



## Lawrence Vernon Brown

March 6, 1918 - August 17, 2014

Lawrence V. "Bud" Brown passed away peacefully August 17, 2014 at the home of his niece, Sherry Cowdell, where he lived for the past 8 months. Preceding him in death was his beloved wife Myrna (Murren)Elizabeth Lockhart Brown , Brother Willard, an infant brother named Floyd and Sister Lois. He is survived by his Brother Bob and his niece and nephew Sherry Cowdell and Steve Payette along with their spouses Richard Cowdell and Julie Payette. He is also survived by several great nieces and great nephews: Brandon, Jenny and Bryan Cowdell, Chasidy Wells; Greg, Emily, Robert, and Dennis Payette; and Angela Harvie.

Bud entered into the world on March 6, 1918 in Gibbon, Nebraska. His father was a farmer raising wheat and corn. As a young child the family moved to Turlock, California. It wasn't many years later that his father abandoned the family and returned to Nebraska. Coupled with the hardship of a fatherless home came the terrible depression era and Bud was forced at a young age to go to work to help his mother support the family. Times were so difficult that his mother would have the children go outside and pick dandelions to make dandelion soup.

In high school Bud excelled in athletics. He was both an offensive and defensive end and became an all-state football player in California. He was offered a college scholarship to play at Stanford University. He declined the offer because he said, "what good was this to me. I needed a job to earn money to support my family."

With the depression continuing and jobs difficult to find, Bud made the decision in 1939 to join the United States Army and was assigned to the Air Corps. After completing training he joined one of the bomb groups that was out-fitted with the newest bomber in the Air Corps inventory, the Boeing B-17. During this time he was approached by the University of San Francisco to play football there. Throughout the pre-war years it was apparently possible to be released from military service by paying a \$500 fee. The university offered to pay the fee if Bud would agree to play. Again he declined.

In the Air Corps he was an aircraft mechanic while the plane was on the ground and then flew with the aircraft as a flight engineer with the responsibility for operating all of the aircraft systems, engines and propellers. In 1941, at President Roosevelt's inauguration, his bomb group flew in tight formation over the proceedings. He remarked that the aircraft were flying so close to each other that their wingtips almost touched. He said that it was such intense flying for the pilots that their flight suits were soaked with sweat by the time that the planes landed. Through the war years, his bomb group would be awarded three presidential unit citations.

Some time following his training, his duty station was changed to Fort Douglas Utah in Salt Lake City. It was there that he meet this beautiful wonderful gal, Myrna Lockhart or Murren (Mern) as she was sometimes called. They dated for a time and then one night when Bud returned to the barracks the squadron clerk handed Bud a set of orders. The orders read that he was being sent to the Aeronautical University in Chicago to receive specialized training. He told the clerk that he wouldn't go. The clerk replied that he had two choices. He could either go on his own accord or under military guard. Bud chose the former.

He immediately notified Murren of this new unwelcomed development and proposed to her. She accepted and they then decided to get married the next evening. Virginia Hausman, Murren's sister; and her husband Herb organized the affair, and arranged for the two to be married by a Bishop Harding at midnight that evening. When the four of them arrived at the residence they

walked to the front door and knocked. The door opened to a darkened house and a sleepy, robe clad older gentleman answered the door. Feeling that they had woken the man from his sleep Bud was beginning to apologize for the late hour when the lights suddenly turned on and the bishop's wife appeared dressed in a full length evening gown. Bishop Harding then removed his robe revealing a black tie and tuxedo. This was all part of the surprise that Virginia and Herb had planned for them. The next day Bud left for Chicago and Murren followed a few weeks later.

After completing the training at the Aeronautical University, Bud with Myrna, returned to his duty station in Salt Lake City.

In November 1941, about one month before the Pearl Harbor attack, a declassified World War II military document and directive from the War Department, revealed that overseas deployment orders were to be issued to various Air Corps combat units, including Bud's 7th Bomb Group along with several others. They were to assemble at the Port of San Francisco no later than 8:30 am on November 15, 1941.

The length of Bud's stay in Hawaii is unknown, but as near as can be determined Bud with his and other Bomb Groups sailed out of Pearl Harbor just a few days before the Japanese attack on the islands. Originally destined for the Philippines the flotilla was instead diverted to Australia and eventually had combat service in the Coral Sea, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Borneo, and Java.

At one point Bud, and it is believed to occur in Java, contracted dengue fever which is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, and a characteristic skin rash that is similar to measles. The disease can sometimes be fatal. Separated from his unit for a time after his recovery, Bud flew dive bomber missions in the single-engine SBD Dauntless with a Texan pilot named Buck Rogers. After returning to his unit Bud learned some months later that this pilot had been killed in combat.

On July 16, 1942, Bud's aircraft commander was assigned to fly the crew and other maintenance people to Horn Island at the northeast corner of Australia. On July 4, 1942 another B-17, which had been damaged on a bombing mission over Lae (Iaiye), had landed at this emergency field where there was little maintenance support. Their mission was to repair the damaged aircraft, which had a collapsed landing gear and make it airworthy again. As their plane, Tojo's Jinx was ready to depart, Bud was the last to climb on board the aircraft. As he was entering the plane, the NCO in charge, Master Sergeant Louis Silva, Bud's close friend, said, "Brownie (this was Bud's nickname among his flying buddies) I want you to stay here and take care of some aircraft that will be landing in a few hours. Bud protested but Sergeant Silva insisted. The plane and the crew, which Bud had flown with for several years, crashed on Horn Island and erupted into a fireball. All on board were killed. In May of 2005 Bud and Steve visited the crash site on Horn Island.

After serving over a year in the South Pacific in various combat theaters, Bud was reassigned to air training bases in the Southwestern part of the United States including Pyote, Texas; Clovis, New Mexico, and Wendover, Utah. He was promoted to Master Sergeant, the highest NCO rank at the time and was the Line Chief at the bases being the NCO responsible for all aircraft maintenance. On all of these assignments Myrna was there with him.

When World War II ended in 1945 Bud was offered a flight engineer position with United Airlines at what was then a very high salary of \$600 per month. His flight sector would have been San Francisco to New York City and return. When he has told during the interview how many days a month he would be gone from home, he and Myrna decided: no it wasn't worth it and he took a job as a repairman with the telephone company back in his home town of Turlock, California.

Not satisfied working for others he ventured off on his own perhaps in partnership with his older brother Willard and began raising turkeys. Eventually the enterprise moved to Freedom, California, near Watsonville, which is just a few miles from the Monterey Bay. The ranch would raise

somewhere around 35,000 turkeys annually. Each year at Thanksgiving time Bud and Murren would send a processed 50lb Tom to Salt Lake City for the family's holiday dinner that was traditionally held at the home of Bert and Ness Lockhart, Murren's parents.

As ranching became more and more taken over by the feed companies Bud was forced out of the business and the couple moved first to Lake Tahoe, California and then Reno, Nevada. During this time Bud worked a variety of jobs until the couple decided to move near their close friends, Ed and Evelyn Schuto (shoo-toe) in San Francisco. During their stay on the ranch they had acquired a pet monkey, named the Gremlin. After the loss of the ranch Bud and Murren donated the monkey to the San Francisco Zoo. So when they moved to the City, Bud applied for and took a job at the zoo. He only stayed there a short time and then decided to return to his previous employment with the Southern Bell telephone company. He worked as a telephone repairman and installer until his retirement in 1982. His job responsibilities helped him maintain his strong physical condition through the years. Much of the work he did required climbing telephone poles.

His beloved wife Murren passed away after a life-long battle with cancer in 1967 at the age of 56. They had a strong marriage were very close as a couple. Bud always talked about Myrna, even during his last few days of consciousness.

Following retirement Bud explored various options as to where to live and finally decided on the small community of Vancouver, Washington across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon. During these years he enjoyed traveling and especially in his GMC motor home. His travels took him throughout the United States.

Bud lived in Vancouver, Washington up until 8 months prior to his death. He was a lifelong member of the Riverside Masonic Lodge. Having a sharp and keen mind, he maintained an extensive knowledge of current events. He was a very charitable individual supporting many worthwhile causes such as our American war veterans, the blind, wounded servicemen and women , the

humane society and so forth. He was a patriotic American with great concern for the liberties that have been preserved through the sacrifices of so many. Bud will be remembered for not only his contributions to our nation but just as importantly his lasting impact on the lives of those that were close to him.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Lawrence Vernon Brown*

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