

# 'He was good to work with'



Courtesy photos

**Tribal Elder Wink Soderberg is a U.S. Navy veteran. He served during the Korean War era from 1951-54.**

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to live.

Wink credits Tribal Council member Chris Mercier and former Tribal Council member and current Early Childhood Education Program Manager Angie Blackwell for helping him get elected to Tribal Council upon returning to Grand Ronde.

"They had my viewpoint," Wink says. "They were always right there. They helped a lot. We thought the same."

Wink also thanks Rebecca Crocker and June Olson for the time they spent helping him get elected to Tribal Council.

Chris Mercier says his only regret from his time together on Tribal Council with Wink was that he didn't pick his brain more and learn more about Wink's time on council before Restoration.

"He was good to work with," Chris Mercier says. "You couldn't ever say

he didn't have a sense of humor. One thing I noticed about him – he was very outgoing and sociable. When I would go to NCAI (National Congress of American Indians) or ATNI (Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians) national, regional Tribal functions they knew Wink.

"He was always out pressing the flesh and making contact with people. People knew who he was and who he worked for. He was a good representative. He was charming in his own way."

**A big TERO proponent**

Wink says one of the things he learned about on one of those Tribal conference trips was Tribal employment rights ordinances. Despite his retirement, Wink sits on the Grand Ronde Tribe's current TERO Commission.

He said he happened upon a TERO session at a conference and decided to sit in to see what he could learn and how it might benefit Grand Ronde Tribal members.

Little did he know that what he learned that day and what he brought back to Grand Ronde would become his signature accomplishment while serving on Tribal Council.

"I was involved with a lot of things," Wink says. "I'm involved in the TERO Commission now. I brought it back right away."

TERO Compliance Officer Duke Kimsey says Wink is an important contributor to the TERO Commission and that he is thankful for the work Wink invested in to establishing the program.

"We've had some great accomplishments," Duke Kimsey says. "Our goal is to get these guys on and get them a career. I think last year we filled 160 positions. With Wink, he is proud of this. He definitely had something to do with it. He inspired it."

Duke Kimsey says that he ad-



**Wink Soderberg, left, and his brother Arthur Soderberg. The brothers were around ages 12 and 14, respectively, in this photo.**

mires Wink for his willingness to speak up and for his efforts to learn the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance.

"He was the first one in my office getting the ordinance, reading up on it, learning it," Duke Kimsey says. "He doesn't mind speaking out and he will ask questions. He is really on top of his game for this. I think it's a good spot for him."

Longtime colleague, friend and current Tribal Council Vice Chair Cheryl A. Kennedy agrees that

Wink is in his element when working on TERO efforts.

"His entrepreneurial spirit still is alive today. He is still out there looking for opportunities," Kennedy says. "He still has a lot of ideas that he thinks about. I'm very pleased that he's on our TERO Commission because he always had an idea that our people can work, they can learn. We are bright people. We're industrious. We just need to get the opportunities that may not have been afforded us. It's a good fit for him."

Kennedy says she is related to Wink and that the two have worked together for the betterment of the Tribe and its people since before 1983's Restoration. Kennedy says that Wink was part of a small but persevering group trying to determine the vision of and future direction of the Tribe.

"Wink really hasn't changed throughout the years," Kennedy says. "I think that he maintained the same forward-looking attitude. We were trying to establish ourselves."

Wink says he really hasn't changed much and that his core values of family being important and the people of the Tribe being his priority are still the same.

"All I ever wanted to do, I didn't care if I had money or anything, all I ever wanted to do in my life was be successful at something. That was my main goal," Wink says. ■

**Tribal Elder Wink Soderberg, right, with, from left, his wife Kathy and their sons, Gary, Steven and Bill, in 2010.**

