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Vet's tale is tragedy with a twist

by SCOTT NEWTON
Staff writer

Gerald "Jerry" Goodwin knows a tragic story with such a funny twist that people can't help but laugh.

It's about a mix-up with the Veterans Administration that began when his wife of 27 years died on Feb. 27. She was buried in Willamette National Cemetery.

The first of March, he didn't receive a small pension check. Goodwin, 65, pays his bills with his Social Security check and buys groceries with his pension check.

Wondering what was wrong, he called the Veterans Administration. "This guy said, 'Mr. Goodwin, we had it reported you died and was buried.'"

After learning of the mistake, the VA representative said it would be three to four months before it could be corrected.

Goodwin had a hard time understanding that; the check had been stopped in three or four days' time.

A call to U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield's office, however, got the timetable moved up considerably. Goodwin is expecting a check, retroactive to March, on the first of May.

Sally Brailier, staff assistant for Hatfield, said there are seven people in the Portland office who help people solve problems they have with federal agencies. She had no trouble remembering Goodwin's case. "I've never had anyone declared dead on me before," she said.

The delay did not cause a great inconvenience as Goodwin transferred some money from savings into a checking account.

But he has to chuckle over the mail he has received. A few days after talking to Brailier, Goodwin received two nearly identical letters from the VA saying everything had been taken care of.

"One hand doesn't know what the other's doing up there," he said.

The next letter Goodwin received was the VA's original announcement that his pension was being discontinued.

Shortly thereafter, he received a letter from the VA saying a review of their records showed he could be trained for gainful employment.

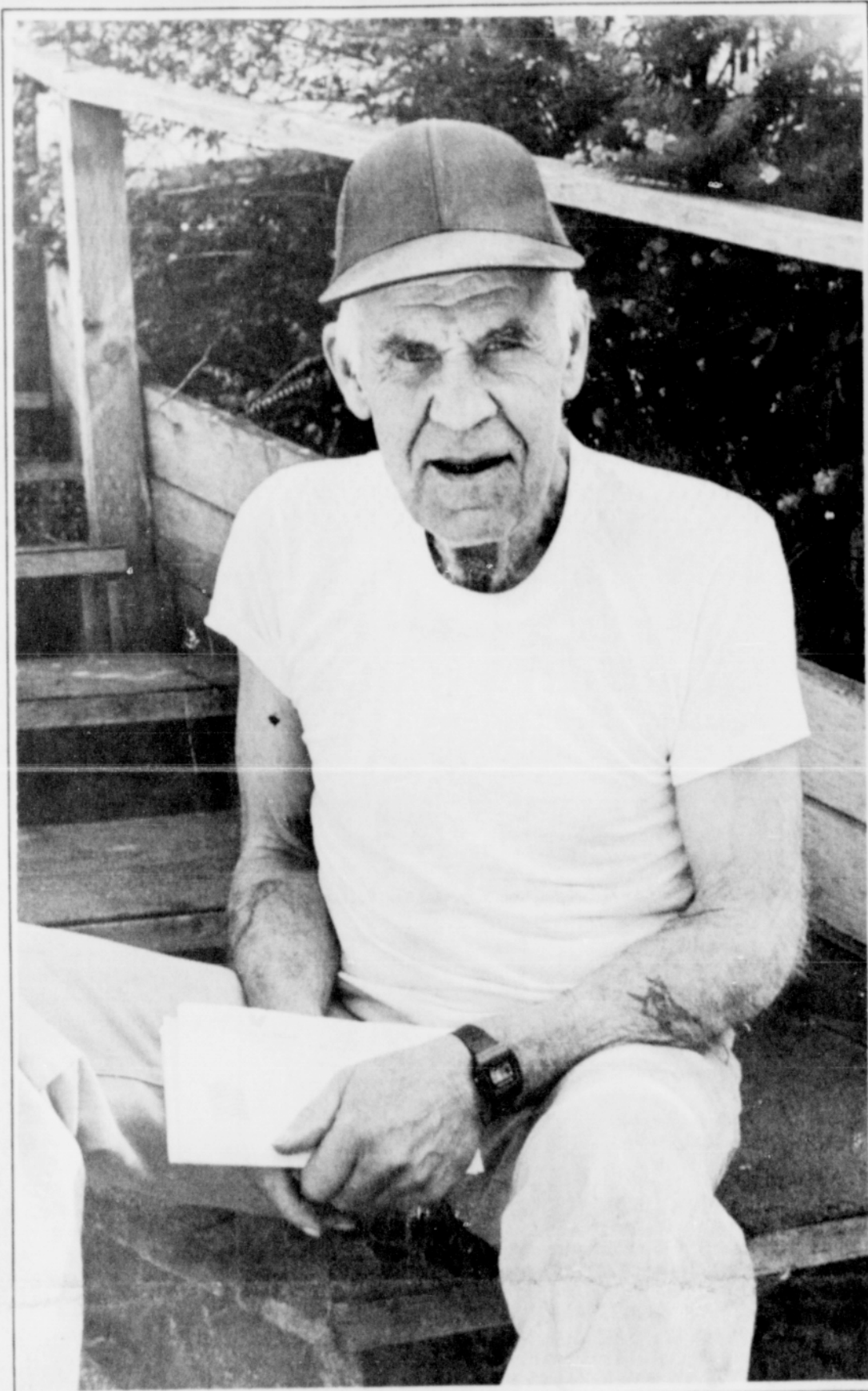
Goodwin, who is tan and trim, nonetheless has serious medical problems. He has undergone 24 back surgeries, suffered a stroke in 1970 and has phlebitis, or inflammation, in his leg. He laughs at the notion he might be trained for "gainful employment."

"When I got that I said, 'Boy, this is exactly like the Army,'" he said.

Well, not entirely. Goodwin participated in invasions of Okinawa and the Philippines during World War II, and also served in Korea.

He was a part of the "flying column" that liberated a civilian prisoner-of-war camp in Manila in a celebrated World War II battle. Goodwin received the Philippine Congressional Medal of Honor for being one of the first people to arrive at the prisoner-of-war camp and for "saving a few people," he said.

Goodwin's military career was far from glamorous, however. After the Manila battle, Goodwin joined the flame throwers battalion. He



Jerry Goodwin says his story is sad, but so ironic that people can't help but laugh.

was with a tank division that had flame throwers mounted on the tanks to "burn" Japanese out of caves.

During the Korean conflict, he was captured and spent nine months in a prisoner-of-war camp.

Despite the hardships of war, Goodwin will tell a person life has been good to him. He was stationed in Japan after the war and enjoyed it. "I liked the Japanese people but not the Japanese soldiers," he said.

Likewise, he enjoyed his youth, which he spent in a company mill town in northern California where there was no need for a police force. Goodwin has fond memories of camping and fishing in the Siskiyou Mountains.

Following a 13-year military career, he held a

variety of jobs, from working in mills to operating heavy equipment.

He has an eye for art; in his living room there are two Japanese scenes he painted.

The house, Goodwin said, is quieter now. His wife died in his arms of a heart attack, and he said she seemed peaceful and calm.

One group he will not criticize is local rescue personnel. They were at his home within minutes after his call to 9-1-1.

Goodwin's daughter has been taking him shopping, and Nicki — half Japanese Akita and half Labrador retriever — also keeps him company.

Goodwin still has his sense of humor and is able to see the irony in his problems with the VA. "People hate to laugh over something as serious as that, but they have to."

City considers defying law

Sandy's city manager is considering flaunting a state law that he says is costing taxpayers money.

An administrator with the Bureau of Labor and Industries is sure the city would lose a lawsuit if it came to that.

Tom Reber, city manager, claims Oregon's Little Davis Bacon Act, modeled after the federal Davis Bacon Act, forces municipalities to pay higher wages than private businesses for construction projects.

Local metal fabrication firms that normally would pay workers \$10 an hour plus benefits were forced to prepare bids at \$18 an hour plus benefits on a 1984 construction project at the sewage treatment plant, Reber said.

Little Davis Bacon requires employers to pay employees a "prevailing wage," which is determined by the state Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Reber does not think the Bureau of Labor's prevailing wages match the free market.

At the April 20 City Council meeting, Reber mentioned to the council that the city might choose to ignore Little Davis Bacon and save itself some money. There were some tentative nods of approval by council members.

Reber told the council there was a possibility it could be sued for such an action, and that the city's legal counsel had advised against such an action.

Reber told The Post the city would have to look at the consequences before deciding to take such an action. If the fines were greater than the amount of money it would save, that would be an incentive to comply with the law.

Reber also acknowledged that such an action could bring on a lawsuit by the state. He said he feels that in such a lawsuit the public would view it as the state picking on Sandy.

"What would they sue us for?" Reber said. "Saving the taxpayers money. What are the damages?"

According to Christine Hammond, deputy administrator for the wage and hour division of the Bureau of Labor, the damages would be in the form of lost wages.

The city, or public contracting agency, would be held responsible if the contractor was not required to pay the "prevailing wage."

Hammond said the bureau has never sued a public contracting agency, but it has collected wages from a public contracting agency.

The Oregon Davis Bacon Act has not cost the city of Sandy a great deal of money, Reber said. But one architect tells him it adds 10 to 20 percent on building projects, and contractors have told him it may cost even more than that.

In a paper prepared for the League of Oregon Cities, Reber points out the savings from repeal of the law could be spent on additional public works projects or for hiring additional employees, allowing municipalities to accomplish more with less.

Reber urged city managers to take the fight to state legislators. He asked them to document the added cost to projects for use in lobbying legislators to vote against the law.

A spokesman for Rep. Bob Shiprack, D-Beavercreek, said the Associated General Contractors bring the issue up every session. Reber said Davis Bacon generates extra paper work for contractors.

Reber is not sure when, or if, the city might challenge Little Davis Bacon, though there are some road improvement contracts to be bid on soon.

Hammond said Reber would be better off fighting Davis Bacon in the Oregon Legislature. "The law is pretty clear," she said. "I think I know who would win (a lawsuit)."

Yearling spotted in Mount Hood corridor

"Alder," the yearling fawn that made its home along Alder Creek, may be back in the Mount Hood corridor.

A tame deer the same size and description of Alder was seen at Hoodland Park Plaza on April 22. The deer was wearing a choke chain, said Mark Wever, who was working at the Union 76 service station. "The deer kept stepping on the chain and choking itself."

A co-worker, Ken Hagan, rescued the animal. He fed soda crackers to the fawn to calm it down, and slipped the chain off its neck while it ate. The deer crossed Highway 26 near the Mount Hood Evangelical Free

Church and disappeared into the woods.

It might have been Alder, an orphaned fawn that was nurtured during the winter by the Dasher family in Alder Creek. Alder was released several weeks ago into an area considered safe, according to Sandy Dasher. She declined to say where.

Neighbors were unhappy because the deer jumped up on children and damaged shrubs and flowers.

"We heard it had been seen down at Thriftway," she said. "I hope it doesn't try to find its way back (to Alder Creek); we've had enough."

Meyers honored as 'most inspirational'

The Sandy Alumni Association Tournament named Richard Meyer most inspirational player for 1987 in both the "A" and "B" divisions — even though he didn't play a single game.

Meyer had played in the tournament since its inception in 1979. But this year he could not; he is recovering from an injury suffered when he was struck by a vehicle while riding his bike along Highway 26.

Meyer considered the tournament a good opportunity to get together with old friends. But this year's event is another indication of just how many friends he has.

The tournament, sponsored for the first time this year by the Sandy Alumni Association, netted \$2,500 for Meyer's medical expenses.

According to Jim Griffin, tournament coordinator, it was the largest amount ever raised by the Alumni Association; even the popular corn-on-the-cob booth at the Mountain Festival nets less than \$2,000.

Friends also have fixed up Meyer's house, making it wheelchair accessible, and in general have offered their support.

Meyer, who had a reputation for physical fitness, said he is wheeling around in the housing division where he lives and may start lifting weights again soon.

He said he is doing "pretty good," though there is some pain in his back. His spine was "traumatized" but not severed in the accident. "There's

hope, definitely a prayer," he said.

As for the tournament itself, the final game offered some suspense as the class of 1974 overcame an early deficit to defeat the class of 1982.

Griffin said he hopes the Alumni Association has breathed some life into the tournament. For several years the tournament was run by the Sandy High School athletic department as a fund-raiser, but Griffin said some staff members had spent an inordinate amount of time working on the tournament and suffered burnout.

This year the players elected six people to serve as a subcommittee to the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association, which has awarded more than \$15,000 in scholarships since its inception in 1963, will handle the legal responsibilities but will let the players run the tournament, Griffin said.

The players will determine each year what cause will benefit from the fund-raiser.

Griffin said SUHS Superintendent Kent Heaton waived the fee for renting the gym; in exchange the Alumni Association members cleaned up after the games.

Twenty-four games were played by 140 players during four nights, Griffin said. He gave credit to many people, from SUHS janitors to business people who purchased advertisements in the program, for making the tournament a success.

Mexican church leader tours farm

An assistant Episcopal bishop from Mexico toured a local nursery Tuesday as part of his mission to find out how his countrymen are living in the United States.

The Right Rev. Martiniano Garcia, along with two companions from Mexico and Father Tom Davidson, pastor of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Sandy, toured the Iseli Nursery in Boring and visited with some of the immigrants employed there.

Garcia's diocese in Mexico and the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon recently became companion dioceses. As part of that program, Garcia, Father Adalberto Reyes and Laura Navarro, a school counselor, came to visit.

During their three-week stay they hope to find ways to strengthen the companionship program, said Garcia, who was visiting the United States for the first time.

Garcia is suffragan, or assistant, bishop in a region that includes central and south Mexico.

That is also the region from which most migrant workers in Sandy have emigrated, Davidson said.

Reyes said that Mexicans who are working in the United States do well for themselves and have an opportunity to better themselves.

When they aren't working, however, conditions are difficult. Mexicans can "literally starve" in the winter when there is no work, Davidson said.

Immigrant laborers also are sometimes exploited by their own countrymen, Reyes said.

The economy in Mexico is bad and many Mexicans are dependent on the money sent from the United States. Navarro said professionals in Mexico earn \$1 an hour and minimum wage is \$3 a day.

And yet when the men of a village leave, it causes problems. In a society that values the family structure, many children are growing up



The Right Rev. Martiniano Garcia, third from left, observes workers at Iseli Nursery in Boring.

without fathers at home, Davidson said.

What do Mexicans think of Americans?

"Not all Mexicans see Americans the same, just as Americans don't see all Mexicans the same," Reyes said.

Some see Americans as exploiters, yet others appreciate what Americans have done for them, Reyes said.

There is a feeling Americans are always coming out ahead, Navarro said. "We grow tomatoes that are sold to the United States, which sounds good," Navarro said. "But when we go to buy

ketchup, it is made by an American company. Who wins? The Americans again?"

Garcia, Reyes and Navarro were constantly on the move Tuesday, and the whirlwind of activities was accented by the driving of nursery owner Andre Iseli.

Iseli, who introduced himself in Spanish, joked that he had once driven in the Baha 500. He was forced to give what he called his two-hour tour in 30 minutes.

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