



Fred Thurston Huntington, Sr.
Class of 2023

Fred graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1931 and played football for one year. Coach Floyd Onyett in the school yearbook ALPHA said, *“Fred displayed some pretty work and played in almost every game of the year, despite this being his first year on the team.”* Fred was unable to, play sports until he was a senior, due to his working at his dad’s laundry. He played the saxophone and clarinet in dance bands around the county on the weekends. As a junior, he drove a 1929 Model A Ford Laundry truck to school and his pals were Bill Walley, Fred Zundell, Frank Scholes and Carlyle (Tub) Osgood.

After high school, Fred joined his dad in the Oroville Steam Laundry business on High Street and in his spare time, was a dedicated shooter, but found it difficult to obtain quality bullets. However, after happening upon a gunsmithing book containing instructions on making a bullet-swaging press and dies needed for the job and reading about making a die to swage .22 rimfire cartridge cases to form jackets for bullets, he began to craft his own dies in the twelve by six-foot back room of his father’s laundry business. These dies were machined from Ford Model T axels from the junkyard. Little did he know that the book, along with an old lathe in a back room of the laundry shop, would be the start of a company that would eventually become known around the world for its high-quality reloading equipment. *(From internet)*

Fred’s own version of the above from his memoirs: ***“One year out of high school, I found bullets. Ammo and Ammo components getting harder and harder to get and much more expensive overnight. I bought a book, “Advanced Gunsmithing”, by W.F. Vickery, and in there was his story on how to make a .22 Cal Bullet making press and dies. I immediately was interested to try out the old Seneca Falls Lathe dad bought for \$100 from Frank Koeplin. I had promised to make many laundry parts that were becoming harder to get, I made a copy of Vickery’s Press and a set of dies. He sent me an old set of .22 Cal dies so I would be sure to make them right.”***

RCBS, Manufacturers of Precisioneered Reloading Equipment was actually founded by Fred in 1943 at age thirty-one. Because the resulting bullets he crafted were used to shoot rock chucks- a varmint of Western North America – he named them the Rock Chuck Bullet Swage dies, later shortened to RCBS. In 1948, he relocated the business to a small shop, the business rapidly spilling into his garage and then in 1954, to a new building.

In 1958, he expanded first to a 7,500 square foot factory that quickly grew to 50,000 square feet. RCBS dedicated itself to the craft of reloading ammunition. RCBS started with one simple bullet die. Its State-of-the-Art Products manufactured were presses, dies, shell holders, powder measures and priming products.

In 1976 the business was purchased by Omark Industries and in 1985, Omark was purchased by Blount Inc. The year 2001 saw Alliant Techsystems (ATK) purchase the business. In 2015, Vista Outdoor Inc. spun off from ATK as a leading provider of outdoor sports and recreation products. Today, Oroville is still RCBS’s home for state-of-the-art production of reloading equipment for rifles and pistols, offering reloading equipment throughout the world.

Fred and his sons Fred Jr. and Buzz founded Huntington’s Sportsmen’s Store and museum on the property next to RCBS. The store is in operation today. Over the years, Fred was an avid hunter and made numerous expeditions in the United States and Africa. He also had cultural interests that took him on extensive trips around the world.

Born and raised in Oroville, Fred was very proud of his community. He was a second-generation member of the Fellows Club of Oroville, his father serving as president in 1954 and he in 1984. He was a strong supporter of the YMCA, and a generous donor over many years to the Pioneer Museum and the Chinese Temple.

Fred was born on December 5, 1912 and passed away August 10, 1998.