

The RUCKER FAMILY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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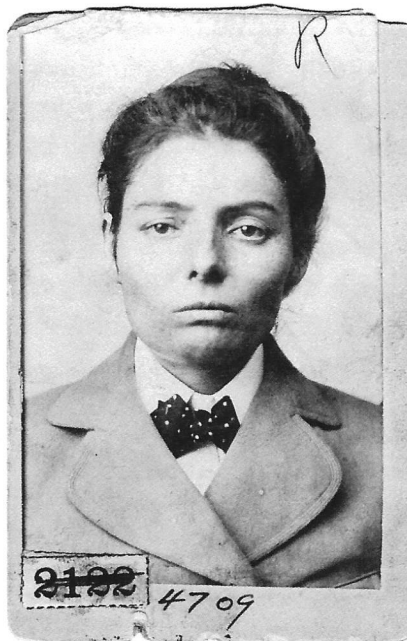
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Laura Bullion, our Outlaw Rucker Cousin By Michael "Mike" P. Rucker

Laura Bullion had "interesting" and instructive parental role models for her chosen profession as prostitute and gun-slinging outlaw. Her exploits included membership in the "Wild Bunch," which was led by Robert LeRoy Parker, better known as "Butch Cassidy," and Harry Alonzo Longabaugh, the "Sun Dance Kid." Laura's nicknames included "Rose of the Wild Bunch," "Della Rose" (because



Laura's Mug Shot, St. Louis, Nov 1901

Continued on page 2

More Strong Ancestors

By Tricia (Manley) Oberndorf

In the December 2018 *Rucker Family Society Newsletter*, Vol. 29, No. 3, p.23-25, Loretta J. Sable wrote about the hardy women she has come to know while researching her Rucker family. It put me in mind of my great-grandmother, Minerva⁶ (Rucker) Manley (Joseph⁵, Garland⁴, Lemuel³, James², Peter¹).

Minerva was born on Christmas Day, 1870 in Illinois, the 9th of 12 children. Her first child was born in 1887, apparently out of wedlock, when she was only 16. She married Jesse Thomas Manley on 11 October 1888 in Jefferson County, Nebraska, and their first child, Chester Milford Manley, was born there on July 21, 1889, almost exactly 9 months later.

In 1891 or 1892 the Manleys loaded up a covered wagon and headed west to homestead in Montrose, Colorado. They built a house and did the other things expected of homesteaders. But challenges abounded for the wife of a homesteader.

Sometimes they caught a burro. Minerva had a garden about ¼ mile from the house, so she

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Laura Bullion

Continued from page 1

of her association with Della Moore, the girlfriend of Kid Curry) and "Thorny Rose."

Her mother, Fereby Elizabeth Byler, was known as the county floozy in Irion County, Texas and often left Laura, her sister, Mary Francis and brother, Daniel with Fereby's grandparents whenever she was away from home. Whereas her mother was pretty much an amateur, Laura, as a teenager, determined how a poor desperate woman could turn a buck in that wild part of Texas.

Her father, James Henry Bullion, was an outlaw who started out as a cattle rustler, then moved on to robbing banks and trains. He died in March 1888 of gunshot wounds during a botched train robbery in New Mexico. He was allegedly born in Oklahoma about 1847, but no record of his parents can be found. Some sources claim that he was an Indian, but there is no indication of which tribe.

With parents of this sort, it is not surprising that Laura became a criminal.

Laura was probably born in Knickerbocker, Texas, near Mertzos, in Irion County on or about October 1876. She was fortunate to, somehow, arrive at Fanny Porter's brothel in San Antonio, perhaps the "best little whorehouse in Texas" - except it

was not a "little" house, but a beautiful, well-furnished mansion. Of significance, it was a "home away from home" for members of the Wild Bunch. Fanny Porter often "covered" for the outlaws who were visiting San Antonio and was never known to "break" under severe questioning by law authorities. The splendor and extravagance of the beautiful mansion, and the income, must have been glamorous for Laura, a girl from a poverty-stricken home.



It was here at Fanny Porter's whorehouse that Laura became romantically involved with two of the Wild Bunch; first, with outlaw Will Carver while she was still only fifteen years old. When he ditched her for another "working girl" Laura took up with Ben Kilpatrick (the Tall Texan). He had been a cohort of Laura's outlaw father and was a bank and train robber in his own

right. Most “madams” were severe and would refuse to let a girl go away with a client, even beating them if they tried to leave, but Fanny Porter was a kind and tolerant employer and even wished the girls well when they went away for a short vacation.

It was said that Laura and Kilpatrick were truly in love. When cash was available after a heist, he would take her on expensive vacations posing as a married couple. She loved luxury: fine accommodations, good food and nice clothes. The Tall Texan treated her to the best available.



Her significance to the gang was primarily to support them as their best “fence;” selling stolen goods and making connections that could provide the gang steady supplies and horses. She was also known to be a forger of stolen documents.

The gang was generally known as “The Hole in the Wall Gang” because one of their retreats was Hole-in-the-Wall, Wyoming².

After a robbery the gang members would disperse, then slowly reassemble at either the Hole in the Wall retreat or Fanny Porter’s brothel. Hole in the Wall was so named because it was in a mountain pass that was easy to defend from pursuing lawmen. Various outlaws used this location as a hideout.

During their association in the United States, Butch Cassidy and the Sun Dance Kid are thought to have led the robbery of four banks, four express trains and a coal company payroll office with an average take of \$35,000 per event, arguably the most successful train and bank robbers in American history. The gang was generally known as “The Wild Bunch.”

The five most significant members dressed in their finest and posed proudly for a photo together in 1900 in Swartz Photography Studio in Fort Worth. They appeared as respectable and clean-cut as church deacons attending a Sunday service. This photograph caused them to become known as “The Fort Worth Five.” This act of vanity was a mistake because, until that time, most lawmen did not know their appearances. It is said a Wells Fargo agent recognized the outlaws when the photo was displayed in the photographer’s studio window. The Pinkerton Detective Agency was hired to pursue the robbers, obtained a copy of the photo and posted the

likenesses of the outlaws on wanted posters. As these posters became circulated, Butch Cassidy and the Sun Dance Kid felt the approaching steps of the Federal authorities and Pinkerton detectives and felt the need to abscond.

On February 20, 1901, they departed from New York for Buenos Aires, Argentina with Etta Place, a love interest of the Sun Dance Kid, aboard the British steamer *Herminius*. The couple represented themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Harry Place. Cassidy posed as James Ryan, Mr. Place’s fictitious brother. Cassidy purchased a 12,000-acre ranch in the Cholila area of Patagonia with loot from the robbery of the First National Bank at Winnemucca, Nevada, on September 19, 1900. They built a four-room log cabin on the east bank of the Rio Blanco at the foot of the Andes and acquired 300 cattle, 1,500 sheep, and 28 horses.

They hid out as ranchers for a while, but eventually felt compelled to return to their more exciting criminal occupation. They were thought to have robbed several banks in South America. They perceived that the Pinkerton agents were on their heels so they sold the ranch and relocated to Bolivia. Etta Place asked Longabaugh to take her back to the United States. The two departed June 30, 1906. He left her in San Francisco and returned to join Cassidy. The two men were fi-

nally killed on early November 1908 in a house where they were staying. They were accused of stealing the payroll of a mining company courier in San Vicente, Bolivia. They apparently committed suicide rather than surrendering.

However, for the remainder of the gang, another lucrative "fall" was concocted: to rob the *Great Northern* "Coast Flyer No. 3" on July 2, 1901, near Wagner, Montana. There were four to six outlaws. One of the outlaws (not certain which one) boarded the train as a passenger. He made his way to the locomotive and pointed his six-shooter at the head of the engineer and made him stop the train at a certain milepost. He had the crew de-couple the locomotive from the cars and take it some distance away. Meanwhile, others of the gang boarded the express car. They used dynamite and black power to blast the safe (and the express car) to smithereens and fled with about \$41,000 in unsigned bank notes. Laura's assignment in this caper was as the "horse-holder" for the other bandits to assure their getaway – an essential, but unglamorous job. She dressed as a boy and with her short hair and masculine appearance was taken to be a man.

The gang scattered. Laura and Kilpatrick headed for Knoxville, Tennessee under the names of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Arnold. There, Kid Curry and Della³

Moore met up with them on October 14, 1901. The four remained in Knoxville until Della was arrested for passing some of their "hot" money. Curry escaped arrest on December 13, 1901, killing two Knoxville policemen in the process. He is considered "the wildest of the Wild Bunch," having reputedly killed at least nine law enforcement officers in five shootings and another two men in other instances. This was in contrast with Cassidy who was never known to have killed anyone. When pursued by a posse on horseback he advocated shooting the horses of the lawmen rather than the riders.

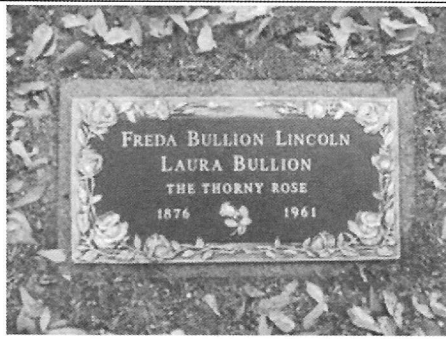
Tall Texan Kilpatrick and Laura fled from Knoxville to St. Louis. In early November 1901, the two were arrested at the upscale Laclede Hotel on federal charges of "forgery of signatures to banknotes." She had \$8,500 worth of the "hot" documents remaining in her possession. The outlaws had not realized how easily new technology would permit tracing the banknotes via the serial numbers. Her occupation in the arrest warrant was stated as prostitute. A St. Louis policeman who booked her remarked, "I wouldn't think helping to hold up a train was too much for her. She is cool, shows absolutely no fear, and in male attire would readily pass for a boy." On December 12, 1901, they both pled guilty. The Tall Texan received a twenty-year sentence, initially in a

prison in Ohio, then he was relocated to one in Atlanta, Georgia. Laura was sentenced to five years in prison and dispatched to a women's prison in Massachusetts. She was transferred to the Missouri State Penitentiary where she was released September 19, 1905 after serving three years and six months.

Kilpatrick was released from prison in June 1911, as a result of good behavior, after ten-and-a-half-years. The Tall Texan and Laura had remained in contact through letters of mutual affection during her incarceration. However, by the time of his release from prison, she had become involved with at least four other men. Laura and the Tall Texan probably never saw each other again. Upon his release, Kilpatrick returned to his chosen profession and was killed with an ice mallet while he and others attempted to rob a Southern Pacific express near Sanderson, Texas on March 13, 1912.

Will "News" Carver was trapped by lawmen on April 1, 1901 in a bakery in Sonora, Texas. He tried to draw his six-shooter, but was shot six times before his gun cleared the holster. He was aged 32. His nickname had come about as the result of his pleasure in seeing his name in the newspapers after their heists. He is buried in Boot Hill Cemetery in Sonora.

Logan (Kid Curry) continued his wild ways of crime and murder



until June 7, 1904. He was tracked down by a posse near the village of Parachute, Colorado. Curry and two others had robbed a *Denver and Rio Grande* train nearby. During a pursuit and final shoot-out Curry was injured and fatally shot himself in the head rather than submit to capture..

Laura's whereabouts were unknown for several years, but she turned up in Memphis in 1918. Here, she used the name Freda Bullion Lincoln and claimed to be the widow of a veteran, "Maurice Lincoln." She also made herself ten years younger claiming to have been born in 1887.

In Memphis, she spent the remainder of her life working as a seamstress, later as a drapery maker, dress maker and interior designer. She lived in Memphis for 43 years until her death. According to her death certificate she died in poverty of heart disease on December 2, 1961, probably aged 85. She is buried in the Memorial Park Cemetery, Memphis, the last surviving member of the Wild Bunch.

Her grave marker in Memorial Park Cemetery, Memphis has a decoration of embossed rose vines along the edges.

Laura⁸ Bullion's Rucker lineage is: Fereby⁷ E. Byler, Elliott⁶ Rucker Fereby, Susannah⁵ Rucker, Elliott⁴, Mordecai³, William², Peter¹.

* * * * *

More Strong Ancestors

Continued from page 1

would load up the kids on the burro, a total of four of them now, as Chester had a younger sister, Bertha May Manley (1891-1899) and two younger brothers, Roy Jerald Manley (1890-1944) and my grandfather, Frank Elsworth Manley (1894-1968). Then, in Chester's words in a story written later in life:

"... mother would put us all on his back and start for the garden. He would trot along as nice as you please then down would go his head and he would stop and off we would go in a pile. Then she would put us all on again and down would go his head and off we would go again...we used to put a pack and saddle on him and he would stand till we got him about half packed then he would go into a tail spin and dump everything off and then he would run a little way and look at us."

What sounds amusing from a child's point of view must have been quite frustrating for this twenty-something mother of

four!

On one occasion Chester went up into the foothills with his father to get a load of poles for a fence. Along the way, Chester fell from the wagon and got his leg caught between the spoke of the wagon wheel and the bolster. It didn't break his leg, but it "skinned up my knee." His Dad just pulled up his stocking over it, but "my mother sure gave Dad fits when we got home, she said it was a wonder I didn't get blood poison ..."

After their six years, they were discouraged, so they decided to return to Nebraska. They set out on the 700 mile trip, again in a covered wagon, along with one of Jesse's brothers and his family. On the way, they came across a herd of burros, "and my mother and my cousin caught two of them and rode them a long ways till they got tired and would not keep up."

Along the way, they went up through Gunnison and on up the Marshall Pass, crossed over to the Arkansas River and drove down about a mile to make camp where two streams branched off and then came back together. The men dammed up one branch, then trapped and caught up all the mountain trout they could gather. "We sure had a good fish fry ..." But I wonder who cooked it all ...

As they went along they "stopped at a place where they had a sod house and they were

thrashing wheat...The men were in for dinner and the women asked my mother and aunt if they would like to bake biscuits which they did and did we ever go for them, first we had had in about 400 miles." "We always tried to find a nice creek or river to camp on over Sunday as we never traveled on Sunday." I wonder whose rule that was ... At least I have found no reason to believe that my great-grandfather was an observant man.

After returning to Steele City, Nebraska in about August 1897, Minerva became ill. Newspaper accounts of the time indicate that she was pregnant with her fifth child and in September suffered a thrombosis, most likely brought on by the pregnancy. She was just 26 years old when she died on 27 September 1897, already the mother of 4 young children. She was most likely pregnant when she was capturing burros out on the plains as they traveled back home.

Minerva, also known sometimes as Minnie, has always been a source of wonder for me. She was clearly robust and adventurous. She did all a wife and mother of the time was expected to do. She was so young and yet clearly so capable. I can only hope to live up to the legacy of this strong Rucker woman!

* * * * *

Genealogical Corrections for Joseph Rucker

By Jeannie Brydon

Delete from Studie Rucker Wood *The Rucker Family Genealogy*, p. 250:

7. **Joseph³ Rucker** (William², Peter¹), bought 150 acres of land in Amelia Co. VA, from Moses Morris, for 15,000 lbs. of tobacco, Oct. 15, 1795, land adjoining William Farley and Benjamin Hendricks. Witness: Zacharia Morris, Thomas Morris, William Burton (D. B. 17, p.357 (Amelia Co., VA).

Now look on p. 240, the same deed is listed for Joshua³ Rucker (William², Peter¹). No records for Joseph Rucker were found in the Amelia County, Virginia Tithe Lists, Census Records or Deed Indexes.

Thanks to Joan A. McNair of Newport Beach, CA, for pointing this out in 2001.

* * * * *

Rucker Query

Query from Javonnie Shearn - I am trying to verify my connection to the Virginia Ruckers. Family history says my great-grandmother was born a slave as the daughter of an enslaved woman and the plantation owner. Her name was Millie Rucker, born about 1850. She would have been freed before adulthood. I can find census reports for her, but only *after* she was freed. My dilemma is confirming

she is, in fact, the daughter of a Rucker. It is possible she was given that name after a sale to a Rucker and not related at all. My question is, is there anyone who has done their DNA test on Ancestry so I can check if there is a connection? If so, please email me at:

jajdshea@gmail.com or call me at 971-235-1765, so we can exchange Ancestry member ID's.

Millie Rucker is found in the 1870 Lamar Co., TX census, age 21, born in Mississippi, with one child. She was in the 1880 Lamar Co., TX, census listed as Millie Rucker, age 30, born in Alabama with six children. The difference in birth places leads to much confusion in research.

* * * * *

The Name of Fort Rucker May Change

by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker

I was contacted in mid-June by a reporter for *Politico*, the on-line news magazine, who inquired about my opinion on the proposal to rename the eleven military bases named for Confederate officers. The reporter had learned of my book *The Meanest and 'Damnest' Job*, the biography of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker after whom Fort Rucker, Alabama is named. She thought that perhaps I was direct descendant of Edmund Rucker, but I advised her that I was not. She still wanted my opinion on the proposed name change. This is, in essence, what I advised her:

• *It seems likely that the eleven*

military training facilities named for Confederate leaders are to be renamed because of social consciousness. When, and if, this occurs, I suggest that they NOT be named for individuals.

Regardless of who may be chosen for the names would be controversial. Fort Rucker, and several other facilities originally had other names. Fort Rucker was originally Ozark Triangular Divisional Camp. That is a very clumsy name, so perhaps a better name needs to be considered. That part of Alabama is called the "Wiregrass Country," so perhaps "Fort Wiregrass" might be better. I do not really like that name either, but I suggest that each of the facilities be named for a nearby geographical feature rather than for individuals.

Family Volunteers

by Michael "Mike" P. Rucker

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was killed in Minneapolis during an arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit bill. A White police officer knelt on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and lying face down, begging for his life and repeatedly saying "I can't breathe."

Peaceful demonstrations as well as rioting, looting and destruction of property occurred that evening as the city of Minneapolis and the entire nation erupted in anger over this atrocity. There was destruction in Minneapolis with debris and shattered glass

thick on the streets. *The Minneapolis Star Tribune* estimated 570 businesses in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area had been vandalized or destroyed, including 67 destroyed by fire. A grass roots call-to-action invited caring citizens to help to clear the litter from the streets. Among those who responded the very next day were Derek Rucker and his wife, Diane, along with their three daughters, Brianna (age 14), Fiona (18) and Sabrina (20). They brought shovels, brooms, garbage bags and other equipment to help remove the debris. They returned the following day to provide additional assistance. The first day was spent working on debris removal from the Wells Fargo on Lake St. in Minneapolis. It was dirty, wet work, and the building was still smoldering in many places

from the previous night's fires. The next day was spent removing glass from the floor and windows of a Cub Foods that had been looted.

The family is sympathetic with doing away with police violence they don't condone the protestors' violence or destruction.

Henry C. Rucker, Jr. vs. Smokey the Bear by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker

As manager of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in central Mississippi, Henry Cowles Rucker, Jr., called "Cowles" ran afoul of Smokey the Bear. That iconic character was introduced in 1944 amid great publicity by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The image of Smokey was based on a bear cub that had been injured in a forest fire in



Photo of Fiona (holding picture she drew of George Floyd), Sabrina and Brianna Rucker at peaceful protest in Minneapolis. They are granddaughters of the article's author.

New Mexico and has become the longest-running promotional (propaganda?) program in U.S. history.

Cowles realized that ground fires in the tall loblolly pine forest were beneficial for the ecology. Exotic invasive species such as honeysuckle and kudzu were taking over the forest floor and preventing native plants from growing. He advocated allowing such controllable fires to move through the forest without being extinguished unless structures were threatened. Based on his observations and his environmental knowledge he chose to monitor such ground fires to keep them under control, but not extinguish them. The fires, he realized, were necessary to keep the invasive, exotic species under control.

He reported this to his superiors in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They were furious with him! They ordered him to extinguish ALL fires. I recall his frustration with this explicit order - and I believe it affected his performance rating.

The U. S. Department of the In-



Smokey the Bear in 1944

terior was entirely on the side of Smokey the Bear. The campaign had been launched with the appealing slogan "Only YOU can prevent forest fires." People had learned to hate forest fires from the Walt Disney film *Bambi* in 1942, as well as from the Smokey the Bear campaign. Dad was on the wrong side of the political and public sentiment.

During this period, the Department of Interior released the appealing song that Cowles' sons, Henry III and Mike, sang with gusto and on which Dad did not comment:

Smokey the Bear, Smokey the Bear.

Prowlin' and a growlin' and a sniffin' the air.

He can find a fire before it starts to flame.

That's why they call him Smokey,

That was how he got his name.

Today, the government, and Smokey's, position has swung entirely to Cowles' side on the matter. The current thinking by the National Park Service about prescribed fires states: "Prescribed fire is one of the most important tools used to manage fire today. Controlled burning reduces fuels, improves wildlife habitat, controls invasive competing vegetation, helps control tree disease, and perpetuates fire dependent species. Some [tree species such as that of loblolly pine] require heat from fire to open cones to disperse seeds."

* * * * *

Help Wanted!

The Rucker Family Society Newsletter needs your help – for newsletter articles.

We could provide the newsletter more often if we had more articles. Please consider writing an article about interesting Rucker personalities, current or historic, and/or Rucker places. If you do not wish to write an article yourself you may submit leads and material to the newsletter reporter, Mike Rucker at:

mikruc@aol.com.

* * * * *

A Note from the President Christopher Rucker

The staff of the newsletter appreciates your patience awaiting this issue. The virus pandemic has thrown a wrench in all our schedules, and the delay was unavoidable. We think that the final product is worth the wait. The editors welcome submissions from the membership, so please use some of your stay-at-home time to write an article on a subject of your interest. If you have a research question or have hit the proverbial brick wall in your family search, this is the place to seek assistance. Our readers may have the answer, or can point you in the right direction.

Our 2021 reunion is on the California coast, and the planning committee is working hard to make it a memorable event. As

the plans are firmed up, the details will appear on the web site and here in the newsletter. We hope that everyone will make the trip.

It is time to renew your membership in the Rucker Family Society. The web site has the renewal form: click on the "Join the Rucker Family Society" link. Consider sending a guest membership to a family member or local library, as well.

Memo from Nell Cordick, Registrar

Recently, you should have received a reminder to pay your 2020 dues for the Rucker Family Society. We hope you have mailed in your dues as your membership is very important to us. Dues are \$15.00 annually. My address is on page 2 of the newsletter. When you look at your mailing label – the first number is your membership number and the second is the year through which you have paid. Also, we would appreciate you letting us know when you move so that you will not miss any issues of the newsletter. You can email this information to me, Chris Rucker, Alice Rucker or Jeannie Brydon, whose email addresses are listed on page 2 of this issue of the newsletter.



Rucker Chapel by Jeannie Brydon

The photo above was submitted by Dorothy and Herman Rucker of Nashville, TN. They suggested it might have been from the Peoria, IL, newspaper.

Rev. James C. Rucker founded a Methodist church known as "Rucker's Chapel" in Wapella, DeWitt Co., IL, not far from Decatur. It was founded in 1865 and was active until 1953. The church burned in 1932 and was rebuilt the next year. Now there are two services held every year. Across the street is the Rucker Chapel Cemetery established in 1882.

James C. Rucker was the the son of John and Elizabeth (Cowan) Rucker and the husband of Mary Margaret (McDaniel) Rucker [1829-1853]. James and Mary had two children together. In 1854, James married Susan Matilda Horton and they had nine children.

James C. Rucker's Rucker fami-

ly connections are: James Cowan Rucker (James⁶ C.owan John⁵, James⁴, Mordecai³, William², Peter¹), b. 28 Jul 1828, McMinn Co., TN, d. 5 April 1873 (His tombstone states he was 45 yrs, 8 mos, 7 das old), Long Creek, Macon Co., IL.



Alice Rucker, Administrator
Paul Mize & Charles Rucker,
Co-Administrators

WANTED!

DNA Corner

Yes, we want to hear from direct male descendants from the following sons of Peter¹ Rucker-William², James², or Ephraim² to be a part of the Rucker Y-DNA Project. We have a substantial number of participants descending from Peter's sons John² and Thomas². Y-DNA and a proven paper trail is need to work to ward showing the full picture of the pedigree back to Peter Rucker. *Please support the project!*



Sunset in Monterey, California

Among other things, Monterey, California is know the world over for superb views of the Pacific Ocean. The next reunion planned for Fall 2021 is scheduled to be held in Monterey, so be prepared to enjoy the justifiably famous coastal beauty and amazing dining with your California Rucker Cousins. Planning is underway, so watch for more details to follow.

The RUCKER *family* SOCIETY



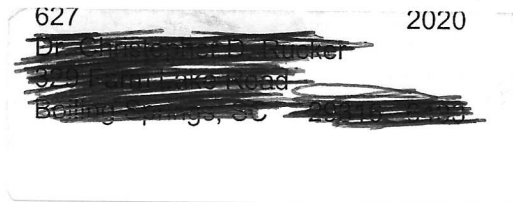
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