

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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98 And Still Writing

"Boyhood Days of Mr. California" by Rockwell Dennis Hunt has come to me as a gift from the author and may I say, I am delighted to have it. I have known Dr. Hunt for many years, first in San Jose and later at the University of the Pacific in Stockton.

He is now ninety-eight years of age and still writing. There are many persons, both young and old who will be pleased to know that Dr. Hunt still thinks of the friends and would enjoy hearing from any of them. His address is 1630 North Edison Street, Stockton.

Now I will quote from his letter: ... "I have been at this hospital for two years, a longer period than I have ever spent in any hospital previous to a few years ago. Throughout my long life, I have enjoyed good health, and I am everlasting grateful for it, but a good many days of the past few years have been a trying time in my life, reminding me vividly of the fact my many friendships throughout the state are of the highest value now. To this let me add my three sons all graduates of the University of Southern California, steadfast and faithful.

"The oldest is Paul, nearly seventy. He lives on a walnut ranch near Oakdale and is the outdoor man of the family. This year he has fished in Baja California, and just now returned from an elk hunt in Montana. He visits me often as he only lives an hours drive away.

Lloyd is a retired electrical engineer, and lives at Palos Verdes Estates near the Pacific. Clarence, the youngest, is a lawyer, and a member of the Board of Governors of the State Bar, and also one of the four vice presidents of the Bar Association. He lives and has his office in Long Beach. In general, my three sons afford the greatest satisfaction and comfort of my later years.

"I am sending a copy of my limited edition of 'Boyhood Days of Mr. California' which you may find of interest. I do not plan on writing any more books at this time. Please remember you have not been forgotten – not by a long shot. I remember well our association in matters of local history. Next birthday I will be ninety-eight – a lifetime Californian."

With most cordial greetings, and best possible wishes for your future, Semper Fidelis, Rockwell D. Hunt.

The first chapter in the book written by Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt is an introduction to himself and his four brothers as well as to his mother and father, parts of which are well worth quoting here.

"All of us five Hunt brothers were born in the glorious state of California, more than ninety years ago – and not one of us had a sister! All five of us were living for more than half a century after the birth of the youngest; but, now as I write this story of our boyhood life, I must tell you that I am the only one of the brothers still living,

"My oldest brother Major Clarence, was born in 1859, before the beginning of the Civil War. He was not an army officer but the namesake of one of the uncles. Second was Frank Lynn, born in 1862, whose name was given him in honor of a prominent governor of a new England state. My next oldest brother was Mark Twain, born in 1864, namesake of the country's greatest humorist, who had come to San Francisco that same year. His own real name was Mark Twain.

"I was the fourth of the five brothers, born in Sacramento in 1868 and I had the good fortune to be named after my father. The youngest of us was George Grant, born in Freeport, in 1870, whose middle name, I was told, was given because of the wish of Major, at a time when General U.S. Grant was at the height of his popularity; it shows that my oldest brother was learning some history."

The story tells of the simple little things they did as boys together on a farm – the scenes of their childhood and the way they lived in beautiful California, way back in the 1870's.

The book is from a long memory; it is very personal; it tells of a way of life in California that has now gone forever; it embodies the thought that the life of the farmer, as five young brothers saw it back in the 1870's.

I am sure that young and old alike would enjoy reading "Boyhood Days of Mr. California." It was printed by the Caxton Printers, Ltd., in Caldwell, Idaho. For twenty-five years he was Dean of the Graduate School of the University of Southern California, before going to the University of the Pacific many years ago. He is also President Emeritus of the Conference of California Historical Societies.