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Weekend

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Good day to our valued subscriber Ben Bean of La Grande

Women veterans share their perspective on military life

By Audrey Love
The Observer

Today, women represent more than 15 percent of armed service members and 9 percent of the U.S. veteran population. Six of those women — five veterans, one active duty — sat around a table at La Grande's American Legion Post 43 recently

to relay their tales of service in various branches of the U.S. military, and how those experiences have uniquely bonded them in civilian life through the advent of a female support group.

At first, the women circling the table all appear different — some are in their late 20s or early 30s,

while others' hair has long turned gray; some served for more than a decade, while others only a few years; some joined because their life lacked direction or a sense of purpose, while others come from staunch military families.

But the women at this table are friends, and

although their experiences in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Army National Guard are uniquely their own, having served connects them in a way few other experiences can.

"I find that whenever you meet anybody that was in the service, there's an instant connection that you

don't get with a person who has never experienced that," said Air Force veteran Bobbie Dalglish.

Originally from New York, Dalglish served for two and a half years as a dental assistant and was stationed in San Antonio and San Angelo, Texas.

"I spent all my time in

Texas — which I think I should've gotten extra pay for," she joked.

Navy veteran Christine Carlson said she's also felt what Dalglish described.

"There's some type of connection, a bond there, that instantly happens when you know both of you have

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EOU student establishes student veteran club after serving in Afghanistan

By Max Denning
The Observer

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Chris Talbert made a decision that many Americans made: to enlist in the military. Except, Talbert was only in junior high, so he had to wait until he graduated high school. A handful of years later, he enlisted in the Marine Corps as a combat engineer.

Seven years since leaving the military, Talbert is now in his senior year at Eastern Oregon University, where he is studying business administration and agriculture science. Talbert started a chapter of the Student Veterans of America to help veterans adjust to college life and to meet fellow student veterans. But, just a few years ago, it was unlikely Talbert was going to end up in college.

In 2009, Talbert was in Afghanistan as part of one of the first units to do route clearance in the area. They were among the first U.S. soldiers to drive on some of these routes in Afghanistan, and they encountered resistance in the form of improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

"I hit four IEDs while I was over there," Talbert said.

The second IED Talbert's squad came across killed two soldiers.

"It was tough because you feel responsible in some way. You get some survivor's guilt," Talbert said.

On Sept. 10, 2009, Talbert was driving a mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle, when he drove over a 200-pound IED, the fourth and final one he would confront while in Afghanistan. The explosion gave Talbert a severe concussion and fractured his back in three places.

After healing from his injuries, Talbert returned to the United States and spent two more years in the Marine Corps stateside.

Talbert returned home to Montana in 2011, where he began to struggle with addiction.

"I spent a few years battling alcohol and drug

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LA GRANDE VETERAN SURVIVED CLOSE CALLS IN WWII



RADIO OPERATOR DAN KRAMER TELLS OF TYPHOONS AND KAMIKAZE ATTACKS WHILE STATIONED ON THE USS ALGOL

By Dick Mason
The Observer

La Grande World War II veteran Dan Kramer does not remember the exact time, but he will never forget the sight — an image of almost certain death raining down from the sky.

The date was April 3, 1945, and Kramer was aboard a Navy cargo ship, the USS Algol, just off the shore of the Japanese island of Okinawa, when he saw a Zero Japanese fighter plane directly overhead. The plane's pilot was diving toward Kramer's ship from a height of 13,000 feet.

"Usually Kamikazes came at ships from the side, but this one was coming straight down," Kramer said.

The USS Algol's crew opened fire on the plane, but kept coming straight at the ship until it veered away about 2,000 feet above the ship, crashing into the ocean about 80 yards away.

The plane's drop from 13,000 to 2,000 feet had taken mere seconds, but not in Kramer's mind.

"It seemed like a half hour," the Navy veteran said.

The Zero aircraft became a ball of fire after crashing. "It was loaded with charges and exploded," Kramer said.

Had the Zero hit the ship, the resulting fire would have been devastating for its crew, who had been unloading many large barrels of gasoline from the deck into smaller boats.

"It would have been a bonfire that wouldn't quit," Kramer said of the blaze the plane would have caused.

In the aftermath of the Kamikaze attack, a name tag from the pilot's uniform was found floating in the water. Kramer was given the name tag and still has it today. The cloth tag, now in a frame, displays the name of a boy who was just 13 years old.

"Someone offered me \$3,000 for it several years ago. It is

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Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Dan Kramer, a 94-year-old World War II veteran, keeps photos of his time in the military. In the center photo, Kramer holds up the name tag of the 13-year-old Kamikaze who tried to demolish Kramer's ship. The remnants of the young man's plane floated in the ocean and Kramer came across a part of the man's uniform.

Dreams of being a knight leads to life in Marines

■ McDowell talks about his role in the intelligence field

By Cherise Kaechele
For The Observer

One little boy's dream of becoming a knight never truly changed. Growing up surrounded by family who served in the military, including a grandma who was a real-life Rosie the Riveter, pushed Brian McDowell into the Marines.

McDowell, of Union, said he always liked the idea of being a knight.

"I know it sounds cheesy, but what little kid doesn't want to fight dragons and save people?" he said.

Two of McDowell's grandparents served in the military.

"I admired them and I wanted to be a Marine," he said. "It's the ideology of service and honor and doing something (meaningful). That's kind of where it came from."

He said he didn't enlist in the Marines until after college because he received a full scholarship to Portland State University. He became an enlisted personnel in 2000 after he graduated.

"My ultimate goal was to be a sniper," he said of his intent in joining the Marines. "I liked shooting and running around and chasing bad guys."

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Hunting with Heroes

■ Brothers assist wounded veterans in successful elk hunt

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Three hundred and forty-six.

The number is one Jeff Grende of North Powder may never forget because of a magical moment the afternoon of Oct. 16 near Elk Mountain, Wyoming — an afternoon he helped a wounded warrior step back in time.

Grende and three other volunteers were helping

take a nearly blind Army veteran on an elk hunting trip. They were on a ridge when they saw a herd of elk, including a trophy bull, run into a forest.

Grende and his party, all lifelong hunters familiar with the movement patterns of elk, anticipated that later that day the elk would come out of the forest and into the opening they had just left.

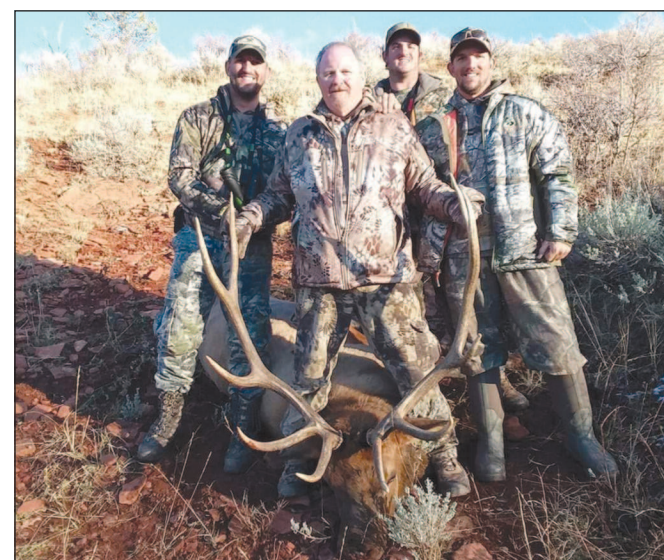
"We knew they would

be coming back," Grende said.

So the men put the brakes on their hike and began waiting — and waiting. Eight hours later, their patience paid off when the herd emerged from the forest.

Suddenly the feeling of boredom dissipated as the hunters bolted into action, helping the veteran adjust his rifle scope

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Submitted photo

Brothers Gee, Jeff and Steven Grende, all wearing caps, pose for a photo with a veteran they took on an elk in Wyoming as part of the Hunting With Heroes program.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Friday
28 LOW
Partly cloudy



Saturday
45/21
Partly sunny



Sunday
45/20
Mostly sunny

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



MONDAY

WOODGRAIN TAKES OVER BOISE CASCADE

Online at lagrandeobserver.com