

# THEN & NOW

June 14, 2011



June 28, 2011



Steve and Jackie Williams' deck at the Armstrong Place, straight south of Meckling. The photo on top was taken June 14, 2011, while the photo on the bottom was taken June 28, 2011.

(Photos by Jackie Williams/P&D)

## State artifacts, documents still safe in Cultural Heritage Center

Pierre and Fort Pierre are experiencing a flood, but officials with the South Dakota State Historical Society want the public to know that the precious historic artifacts and documents of our state's past are safe and sound in the Cultural Heritage Center.

"The Cultural Heritage Center - like nearly all Pierre/Fort Pierre businesses - is open for business as usual," said Jay D. Vogt, society director. "The Heritage Center is built into the side of a hill, northeast of the state Capitol and far away from the Missouri River and the flooding it has caused."

Not only is the Cultural Heritage Center open, but the museum is open extended hours during the summer for visitors to

see South Dakota history on display. Through Labor Day in September, the museum is open 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. CDT Monday-Saturday and 1-4:30 p.m. Sundays and holidays (including the Fourth of July). The public research room is open 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and the first Saturday of each month.

Vogt also encouraged people who have photos or videos of the current flood to submit them to the society for posterity.

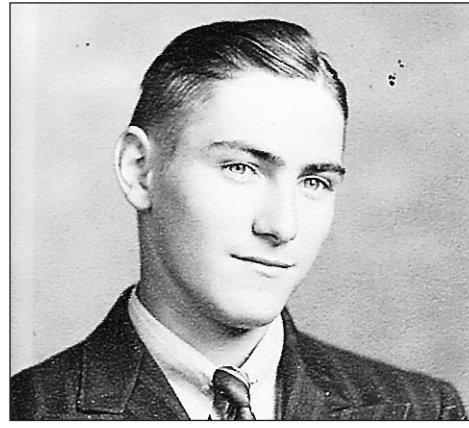
"This flood, like the one in 1952, is a major event that, as we like to say around here, will go down in history," Vogt said.

For more information on the State Historical Society, visit [www.history.sd.gov](http://www.history.sd.gov) or call (605) 773-6000.

## Honoring & Remembering:

# Radioman 2nd Class Ernie Cap

By Donna Schafer  
VFW Auxiliary President  
Clay County Post 3061



ERNIE CAP

Radioman 2nd Class Ernie Cap was born May 20, 1925 in a farmhouse about 11 miles northwest of Yankton, near Tabor and Utica to Frank and Hattie (Kaiser) Cap. He was the third of seven children.

"There were nine eligible young men for military service on my dad's side," Ernie said. "The first one that enlisted, a dear cousin, was killed on the USS Boise in a famous night battle early in the war. I was the first of six who followed him. I enlisted to avenge his death."

"I graduated from Meckling Consolidated School on May 16, 1943. The next day I enlisted in the Navy at Yankton, May 17, 1943, at the age of 17. I quietly had my 18th birthday on a crowded train heading for Farragut, Idaho, Boot Camp," he said. "In boot camp, I was asked to name three choices of specialties. My first choice was radioman. I received my training at the University of Idaho at Moscow, ID. I ended up as a Radioman 2nd Class.

"Only myself and another radioman was shipped out on a Merchant Marine (civilian) ship with a Navy gun crew. I volunteered for the shore based communication unit in New Caledonia," Ernie said. "On April 22, 1944, about the fourth wave, my unit made our first invasion at Hollandia, New Guinea with the Army. I carried my rifle, 15 shot clip, extra bullets, shovel to dig a foxhole and canteen. Standing by the rail to go down the rope ladder, it seemed like a long way down to get on the landing craft which was bobbing up and down with the waves. As I near the bottom of the rope ladder I had to time it just right to step onto the craft but not when the ship was bobbing upwards and the Higgins boat was three feet downward. We didn't practice this in boot camp.

"When we had arrived at the beach and we were unloading, I started to walk to the beach, I noticed a young American soldier, lifeless, face downward in the water. He had stopped a Jap bullet before he got to shore. Our unit stayed for eight months and had a fine radio station. We could send messages to any part of the world. When we operated we had three shifts. I guess it was eight hours on and 16 hours off. After the third or fourth month, I suddenly came down with Hepatitis C, a virus from a rodent. Your liver stops functioning properly. I was put in a quarantined quonset hut with about 40 other shore-based Navy or Army young men. I lost a pound a day for 30 days. My unit was moving from tents to quonset huts.

"With their large trucks, the Navy Construction Battalion (SeaBees) was raising red dust which filtered to the bottom of my seabag. Weakly, I'm in the laundry room washing all my clothes by hand when a mechanic from the unit come in and announces, "Anyone who can be ready in one hour, can go to Australia." I said I can't go because I have a seabag full of wet clothes. The Executive Officer was three steps behind. He heard me and said, "Cap, you aren't

going? I'll put you in charge of ALL the Unit's property; trucks, eight man receiving van, tents, cots, personal property for about 200 men!" So, I had a very quiet but demanding job while the rest of the unit enjoyed Australia.

"By then the Seventh Fleet had taken over the large Navy Radio Station where messages could be relayed or received from all over the world and to any Navy ship in the Pacific. Being a radioman, I had access to a secret code book that contained the four-letter call signs of every ship. I learned my brother Ray's ship was in the harbor. I spent the best of 10 hours visiting with him. His LST was part of the invasion fleet at Leyte Gulf.

"After spending eight months in Hollandia, New Guinea, my Communication Unit loaded onto two LSTs for another invasion. The same amount of Radiomen were put on each ship, so if I was damaged or sunk by the Japs, the other part of the Unit could carry on. It was on Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 1944, when 50 or 100 ships departed for Luzon, PL. On Jan. 6, 1945 two Jap planes came over the convoy, one near my LST. The pilot dropped a bomb, which exploded about 90 feet from the ship I was on. The other plane was hit by anti-aircraft shells. The pilot realized he would not be able to make it safely back to land and dove into a ship in the next column. Because of that a lot of young soldiers crammed on that ship were wiped out, Jan. 7, 1945.

"My unit was issued new 15 shot carbine rifles. The rifles were greased to prevent rust. I had neither rags or ramrod to clean my rifle. I took my gun to the Gunnery compartment. A young gunner, my age, said yes, he would clean my gun quickly. My newly found friend and I chatted. I asked him how a person makes it back home in one piece. He said, "Just duck at the right time!"

"I was uncertain if a Jap bullet or hand grenade on Luzon had my name on it. I did not know when or what part of the LST the young gunner would go on watch. I tried always to sleep on deck in case the ship was torpedoed. I was fast asleep the next morning at 5 a.m. when I am awakened by the screaming plane engine in a dive. The Jap suicide plane crashed on the rear part of the ship. My boss saw me and said, "Cap, go help put the bodies in bags!"

"Imagine my deep shock as I put my newly found gunner friend in a bag! I met him at 3 p.m.

the prior afternoon, he went on watch at 4 a.m. His life was snuffed out with the others at 5 a.m. I am putting his remains in a bag at 5:30 p.m. This experience has haunted me ever since. I regret that I did not receive the next of kin's address from the ship's office. Three hours later, we had a burial at sea. I still weep when I tell anyone of this experience.

"January 9, 1945 was invasion day. The LST finally pulls up to the beach and drops the huge door. I had not slept much since the plane crash. I have my steel helmet, new rifle, four extra clips of shells, canteen and poncho. I spot an empty 10 wheeler truck with no driver. I climb beneath the rear wheels, put my poncho on the sand, have my rifle ready and fall asleep. About 2 a.m., I wake up to see a starry sky. The driver had moved the truck! That day, our unit moved all our equipment about 100 yards inland off the beach. My boss asked me if I had dug a foxhole. I said, "No, I am going to sleep on the Receiver Van roof. There are no Japs within 20 miles!" A Jap shell from a Coastal Artillery gun exploded and that whole area was bombarded all that night.

"We moved inland to a small village early the next morning which was towards Manila about 20 miles. This was our first of three stops to set up our Navy Radio Station. General MacArthur's headquarters was 100 feet away. I saw him once.

"Shortly before, I had trimmed my toenails incorrectly and now had an ingrown infected toenail. I went to an Army doctor in a clinic where they were treating wounded soldiers. He cut out about 1/3 of my toenail. Instead of standing watch on one of the eight frequencies in the crowded mobile receiver van, my boss suggested I stand watch marching around it. This was soon after we arrived. Suddenly, two Jap looking men appeared, dressed in sandals, shorts and T Shirt. One of the men has a covered reed basket attached to his belt. Hurriedly, I motioned for them to keep moving. If I was forced to shoot, I might have hit a villager or hit someone from my own unit who is taking a nap before going on watch. They walked straight ahead, turned left, then right onto some railroad tracks. I told my boss. We had a phone hookup with a few soldiers maybe eight blocks away. My boss warned them that two suspected Jap soldiers were heading their way. Our soldiers phoned back that the two were challenged and were shot as they were reaching into the reed basket for the hand grenades. The Japs were tired of the war and were trying to escape into the hills.

"I spent about two-and-a-half months in Tokyo occupation service. After 22 months overseas, I made it home for Christmas. I was honorably discharged May, 24, 1947. I stayed in the active Reserves. I was in my senior year at Creighton University of Omaha when I was called back quite quickly for the Korean War. I obtained a four-month deferment so I could graduate. I met Fran in April of 1950. We got married during this short deferment on Sept. 30, 1950. I served 22 months in the Korean War."

## SESQUICENTENNIAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Cleo Erickson

From the files of the Plain Talk

1956

The construction of the new Piggly Store that is being erected on Highway 50 is progressing rapidly. Mr. Nate Hurowitz, owner, hopes to occupy the building in about 45 days.

Sheriff Joe O'Connor had good news on Tuesday when he reported not a single arrest was made for drunken driving on the New Year's weekend.

Pledges for the Dakota Nursing Home Fund drive have passed the \$25,000 mark. The actual solicitation campaign to raise \$100,000 for the Dakota Nursing Home for the Aged will get under way this week. Dallas Christopherson, general chairman of the committee, opened the meeting held at the new Austin School auditorium and stated the goals of the campaign.

Miss Bird Richardson who served as Assistant Librarian at USD for 35 years passed away at the age of 71. She was a lifelong resident of Clay County.

Rex's Alley at 24 Center Street invites everyone to try their big, juicy hamburgers for a late lunch or anytime. They stay open late and they also serve baked ham sandwiches and malted milks. By the way, stop in for a game of bowling.

The Coyotes lost to Creighton by a score of 71-54 on Monday night. Guard Clayton Kiewel was high point man with 13 points followed by Jongewaard and Middleton.

It must have been a bad week for basketball as the VHS Tanagers lost to East Sioux City by a score of 61-44.

NIGHT PARKING ISSUE: The city council, with the cooperation of University student leaders, is making an intelligent effort to find a plan to handle the night parking situation on the city streets. It is a problem which has been with the city for years but is now becoming more acute. The extent of the problem is clearly indicated in the results of a night parking survey recently conducted by the city police officers. They counted a total of 683 cars bearing out of county

licenses. This is a situation which is peculiar to a college town and is not even approached in any non-college community of comparable size.

Many small Vermillion business firms will have a new tax to pay in 1956. Beginning this month, (January), they become subject to the Federal Employment Tax Act and the State Unemployment Insurance Law. This will mean an additional 3 per cent payroll tax for those employers who have not been subject to these two laws.

The Dakota Nursing Home Campaign for funds has passed the half way mark. Pledges now total \$54,000. It is estimated that approximately 2,500 homes in Clay County and neighboring townships in southern Union County have yet to be called on.

Bids are asked for a new city well. The well would be located

south of the railroad tracks and west of the municipal water and power plants. It is estimated the well will have a capacity from 700 to 1,000 gallons per minute at a depth of 95 feet.

Pupils from the Burbank school are finding it to be an education experience to have Rita and Alberta Colamberto from Italy in their classes. They are learning English and in turn teaching Italian to the local pupils.

At the annual meeting of the Trinity Lutheran Church the congregation authorized the Building Committee to purchase a parcel of land at the corner of Plum and Clark Streets from Mrs. Sanna Lore for a proposed future building site.

Have you noticed that the young fry in Vermillion are dressing up more and swinging away from the sloppy attire of blue jeans? The makers of denim

must be in a dither about it. United Airlines has sent the word to all its stewardesses and counter girls that there will be no more Italian style idiot boy hair do's while on the job.

Total pledges to date for the Nursing Home total \$68,840.

Rev. Hugh K. Wolf of St. Agnes Catholic Church served as the official chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives for two hours on Monday. The invitation was extended to Father Wolf by Rep. Harold Lovre.

An open house and dedication program will be held on Sunday for the new Austin and Jolley school units. The open house will be held at the Austin School Auditorium. Total costs for the new buildings are \$287,586.01 for the Austin building and \$145,686.25 for the Jolley unit.

Nursing Home pledges now total \$73,000.

Harry Gamage, who began as USD head football coach in 1934, announced this week that he is retiring on July 1. Mr. Gamage told a Plain Talk reporter that he would sever connections with the USD Athletic Department but he would still be affiliated with the University in another capacity. When asked what his future plans were, he answered, "To stay young and happy."

President Eisenhower announced to a radio and television audience that if the American people so desired, he would be a candidate to succeed himself in the presidency.

Television in color will be on display at the open house this weekend at Oden Implement Co., on Market Street. Odens are the exclusive franchised dealer for RCA Victor products in Vermillion.

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*Thank You!* Bob Van Why's extended family wishes to express deep gratitude in his many friends. In addition we thank you for all the memorials.

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**MEN ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & CHILDREN**

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- protect women and children
- face fear, pray and be humble
- be compassionate and considerate
- use respectful words, thoughts and actions
- help other men do the right thing
- be responsible and provide for self and family

If you're a Survivor of abuse, know that NOBODY chooses to be a victim and you can heal.

Being an abuser is a CHOICE and a crime!

For help contact a local domestic or sexual violence program, mental health agency or the SD Coalition Ending Domestic & Sexual Violence  
1-800-572-9196 or [www.sdcedsv.org](http://www.sdcedsv.org)

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