Navy frogman reflects on WWII experiences

By DICK MASON The Observer

COVE — Almost eight decades ago the hopes of Wally Rudd, a U.S. Navy frogman, were sinking like an anchor.

Rudd, who had just survived a dangerous World War II island mission in the South Pacific, was beginning to wonder if he would ever catch a plane in Guam back to his military base at Hawaii's Pearl Harbor.

Rudd, who now lives in Cove, had gone weeks without getting a seat on a plane bound for Pearl Harbor because the U.S. military was giving top priority to officers, letters and packages.

A frustrated Rudd then took matters into his own hands — he airmailed himself, postage-free, to Pearl Harbor.

The Navy frogman and a friend snuck onto a plane bound for Pearl Harbor and hid under bags of mail. Rudd said military bosses thought the pair were in with the mail and yelled for them to come

"But we didn't," Rudd said, "and they never came in and checked on us."

When the stowaways arrived at Pearl Harbor they were not disciplined as mischievous rule breakers. Instead, their fellow sailors

embraced them as though

they were long-lost brothers. "They were afraid that we had died because we had been gone so long," Rudd said.

This was understandable, considering they were part of an underwater demolition team, one of a number that helped give rise to today's legendary Navy SEALS. Rudd's team was responsible for checking the harbors of islands occupied by the Japanese — islands the United States was preparing to invade. The teams checked for coral reefs and obstacles, such as steel triangles the Japanese placed in harbors to sink incoming ships. Rudd often evaded enemy gunfire while swimming in harbors. He said he likely escaped because the Japanese often were firing from 200 yards away and because he made for a small target.

"Often only my head was sticking out (of the water)," said Rudd, who grew up in La Grande.

Still bullets came dangerously close to hitting him, something he could easily see because of how they ricocheted off the waters he was

Rudd was a member Underwater Demolition Team Three. Today, the names of all members of the Navy's underwater demo-



Dick Mason/The Observer

Wally Rudd of Cove holds a 50-caliber bullet on Nov. 17, 2020, at his home in Cove while recounting his experiences while serving as a Navy frogman in World War II.

lition teams, including that of Rudd, are displayed at the National Navy SEALS Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida, said Jack Johnson of Cove. Johnson is a retired Oregon National Guardsman and a good friend of Rudd's.

Navy SEALS today are equipped with high-tech diving gear including air tanks, which do not emit telltale bubbles. Such equipment is light-years away from what Rudd and the other Navy frogmen had at their disposal during WWII. All they had were face masks, fins and

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PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

HIGH

LOW

0.03"

1.64"

0.89"

4.95

45° 31° 75° (1933) -12° (1985)

SATURDAY

FRIDAY

TEMP.

Yesterday

Records

sand shoes — no air tanks or even snorkels.

"Those would have been nice to have," Rudd said.

In lieu of oxygen sources, frogmen had to work underwater on a single breath. Rudd was able to work three minutes at a time on one breath.

"You can do this if you are in good shape," he said.

The perils frogmen faced were great, but perhaps not as frightening as the Japanese kamikaze planes that passed over the convoys of ships Rudd was with during South Pacific journeys. The planes often appeared to be diving into the ship Rudd was on, but always hit other crafts in his convoys instead.

Still, Rudd did not emerge from WWII unscathed. He was on one ship a bomb hit. Three pieces of its shrapnel struck Rudd on his right side. The shrapnel burned at first, but Rudd never experienced great pain.

"I had three chunks of steel under my skin," Rudd

Doctors did not remove the shrapnel, which broke down over time.

"I had that shrapnel until 1963," Rudd said.

Navy frogman The escaped serious injury in WWII, but saw many people around him on ships die or suffer grave wounds.

"I would see guys who had really taken a beating, who had no arms or legs or had their belly shot up, but I never heard them moaning. They never said a word. I really admired them," said Rudd, who has lived in Cove with his wife of 57 years, Marilyn, for 45 years.

Wally Rudd, 94, born in Nebraska and later moved to the Ontario area where he attended Ontario High School. His family later moved to La Grande, where he enrolled at La Grande High School.

Rudd left LHS in 1943 at age 17 to join the Navy. He returned home four years later, but was told by a school staff member he would not be allowed to graduate until he paid for two unreturned library books and a desk he had carved his name in.

La Grande High principal Ron Walk then told the staff member that this was no way to treat a returning serviceman and told Rudd to come back the next day. The following day, Walk awarded Rudd and three other veterans their diplomas.

"If it was not for Ron Walk, I would not have gotten a diploma," Rudd said.

The sheepskin helped Rudd land a railroad job. His later work included a 12-year stint with the La Grande Fire Department.

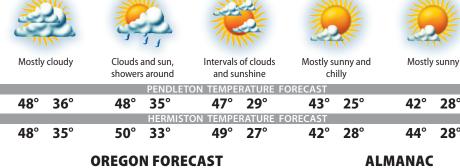
Although Rudd today is credited with being part of a program that evolved into the Navy SEALS, he humbly said he would not have wanted to serve as one.

"Their training is twice as tough as the training we received," Rudd said.

Johnson, who has known Rudd for decades, describes him as a delightful, one-of-akind person.

"He's loves people and is always upbeat. He's a wonderful guy. You will never meet anther Wally," Johnson

Forecast for Pendleton Area WEDNESDAY



Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows. Spokane Wenatchee Aberdeen Astoria Salem Corvallis Albany 52/41 52/39 46/29 Ontario • Eugene Bend 48/29 Caldwell Burns Medford Klamath Falls

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 85° in McAllen, Texas Low -4° in Jackson Hole, Wyo.

ima 43/32 28	41/34
Kennewick 48/37	Walla Walla 50/38 Lewiston
40/37	46/37
Hermiston	Enterprise
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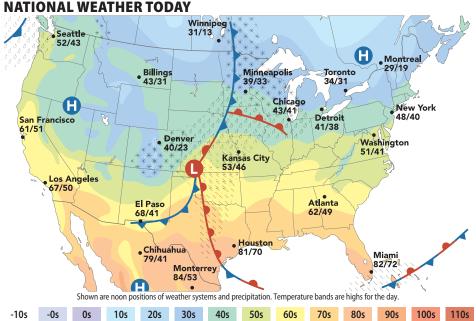
PRECIPITATION 24 hours ending 3 p.m Normal month to date Last year to date Normal year to date **HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest. 70° (2017) -11° (1985) **PRECIPITATION** 24 hours ending 3 p.m Month to date Normal month to date Year to date Last year to date Normal year to date WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.				
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Pendleton	S 6-12	WSW 8-16				
SUN AND MOON						
Sunrise today		7:07 a.m.				
Sunset tonight		4:16 p.m.				
Moonrise today		2:13 p.m.				

SUN AND MOON						
Sunrise today			7:07 a.m.			
Sunset tonight			4:16 p.m.			
Moonrise today			2:13 p.m.			
Moonset today			1:12 a.m.			
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cold front

Economy facing 'permanent damage'

Nearly 55,000 Oregonians have been out of work for last six months as of October

> By MIKE ROGOWAY The Oregonian

SALEM — Oregon's recovery from the coronavirus recession will likely be much faster than from prior downturns, state economists said last week in their quarterly economic forecast. The state's jobless rate has plunged by more than half since the start of the pandemic, from 14.9% in April to 6.9% last month.

And yet they said there are growing signs of "permanent damage" to Oregon's economy as the number of long-term unemployed soars.

The number of Oregonians who have been out of numbered nearly 55,000 in October, quadruple the 13,000 who had been out of work that long before the pandemic. "The longer a spell of

work for at least six months

unemployment lasts, the lower the probability of finding a job and the higher probability of dropping out of the labor force entirely.

This reduces the productive capacity of the economy as fewer people are available for work," state economists wrote in the Nov. 18 forecast.

Congress

In March, extended the duration of unemployment benefits from the usual 26 weeks by an additional 13 weeks. Oregon has paid out \$189 million of those extended benefits during that period.

That 13-week extension expires at the end of the year, though, and there's no indication the divided Congress will act to extend it during that period — and perhaps not after the new Congress and new president take office in January 2021.

Some workers will be eligible for other extended benefits, but the Oregon Employment Department estimates as many as 70,000 in the state could lose those benefits or others for self-employed workers when they expire on the day after Christmas.

Absent new federal support for workers and businesses, Oregon's state forecasters say the damage the pandemic has inflicted on the economy could inflict long-term harm.

"Given that the end of the pandemic is in sight, provided the vaccine or medi cal treatment truly is available sooner rather than later," the wrote, "the key to a full economic recovery is limiting the amount of permanent damage done in the meantime."

IN BRIEF

Western Oregon to make cuts as university faces crunch

MONMOUTH — Several positions and programs at Western Oregon University will be reduced and eliminated next year in an attempt to curb a growing concern for the institution's financial stability.

The Statesman Journal reported the university's board of trustees on Nov. 18 approved an adjusted 2021 budget, which required an update on fall 2020 enrollment numbers.

The previous budget, initially adopted at the board's June meeting, was based on a projected enrollment decrease of 2.5%, officials

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and "many other factors," officials reported enrollment was actually down about 7.9%.

Officials said the new budget reflects the resulting decrease in revenue, as well as financial shortfalls caused by a shift to mostly remote instruction. Cuts in spending, salaries and other expenses will be used to cover the deficit.

This includes the university reducing or eliminating nearly three dozen full-time equivalent positions and programs, including the elimination of a major or minor in anthropology, a major in philosophy and the entire Master's in Music and Master's in Information Technology programs.

Inmate at Walla Walla prison dies of COVID-19

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — An inmate at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla has become the third incarcerated person to die in a state prison from COVID-19.

The Department of Corrections said 62-year-old Michael Cornethan died on Saturday, Nov. 21, at a Walla Walla medical facility of COVID-19 and other health-related issues.

Cornethan had been in prison since 1983, serving a a sentence of life without parole for aggravated murder out of King County. He had been housed in long-term medium custody at the Washington State Penitentiary.

The prison's Medium Security Units are currently on quarantine status to further contain the spread of COVID-19.

Two earlier COVID-19 related deaths occurred in June at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center in Connell.

The Washington State Penitentiary currently has 38 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff, and 110 confirmed cases among prisoners.

— Associated Press

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

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