

# Community Voices

## MILITARY CHRONICLES — PEDALING THROUGH HISTORY



BY CAL APPLEBEE  
Special to Siuslaw News

the early 1800s in some pretty unusual configurations. By the late 1800s the “safety bike” version became fairly standard and, soon after, militaries around the globe began experimenting with them as a tool of war.

France was the first to explore the bicycle’s military capabilities in 1887 and the U.S. began in 1891 for messengers and relay riders in the First Signal Corps of the Connecticut National Guard.

WWI saw bicycles used by the militaries on both sides of the conflict, including the U.S. when it entered the war in 1917, playing a vital role of transporting soldiers and supplies to and from front lines.

While they didn’t appear to be readily adaptable to combat roles, the U.S. military did realize

they could make a difference in certain circumstances.

WWII again saw use of bicycles, both in the military and on the home front in partial response to rationing and war-time shortages. But as seen in the movies and particularly archival military photos, the use appears more specific to military camps and airfields.

Not a lot of evidence could be found regarding the use of bicycles by American forces during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. They were, however, used extensively in Vietnam by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, particularly to re-supply forces along the rough terrain, often further degraded by American bombing activity.

In the modern military

of the U.S., bicycles are still in use by the Marine Corps and Army Special Forces, who employ the “Paratrooper” folding bike developed by Montague. It is designed to allow airborne soldiers to drop out of an airplane into combat with a bike, ready to roll.

Bicycles both evolved, as well as are produced in multiple countries, as well as companies. Here in America, military bikes were manufactured by various iconic bicycle companies, particularly for WWII, such as Schwinn and their “Defense” model; Huffy who produced over 4,000 bikes for the war effort; Columbia under several entity names; and Cleveland Welding Company who produced the “Hawthorne” and “Roadmaster,” among others.

As with other product production during the years, manufacturers of other goods such as the Davis Sewing Machine Company, also switched to military bicycles during the war effort as well.

Unfortunately, few original, authentic bicycles, particularly from WWII, survived the war. Collectors should be extremely cautious when purchasing that the specimen they’re seeking is not a fake or replica.

As with other types of vintage/historic military vehicles, a replica can be created as long as it is presented appropriately as what I term a “tribute” vehicle or bicycle. I recently completed two such tributes bicycles — a 1970s-era Schwinn “Heavy Duty” restored as a Vietnam-era bicycle,

and a 1980s-era Huffy restored as a post-war/Cold War bicycle of the Ground Observation Corps.

Both bicycles were a lot of fun to restore and re-create, including the specific accoutrements to display with both. Better head out to the garage and check your old bicycle; you might have a diamond in the rough ready to be brought back to life!

For more military heritage, visit the Oregon Coast Military Museum located on Kingwood Street adjacent to the Florence Municipal Airport, open from noon to 4 p.m., Friday thru Sunday, or by visiting the museum’s website at [www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com](http://www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com).

## THE MORAL OF THE STORY — LOVE IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER



BY KAREN D. NICHOLS  
Special to Siuslaw News

I could sketch Ralph’s face. When I close my eyes, I can visualize his sapphire blue eyes all the way to his toes. (The second one is longer than the big toe.)

In 1980, Ralph and I ‘d been married six years. To say I was still on his pedestal would be nearly accurate, and I believed he rode his white steed. In those days, I read Mademoiselle magazine even though I was a madam (married woman in case you had the wrong notion of madam). Besides seeing current fashions,

my favorite part of the magazine was the “quiz.” You might determine your best colors to wear, what kind of man is your match, or where your ideal place to live would be.

One afternoon, Ralph and I lounged by our backyard pool. Besides being an avid swimmer, I’d sit, basking and reading. Thumbing through my Mademoiselle, I noticed the quiz. Pen in hand, I finished my part to answer questions to decide — Was my man right for me? My answers proved he was my

match made in heaven.

Then I came to the “Ask Him” part of the quiz. So, I ask him about his favorite kind of woman.

“Which do you prefer? Petite, average, or tall?”

To which he answered, “Tall.”

So much better for him, since I was even taller than before I shrunk back to my current stature of five-foot-eight.

Number 2: “Slender, muscular or pleasingly plump?” I asked. If today, I suppose he’d answer the latter and I’d

have to slug him, but he chose “slender,” which matched my build in 1980.

“Blonde, brunette or redhead?”

As I expected, he chose brunette. I guess, were it now, as I have white hair, he’d better say none of the above, but I was a brunette then.

“Hazel, blue, green, gray or brown eyes?”

“Brown,” came his reply. Casting my eyes downward, I asked, “Ralph, what color are my eyes?” “Brown,” he said, grinning.

Well, now, should I be mad? You see, my eyes are technically no color. For years, I’d put hazel on my driver’s license until I just happened to look hazel up in the dictionary. When I wear dark green, my eyes will look dark green, other colors and different light can make my eyes appear blue, blue-green, or gray, but the one color they never are is *brown*.

**The moral of the story:** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder — but you should see rather than just look.

# We Are Better Together

As we look to a new year, we’re celebrating what connects us as a community, and what we can do to bridge our divides. From virtual events and local perspectives to cultural insights and conversation starters, we invite you to join us in making our community better, together.

Help rebuild our economy by supporting these and other local businesses!

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