

## CONAT, continued from Page A1

than 20 years ago. Conat came by Anagnos' office to visit, only to discover Anagnos was out of the office. Conat was initially disappointed and left a note about Anagnos apparently not working since he was out of the office. However, Conat changed his tune after learning Anagnos was at a school helping youth.

"He said anyone that gives time to kids is good enough for me," Anagnos said. "That's how our relationship got started."

Among other things, Conat was heavily involved with Keizer Rotary and Make-A-Wish Oregon.

"Don Conat was a true Oregon treasure," said Laila Cook, CEO of Make-A-Wish Oregon. "He had a heart of gold and truly used it for good. In my opinion Don and Blanche, his wife, are responsible for the growth of Make-A-Wish Oregon from a small, fledgling nonprofit to the over 200 wishes each year organization it has become."

Cook noted Conat opened his home to Make-A-Wish staff members, volunteers and anyone else interested in learning more about the organization's mission.

"Don worked with a small group of local volunteers to host a golf tournament in support of wishes and he was so proud of the local businesses who would place an advertisement in the tournament brochure, or sponsor the event," Cook said. "Don would literally cut and paste each ad in the brochure long after computers could do the work easily. It was hard to say no to his passion for these brave kids. and I believe businesses would give beyond their budgets after hearing Don's enthusiasm."

Cook noted that enthusiasm continued to the end, even after Conat moved to Avamere Court.

"Don Conat's impact on Make-A-Wish Oregon is impossible to quantify, but easy to feel," Cook said. "He was the embodiment of magic and he will be missed."

Conat, a Keizer resident for 23 years, passed after a battle with cancer. He was born in Minnesota on Feb. 28, 1924. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Blanche, in addition to sons Terry and Rick as well as daughter Linda. Conat is also survived by five grand-children and six great-grand-children.

After graduating from high school in 1942, Conat joined the U.S. Navy. In a 2012 interview with the *Keizertimes*, Conat talked about being a gunner on the USS Somers destroyer during WWII.

"We had another guy figure out distances," Conat said. "I just pointed it where it was supposed to go."

The USS Somers was in support capacity at the invasion of Normandy on the north coast of France, then was dispatched a month later for an invasion along the southern coast of France.

"We knew something big was happening because, at the last stop at port in Corsica, a minister was brought on board and we were told to go to service if we needed to," Conat said in the interview.

The ship had the task of leading a fleet of seven British minesweepers, which resulted in a three-hour battle with two German destroyers.

Following four years of ser-

vice, Conat left the U.S. Navy as a first-class petty officer and married Blanche. He went into the lumber business with his father and brother before leaving to be a baseball umpire.

"It was in SI not too long

ago that he threw Lou Pinella out of a first game for a doubleheader," Anagnos said. "Don was such a great guy. He had great baseball stories. It was fun to sit around the table and visit with Don."

Following the six years as

an umpire, Conat worked for a California paint supplier before retiring and moving to Keizer.

"I never went to college

"I never went to college so [the military] was a pretty good education," Conat said in 2012. "I think I learned a lot about life and what a great country this is."