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Contributed photo/Tanni Wenger Photography Studio
The Grant Union Prospectors celebrate during their rise to the top at the OSAA Volleyball State Championships.

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Forest reform bill passes House

Rep. Walden applauds effort in conference call

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

For the fifth time in as many years, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill Wednesday that would expedite certain forest thinning projects to lower the risk of destructive wildfires across the country.



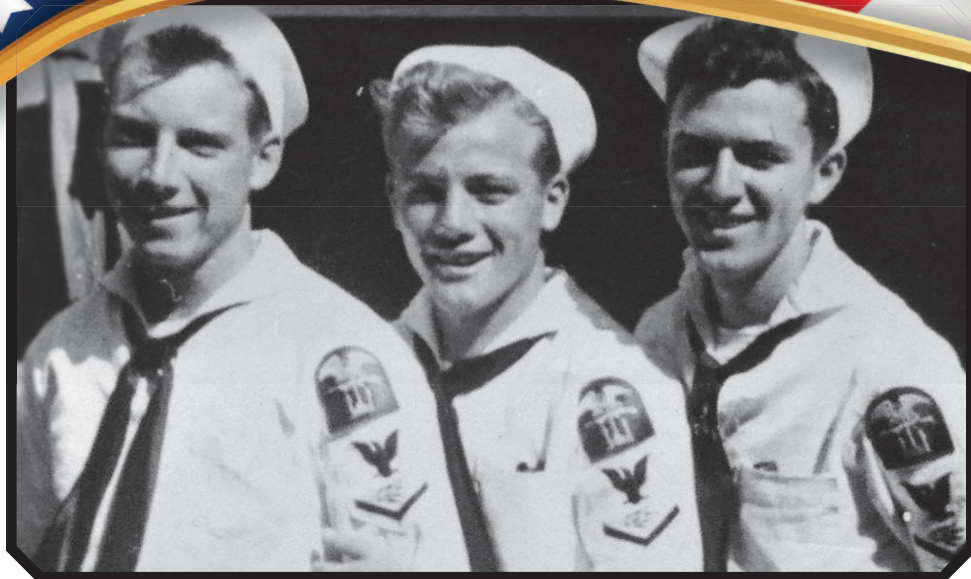
U.S. Rep. Greg Walden

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Oregon) hailed it as a big day for the Northwest during a conference call with reporters, saying the bill not only solves the issue of "fire borrowing" but gives agencies more leeway to thin overcrowded and diseased forests.

Fire borrowing refers to the longstanding practice of taking money away from forest management programs to pay for fire suppression, making it even more difficult for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to get ahead of the problem. Instead, the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017 would create a new account under the Disaster Relief Fund —

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Celebrating Veterans



Contributed photo
Navy Radioman Third Class Bob Kimberling, left, stands with some war buddies during their service in World War II.

BOB KIMBERLING recalls WWII service

Navy vet a 70-year member of American Legion

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Navy World War II veteran Bob Kimberling of Prairie City was 16 when he heard about the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor.

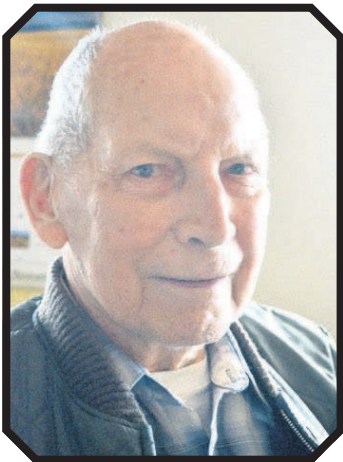
In 1944, at age 18, he signed up for the selective service. He and his friend Vernon Reynolds drove together to Pendleton then rode a train to Portland where Kimberling signed up for the Navy and Reynolds for the Army.

Entering the service in September of 1944, Kimberling went from working on his dad's ranch, to boot camp in Farragut, Idaho, to the Pacific Fleet Radio Strikers School at Pearl Harbor.

He was in radio school for 22 weeks, he said, learning to send and receive Morse code.

Kimberling was a part of the Air Support Control Unit Amphibious Forces Pacific Fleet.

"We were in a unit invasion of an island," he said. "We might be in the communications ship



Bob Kimberling

in the harbor and have a small ship go in and tell them where to fire."

He added, "You'd be copying all the messages from the planes and boats in the invasion, and we were supposed to copy that on a typewriter and turn it over to the superiors."

When asked if his ship ever came under fire, he said, "We may have dodged a torpedo or two."

Toward the end of the war, he was aboard a ship headed to the invasion of Japan, he said.

"When the Japanese surrendered, the ship turned around back to Maui," he said.

He said, after his ship came back to base camp, "It was kind of like a vacation — it was Maui."

Kimberling was honorably discharged June 4, 1946, a radioman third class.

His friend Reynolds returned earlier from the war after being shot in the thigh in Okinawa,

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SOPHIA NICODEMUS joined Air Force for career, service

Vet recognized for top secret work

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

For Sophia Nicodemus, joining the Air Force was a career and service decision.

"It was a career option with college benefits," she said. "I also wanted to serve my country."

Nicodemus graduated from high school in Mesa, Arizona, in 1999 and was working at a car parts store when someone suggested she join the Air Force. She had been a good student in high school and was considering going to college, but she had scored well on the military's ASVAB general competency test. The Air Force recruiter she saw signed her up for a linguist job in intelligence work.

"At first, I wanted to see some action and get deployed," she said.

Intel training

Nicodemus was sent to Phoenix, where she underwent the Defense Language Abilities Battery tests.

"I was already bilingual and had taken four years of French, but these tests used made-up languages with nonsense sounds," she said.

Next was six months of boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

"I wasn't an athlete in school — I always worked," she said. "But Air Force boot camp is not as hard as Army and Marine boot camp."

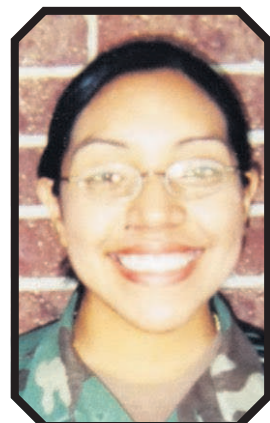
Nicodemus was sent to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, for technical training in Spanish and different dialects. She learned native speakers couldn't be complacent and had to study hard.

"It was full-time on top of my military responsibilities, such as exercise," she said. "It made for long days."

She was next sent to Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas, to learn how to perform her job for the Air Force.

"Altogether, I spent about a year training for my job," she said.

Nicodemus was at Medina Annex at Lackland awaiting top secret clearance for her job at the Medina



Contributed photo

Air Force Staff Sgt. Sophia Gutierrez, now Sophia Nicodemus.

DEAN NODINE recalls Navy time during Korean War Page 8



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