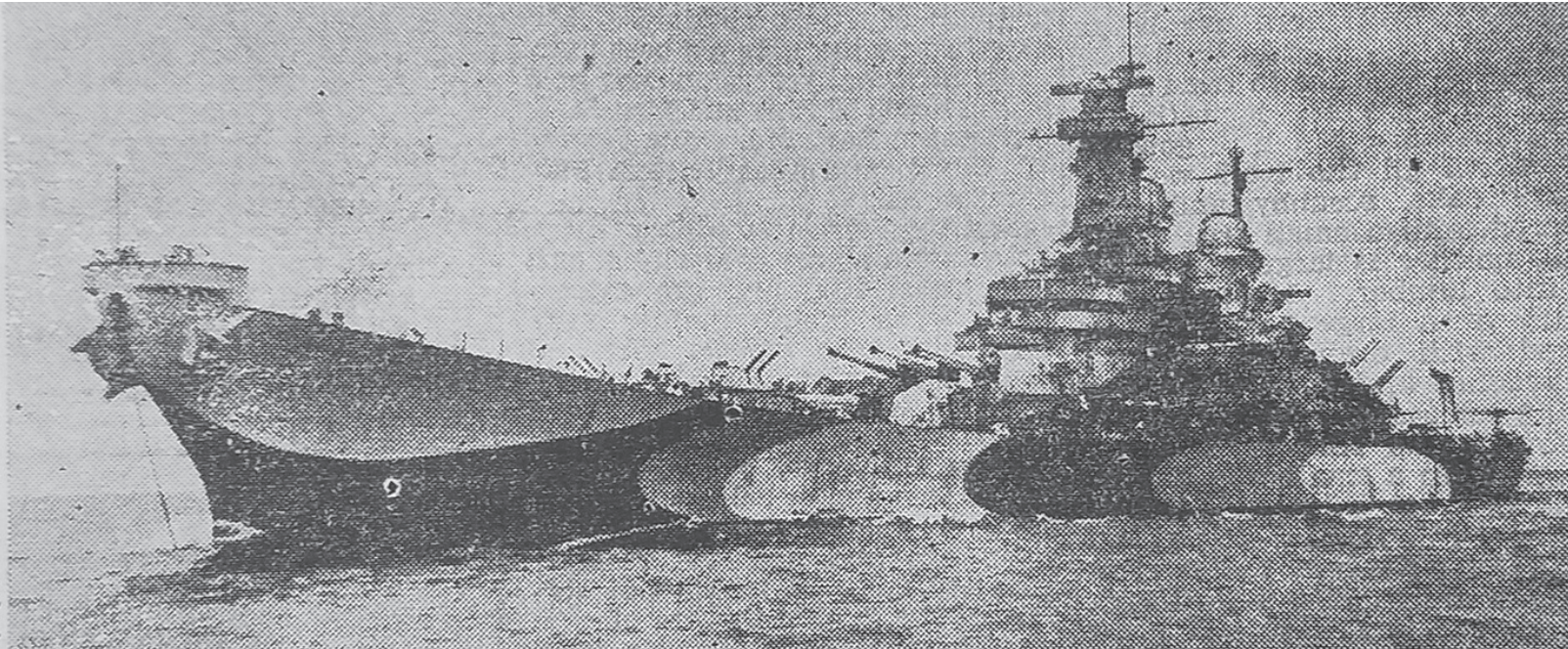


GRANT COUNTY MAKES ITS MARK IN WORLD WAR II

AS THE SECOND WORLD WAR CAME TO AN END 75 YEARS AGO, THE BLUE MOUNTAIN EAGLE REPORTED ON THE HEROICS AND HONORABLE SERVICE OF MANY LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO SERVED



The USS Missouri, where the Japanese signed official documents surrendering in World War II.

U.S. Navy photo

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Seventy-five years ago, the 33rd President of the United States, Harry Truman, announced the end of World War II as Japan surrendered a month after atomic bombs leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Men from various parts of Grant County, from doctors to principals and more, began returning to the community after serving their country. Many of their stories of heroism, awards and experiences were reported by the Blue Mountain Eagle in 1945 as life after the war began to settle.

Aug. 17, 1945
Japanese Surrender Ends War!
“The war is over!” states an article from the Eagle. “At 7 p.m. Tuesday,

President Truman announced Japanese acceptance of surrender terms and read the formal message relayed from Emperor Hirohito through the Swiss government...”

To rejoice in victory, Grant County towns joined for a Gala Celebration of the landmark occasion, according to the Aug. 17 edition of The Eagle.

“Announcement of the Japanese capitulation set off joyful and noisy celebrations in all Grant County towns,” The Eagle reported. “In John Day and Canyon City streets were jammed shortly following the radio announcement of the war’s end. The touting of the car horns, the ringing of the church bells and the shriek of the fire sirens told the glad story.”

The energy was the same in Prairie City and they had street dances followed by a free dance at the

Grange Hall which filled the building to capacity. Mt. Vernon also celebrated with a big dance that night.

This edition of the Eagle also began reporting the stories of various men in service from Grant County during the war.

USS Lexington Survivor Home from South Pacific

Robert E. Wright, Motor Machinist 2/c, is home on a 30-day leave after active duty in the South Pacific.

He is visiting in Seneca with his wife Bette, son Jack, 20 months, and Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Wright.

Wright has been in the Navy for four years, during which time he has served on the Atlantic, and recently has seen action in the Leyte, Luzon and Okinawa invasions. He is a survivor of the USS Lexington sinking during the early part of this war. Upon completion of his leave, Wright

will report to San Francisco, California, for further assignment.

Aug. 24, 1945
Overseas veterans headed for home

A group of overseas veterans flown from Europe into Miami Army Air Field by the Air Transport Command were heading for their homes in California and Oregon Tuesday hoping it was the last day of the war. Some were slated for separation from the service, but many others were destined for further action in the Pacific after furloughs. Included in the group was a Prairie City Man: S/Sgt. Tom F. Edmunson, 27, 3rd Infantry Division, 32 months service overseas terminated in Germany, eight battle stars, invasion arrowhead shared distinguished unit citation.

Dayville man aboard Mighty A:

“ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE JAPANESE CAPITULATION SET OFF JOYFUL AND NOISY CELEBRATIONS IN ALL GRANT COUNTY TOWNS. IN JOHN DAY AND CANYON CITY STREETS WERE JAMMED SHORTLY FOLLOWING THE RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WAR’S END. THE TOUTING OF THE CAR HORNS, THE RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELLS AND THE SHRIEK OF THE FIRE SIRENS TOLD THE GLAD STORY.”
—The Blue Mountain Eagle, Aug. 17, 1945

which raided Japanese mainland twice

Clarence O. Salsbery, seaman, first class, USNR, is serving aboard this battleship which in one month’s time raided the Japanese mainland twice, bombarded a Japanese-held

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Lent’s fighting spirit kept him alive for four years as a prisoner of war

Future John Day business owner captured and interned with over 1,000 other civilian contractors on Wake Island in the western Pacific Ocean in 1941

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day resident Leslie Traylor said her father, Oscar “Whitey” Lent, was always just her dad.

However, before he was her dad, Lent, a longtime John Day resident and business owner who died in 1982, was one of over 1,000 civilian contractors taken prisoner in December 1941, when Japanese troops overran Wake Island in the western Pacific Ocean.

“He was just our dad, but when you look at (his diary), you can see he was another person before he was our dad,” she said. “Before us, dad had a whole other life.”

Author Bonita “Bonnie”



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Leslie Traylor looks at memorabilia from her father, Oscar Lent, who spent four years in an internment camp after being captured as a civilian contractor on Wake Island.

Gilbert, who teaches history at North Idaho College, said the Battle of Wake Island, a 16-day siege, occurred the same day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Gilbert said most civilians aided

Marines in the defense and the manning of the guns to defend the island.

Gilbert, who wrote “Building for War: The Epic Saga of the Civilian Contractors and Marines of Wake Island in

World War II,” said 93 Americans were killed, while many more were rounded up and captured, including Lent and Gilbert’s father, Ted Olson, and grandfather, Harry Olson.

Gilbert said 44 civilians and 49 soldiers died in the siege.

She said the Japanese massacred an additional 98 civilian prisoners of war on the island in 1943, and a total of 194 civilian and military POWs died on Wake Island from 1941 to 1945.

As many of the 1,145 contractors, Lent worked for Morrison-Knudsen Co. of Boise and recruited laborers from the region to build roads on Wake Island. In winter 1941, the country was still in the midst of the Depression, and good-paying jobs were scarce.

Gilbert said about 135

See Lent, Page B7

BEAUTY OUT OF DUST: 75 YEARS LATER, JAPANESE-AMERICANS REMEMBER WORLD WAR II INCARCERATION

By Sierra Dawn McClain
EO Media Group

Morning sunlight spilled into the garage, illuminating a bent figure, about 5-foot-2. George Tsugawa was plucking weeds from potted plants. At 99, he still helps with the family-run nursery.

Tsugawa Nursery, minutes from his home, is a marvel of floral carpets, Japanese maples and fairy-like bonsai forests, drawing garden enthusiasts from across the Northwest.

But in addition to its inviting, multicolored beauty, the nursery holds a story of hardship and hope during wartime. Its founders, George and his late wife Mable, were both Japanese-American prison camp survivors.

Seventy-five years ago this week — Sept. 2, 1945 — Japan formally surrendered, ending World War II. In the months

following, thousands of Japanese-Americans, including the Tsugawa family, were released from prison camps that had isolated them.

After the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, resentment and fear festered toward people of Japanese descent. Even those born in the U.S. as late as February 1942 were included in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Executive Order No. 9066, which led to all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast — 120,000 people — to be put in prison camps, euphemistically called “internment” centers. Most were U.S. citizens.

High school students have learned about this chapter of World War II in history class. The lesser-known story is how the Japanese-American

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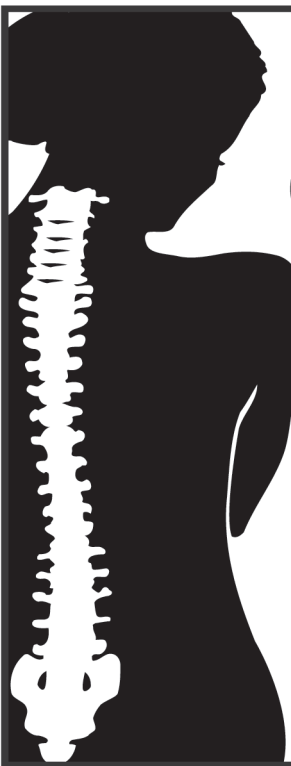


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