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Veteran Ken Garrett wants the city of Pendleton to dedicate this bridge on Court Place in honor of veterans.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A VESSEL OF CHANGE

Pendleton veteran seeks memorial for old bridge across from VFW

By **GEORGE PAVEN**
East Oregonian

It is easy to overlook the old bridge on Southeast Court Place in Pendleton, across from the Veterans of Foreign Wars "Let 'er Buck" Post 922.

Built in 1914, the structure used to run over a canal that carried water to the Byers Flour Mill downtown. Since the mill burned down in 1947 — taking an entire city block with it — the bridge has largely faded into the background as new development moved into the area.

Ken Garrett, a former captain of the Pendleton Fire Department and Korean War veteran, figures most people walk or drive past the bridge now without really noticing it. But Garrett, 85, insists it could be something more. He has requested the city designate the bridge as a memorial not only for his fellow veterans, but also for peace.

"I'd like to see peace in the world," Garrett said, flipping through a collection of wartime photos and news articles at his Pendleton home. "People of the world need to start caring for each other."

Garrett penned a letter to the Pendleton City Council in November to raise the issue of a memorial at the bridge, which he envisions as a "vessel of change, from war and hate to peace and friendship."

"It needs to reflect the past, and the hopes and prayers of the future," Garrett wrote. As part of the memorial, Garrett said the city could also give the bridge a fresh coat of stucco and bronze job on the iron piping. On one side, the bridge could display the messages "Remember Pearl Harbor" and "Never Forget 9/11," while on the other side acknowledging the devastation of the Tokyo bombings during World War II. Garrett's earliest impres-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The bridge was built in 1914 and originally spanned a canal that fed the Byers flour mill.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Ken Garrett spends his days compiling scrapbooks filled with local history and his own personal history from the time he spent in Japan during the Korean War.

sions of war date back to his childhood growing up in La Grande. He was 10 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, which instilled a deep hatred of the enemy.

"They weren't even human, as some of the people would

say," he said.

Those views, however, would evolve over time. Garrett joined in the U.S. Navy in 1951, and would spend 14 months in Japan during the Korean War. He vividly recalls one day in 1954 climbing Mount Fuji with a friend, Lee



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Ken Garrett as a 21-year-old in the U.S. Navy and as a five-year-old, inset.

Travis. On the climb back down, Travis suffered a hand injury and several Japanese climbers rushed to administer first aid.

That moment, along with witnessing the beautiful Mount Fuji sunrise, helped to change Garrett's perceptions of the

Japanese. He began researching civilian casualties during WWII, finding that one out of every 78 Japanese people died during the final nine months of the war.

"Millions of Japanese people were killed in that war, along with Americans," Garrett said. "Looking forward, I think about peace. I'd just like that bridge to reflect that."

In his letter to city council, Garrett recalls the city borrowed \$35,000 from the fire department's sinking fund to build the Pendleton Veterans Memorial Armory, now the Pendleton Convention Center, in 1956. The money was never repaid, Garrett said, nor does the building stand any longer as a memorial.

When Garrett joined the fire department in 1964, he said most of his officers were WWI and WWII veterans. Designating the bridge as a new memorial could help make up for the armory, Garrett said, and honor those veterans who went on to serve the fire department.

"In remembering and honoring our veterans, it should include not only military but all these firefighters and law enforcement men and women," he wrote in his letter.

While Garrett continues to push for the memorial bridge, other members of the VFW have ideas of their own for honoring veterans. At the post's Jan. 9 meeting, they agreed to pursue a twofold plan that would place a veterans statue at the fountain near Highway 11 and Southeast Emigrant Avenue, as well as rename Southeast Court Place to Veterans Way.

Robb Corbett, Pendleton city manager, said the proposals will be considered at the council's Feb. 7 meeting.

Contact George Paven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

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