



# Ten minutes with ...

... **Veteran aviator, Bob Perkins, 83, of Cave Junction.**

## When were you born?

June 8, 1921 in Washington, Ind. It was a small agricultural community. My grandparents were farmers. When the Depression came along, my father lost his job at the Ford Motor Co. in Detroit, Mich., so we moved back to Indiana to live on my grandparents' farm.

I attribute my longevity and good health to Irish potatoes and raw turnips. We had to eat a lot of those during the Depression. My Irish grandfather used to take me out in the garden. He'd dig up a turnip, peel it, and cut off a slice and hand it to me. Then he'd clean his fingernails with his knife.

## Did you come from a large family?

No, I just have one brother, William John. He's retired now from the "Washington Post." I was close to him growing up, but we're 3,000 miles apart now.

As a kid, I was involved in sports. I played basketball and football. In 1939, after I graduated from Eastern High School in Washington D.C., I joined the Navy for six-and-a-half years. I was a "swabbie."

## Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

I was on a floating dry dock, stationed on the destroyer USS "Bernadou." The "Shaw" (another destroyer) was docked just behind us. The next day it was all blown to pieces; that's fate.

I did lose two shipmates. One was killed on the naval hospital grounds, and the other was killed in a taxicab while he was traveling back to Pearl Harbor from Honolulu. Can you imagine?

## Were you injured during the service?

When I went down to Mexico on St. Patrick's Day by myself, I got shot. I was supposed to meet a couple of guys in Ensenada and go fishing; but I didn't make it.

When I stepped outside this bar, to go to my car, some guys cornered me. They said, "Señor, we want your wallet." I thought, "Dang, it's St. Patrick's Day," so I escaped. Boy, I got a good lick in at one and knocked him down. Another one started coming at me when I heard one of them yell, "Shoot heeeeeeem!" After they shot me, I managed to wobble away.

The bullet went through my right calf and just nicked the bone. The next day, I went to a friend that worked as a veterinarian. He told me to get up on the dog table. He ran a swab through the hole in my leg, gave me a shot of dog penicillin, and that was the end of that.

## What did you do after the service?

After the war, I enrolled in Syracuse University in up-state New York. I studied forestry. I became a supervisor of a 200-man hotshot crew in the U.S. Forestry. I wound up becoming the chief park ranger in the Redwoods. That job fit me to a T. I stayed in the park service for 28 years. After that, I went back to New York and bought a franchise called Four Seasons Sunrooms. In 1988, my son and I set up a business in Grants Pass. I was going back and forth from Crescent City to Grants Pass to get business established. Each time I passed through here, I always got a good feeling about Cave Junction. I bought property in 1988 and moved here.

## Did you ever have a family of your own?

Yes. I was married for 24 years. I met her in a barber shop where she worked, while I was getting a haircut. My wife was a country girl. I even composed a song about her, "She was the queen of Shasta County, and I was her Mounty." She scuttled me. I thought I was pretty sophisticated at that time. You know, a college guy, in the Navy, and married to a young country girl.

We had two girls and two boys. My boys are still in business in Grants Pass; my girls are married and live in Redding.

## What first attracted you to Cave Junction?

The airport and the golf course.

## Are you a pilot?

Yes, I've been a pilot for 25 years. At the age of 5, my father took me up in a WWI "Jenny," and I've been hooked ever since. Now I fly whenever I get the urge. I own a Cessna and scatter ashes for morticians.

In Crescent City, I met a guy who was a flight instructor and got my pilot's license. I've logged 1,200 hours. I've flown my plane twice to Mexico, once to Canada, and once back to North Carolina. The guy that taught me how to fly nicknamed me, "Ticky Do." That means "All's Well."

I just got back from Tillamook. I went to see the air museum. I landed in North Bend for fuel, and right after that they had an earthquake. They were blaming it on my hard landing.

On my 80th birthday, I did my first skydive with my sons.

## What is your favorite ice cream?

Juicy Sweet Lucy. It has grapes in it and goes well with anything.

~Interview and Photo by Shane Welsh



**PENNIES AND PJs - Students at Evergreen Elementary School conducted a penny drive to raise funds for the student body and tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. Slightly more than \$1,000 was raised; half will go to the American Red Cross. As part of the fund-raiser, students were told that there would be a 'Pajama Day'**

if the goal of \$1,000 was reached. The day was held last week with many participants, including one of the top contributing classes, the third-grade students of Mary Orton (left). Principal Nancy Brown, with her Teddy, is at right. She congratulated all Evergreen Eagles for their efforts.

# Small business 'healthy'

The most important segment of Oregon's economy -- the small-business owners of the state who employ nearly 60 percent of all workers and generate almost all net new jobs -- is in much healthier shape than its counterparts in neighboring states.

That's according to a new survey released by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), America's largest small-business advocacy group.

In compiling its Oregon "Small-Business Conditions" report, one question NFIB asked small-business owners was to rank how supportive the state's business environment -- including government, banks, the media, and community groups -- was to them.

Oregon racked up a respectable 29 percent net support tally, while Northern California had 17 percent, and Washington state had a negative 9 percent rating. In fact, Washington's was the worst in this category among all 26 states surveyed. California was divided into three regions.

"This report gives Oregon decent grades, but not nearly enough for state policy makers to start patting themselves on the back," said J.L. Wilson, state director for the 12,000-member NFIB Oregon chapter.

"Although about half (48 percent) rated Oregon either 'supportive' or 'highly supportive' of its small businesses, an almost equal amount ranked it 'neutral' (26 percent), 'not supportive' (14 percent), or 'not at all supportive' (5 percent)," said Wilson.

"The message to lawmakers is that they can add fuel to this slow recovery by cutting capital gains taxes and holding the line on health insurance and Workers' Compensation costs,"

he said.

A complete copy of the 22-question survey, which also includes information such as hiring and employment figures, capital outlays and credit availability, can be found at NFIB.com/object/sbcor0305.html. Visit NFIB.com/OR for information about NFIB's activities in Oregon.

For information about the "Small-Business Conditions" project and other small-business research studies conducted by the NFIB Research Foundation, visit. NFIB.com/research.



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When I was a kid my parents moved a lot, but I always found them.  
  
- Rodney Dangerfield -

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