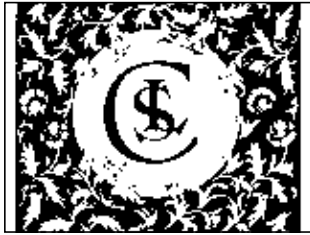


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Front Cover: A fellow sailor took this photograph of Lt. M. B. Kibbey while on board a Yard Minesweeper in World War II.

Back Cover: Achille Phillion, the “Marvelous Equalibrist” at his tower during the California Midwinter International Expositions in 1894. Mead Kibbey donated a very rare I. W. Taber album of the event.

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Requiescat In Pace Mead Brokaw Kibbey

By Gary F. Kurutz



A fellow sailor took this snapshot of Lt. Kibbey holding binoculars while on board a Yard Mine Sweeper in World War II.

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of our beloved chief benefactor Mead Brokaw Kibbey. Mead passed away at his home in Sacramento on September 21, 2018. Born in San Francisco in 1922, his family moved to Sacramento shortly thereafter, and he had been a resident of the river city ever since. In learning of his death, friends have rightly called him “one of the greatest of the Greatest Generation,” a Renaissance man, raconteur, humorist, and accomplished historian, photographer, and sculptor. As another so rightly put it: “God broke the mold after making Mead Kibbey.” Over the decades, Mead has been incredibly generous to the Library and its Foundation showering both institutions with precious gifts and promoting the Library’s fabulous collections and services. So many see the State Library merely as a state agency but Mead



A very photogenic Mead Kibbey poses on the deck of the USS Yard Mine Sweeper (YMS) 435 near Seattle on March 15, 1945. While on board the USS YMS 350 in preparation for the Allied Invasion of France, a mine exploded and sunk his ship on July 2, 1944. For his heroics in rescuing two men serving with him, Mead received a special citation from Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal.

saw it as a hidden treasure worthy of support from the private sector. Many of his gifts have been highlighted in past issues of the *Bulletin*. In fact, at the time of his death, I was writing an article about his most recent donation of a remarkable set of magic lantern slides documenting the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. Until his last days, he continued to support our collections.

Mead was truly a man of broad interests and attainment. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in mechanical engineering. However, his studies were interrupted with the outbreak of World War II, and he joined in the defense of our country as an ensign in the U.S. Navy. His heroics on board the minesweeper *USS YMS-350* during the D-Day Invasion have been recounted in the Spring 2004 issue of the *Bulletin*. Mead served in the navy for eight years, and in recognition of his heroism, received the prestigious Navy and Marine Corps Medal along with the French Legion of Honor medal.¹

Returning home, Mead entered the lumber business and starting in 1951, owned and operated the Black Diamond Lumber Company. His work as a lumber company executive took him many times to Sierra County and its county seat of Downieville. He loved the region, befriended many people, and became an ambassador for Sierra County serving as the “Foreign Correspondent” of *The Mountain Messenger* of Downieville. On a trip aboard the Trans-Siberian Railway, he eagerly passed out copies of *The Mountain Messenger*. He always carried in his wallet business cards with his special newspaper title. Early this summer, Mead donated two volumes of the Sierra County newspaper from the 1860s. Several issues carried news of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. In 1980, this hard-driving entrepreneur started the Red River Lumber Company that produced redwood planter boxes. He retired in 1986 to pursue his many interests ranging from photography



*Even in his senior years,
Mead was a bundle of energy
and was constantly at work
on scores of projects.*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Gary F. Kurutz is the Executive Director of the Foundation and longtime friend of Mead Kibbey.



Mead stands in front the entrance to Pioneer Hall on 7th Street in downtown Sacramento. For many years, Mead was a devoted member of the Sacramento Pioneer Association. Photo courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History.

to carving granite.

Over the years, Mead actively served on the boards of philanthropic and community relations organizations including president of the KVIE and KXPR, vice president of the Sacramento County Historical Society, president of the Crocker Art Museum Association, treasurer of Sutter Health, treasurer of Sutter Davis Hospital, and president for two terms of the Sacramento Pioneer Association.² Because of his passion for photography and its history, he donated the archive of the Keystone-Mast Stereograph collection to the University of California, Riverside's California Museum of Photography as eloquently summarized in the accompanying article by Mary Beth Barber.

Mead had a long and fascinating rela-

tionship with the State Library dating back to his childhood when his mother secured a library card for him around 1930. Our wonderful author and copyeditor M. Patricia Morris interviewed Mead in February 2009 for a *Bulletin* article that included one very memorable experience concerning borrowing privileges. Mead, after reading a book about ancient Egypt, became deeply interested in Egyptology and discovered that the Library possessed a copy of the famous and spectacular nineteen-volume *Description of Egypt* (Paris, 1809--1828) that Napoleon Bonaparte sponsored. He eagerly went to the Library with his checkout card in the hopes of borrowing the great large folio work. The following is his recollection of that experience:

Mead: "Can I get this out?"

Librarian: "Well, I don't know. We'll see." The librarian disappeared back in the stacks. When he returned he said, "There are fifteen volumes of plates and forty-six volumes of text. What do you want?"

Mead: "Why don't we start on number one of the plates?" The volume was big, three by four feet, and beautiful.

Librarian: Upon opening it up, he said, "It is kind of interesting. We have had these books since 1894, and you are the first person ever who took them out or even wanted them."

After a while Mead returned to the library and asked to speak to the reading room supervisor, who Mead described as a "fairly old guy."

Mead: "I would like to buy the Description of Egypt. Nobody's asked for it for seventy or eighty years. Your usage isn't very great, and I would be interested in buying that set."

Supervisor: "No. We can't do that. Even though the next person will be sixty years from now, we will have them when they come."

Mead: "Boy, that's my kind of place."

He loved the Library ever since and even taught himself Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Starting in the early 1980s, Mead began making extraordinary donations to the Library and became an active member of the Foundation's board of directors in



Business man Mead Kibbey poses at his desk. For decades, Mead ran successful businesses in Sacramento. He still found time for his many cultural and charitable pursuits.