farm until each went off to college. Ben first attended Hampton Sydney College in Farmville, VA where he received a premedical degree. His mother, Lillian, very much wanted Ben to become a doctor to follow in his father's footsteps. But Ben decided to branch off in a different direction, attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute where he received a master's degree in Civil Engineering

in 1936. After graduation Ben became the manager of several Civil Engineering Corps (CCC) camps in the Western United States, where he became engaged to Martha Elizabeth Cosby (1913-2002) whom he married in her home town of Powhatan, VA, December 28, 1940. Ben and Martha were travelling to the CCC camp in Great Falls, MT when their trip was delayed in Tulsa, OK by the arrival of Benjamin Ambrose Rucker, Jr. on November 7, 1941. Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Ben was ordered to report for duty with the U.S. Army. Martha had to drive back to Virginia with their infant son. They later had two additional children, Martha Anne on May 11, 1944 and James Cowles on August 14, 1946.

Ben returned to the U.S. from France aboard the *Queen Mary* in Dec 1945. He accepted a position with the Bureau of Public Roads in Arlington, VA, then a division of the Department of Commerce. He relocated his family from Amelia County to Arlington in 1948, where Ben accepted a position with the Army Map Service in Maryland. Several years later he was engaged with the Department of Labor in an assignment which led to the development of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in 1970. The OSHA law required that he work closely as a liaison between Congress and the Department of Labor.

Ben was especially proud of his contribution to the OSHA requirement regarding mandatory safety belts for all new cars sold in the U.S. His son, Ben, Jr., commented, "He was adamant that every person in the car had

to fasten their seat belt before he would start the car." This, of course, in a period where most cars did not have safety belts and many people refused to fasten them.

During Benjamin's government career he maintained an active role in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. During the Korea Conflict he was assigned an engineering position with the U.S. Air Force at Mitchell Field in Hampstead, NY. During this period, he held the rank of major. That assignment lasted for just over a year and he then returned to the Bureau of Public Roads.

He retired from the U.S. Air Force with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He and Martha relocated to a home overlooking Buggs Island Lake near Clarksville, VA. Never one to be idle, Ben then taught math and physics at Blue Stone High School. While settling into his well-deserved retirement he suffered a heart attack on Mar 8, 1975 while pulling his boat from the water and died there on the shore of his much-loved lake.

Ben was an usher at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Arlington, and was a Boy Scout Troop Master and merit badge counselor for many years. He was very active as a Mason, and achieved the position of a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason.

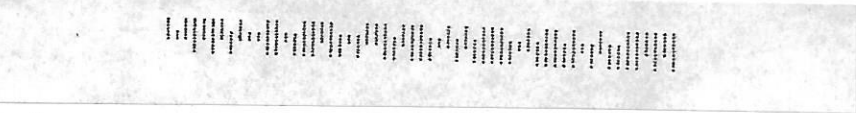
Ben is buried in the Amelia Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Matoax, Virginia near his parents. Martha died September 11, 2002 aged 89 at Chatham, Pittsylvania County, Virginia and is buried next to him. Ben and Martha are survived by four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

# 2019 Rucker Family Society Reunion - Amherst, Virginia

The Rucker Family Society will be holding it's 2019 Reunion in Amherst, Virginia between June 7 and 9, 2019, with is base on the campus of Sweet Briar College (pictured below and much of it built on former Rucker land). Activities will include [Friday] Tour of Appomattox Park and Museum, Rucker family history and DNA update, talk about Col. Edmund W Rucker (with Mike Rucker), [Saturday] visit Academy of Music in Lynchburg, the Batteaux Festival & Rucker Landing, dinner and a Rucker Duel, and [Saturday] visit to Bethany Church, Rucker sites in Elon, lunch and auction, visit to Amherst Historical Museum with a talk Queena Stovall and a visit to the museum.



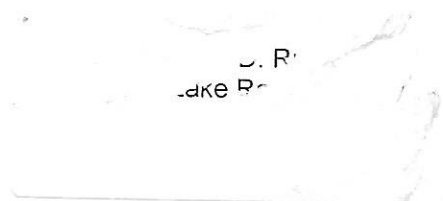
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