

**Obituaries**

**Lorna Elaine Davis**

Lorna Elaine Davis, 82, of Irrigon, died Aug. 16, 2006 at her home.

A memorial graveside service will be held at 1 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 26 at the Desert Lawn Memorial Cemetery in Irrigon. Disposition was by cremation. A gathering will follow at Stokes Landing Senior Center in Irrigon.

She was born July 8, 1924, in Portland, to Lige and Wilma Boyer Eaton. She graduated from Girls Poly High School in Portland. She worked for the telephone company.

She married Walter Davis on Sept. 14, 1970, in Vancouver, WA.

She lived in Gresham, Portland and moved to Irrigon in 1997.

She was a member of the VFW Ladies auxiliary, Irrigon Watermelon Festival board and the Planning Commission. She enjoyed crocheting, knitting, traveling, fishing, gardening and canasta.

She is survived by her husband; daughters, Karen Hunt of Vancouver, WA and Debra Lehman of Portland; stepdaughters, Patty Foreman of Boring and Crystal Thurman of Auburn, WA; son, Gary William Falk of Gresham; stepson, Michael Feldmann of Marion, MT; sister, Lois Packard of Seattle; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and a niece.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, in care of Burns Mortuary of Hermiston, which is in care of arrangements.

**Jean Elizabeth McElhinny Nelson**

Jean Elizabeth McElhinny Nelson, 90, died Aug. 19, 2006 at Mount Angel.

She was born Oct. 8, 1915 at Roseburg.

A celebration of life is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 11, 2006.

Obituary and information to follow.

Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner is in charge of arrangements.

**BUSINESS CARDS**  
Heppner Gazette-Times  
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**Local Marine Travis Bellamy in article**

**Tank mechanics crucial to Marines' efforts in Iraq**

[Editor's note: Cpl. Travis Bellamy is the son of Sam and Mary Kay Bellamy of Lexington. He graduated from Heppner High School in 2002.]

Published Aug. 16, 2006  
By Staff Sgt. Jim Goodwin, 1st Marine Division

Leaning on an American tank in Iraq's Al Anbar province, Cpl. Manuel Morangomez says he doesn't need any medals or "atta boys" to help him get through a seven month deployment.

The satisfaction of helping Marine infantrymen stay alive in arguably Iraq's most dangerous region is all the reward the 26-year-old Marine needs while serving in this combat zone.

"This tank is saving lives," said Morangomez, a tank mechanic with the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based Company C, 1st Tank Battalion. "This keeps grunts from getting killed. When we send these back into the fight, that's the reward."

The Dallas, Texas, native, along with the half-dozen or so other mechanics on this sprawling U.S. military air base, spend 12-plus hours a day, usually six or more days a week, repairing and maintaining the company's fleet of M1A1 Main Battle Tanks.

C Company is currently attached to Regimental Combat Team 7, the U.S. military unit responsible for providing security and mentoring Iraqi Security Forces in western Anbar - an area more than 30,000-square miles in size, or about the size of South Carolina, according to the Marines here.

Working in blistering heat, the mechanics have spent nearly two days now tearing apart one of the company's 68-ton, tan-colored tanks to find a damaged component, hidden well within the tank's underside.

The task seems tedious, but the mechanics seem used to spending countless hours tinkering and handling thousands of metallic parts to reach one broken component.

"If the mechs don't do their job well, these tanks don't roll - period," said Gunnery Sgt. Jeffrey W. Hyrne, a 32-year-old from Louisville, Ky., and Company C's maintenance chief. "It could cost someone, or a crew, their lives."

In addition to supporting the regiment's infantrymen with massive

amounts of firepower on the battlefield, C Company's tanks and their crews are considered an invaluable asset to Marines "on the ground" - they add an extra layer of protection for patrols and convoys traveling Iraq's bomb-laden roads.

They also provide added protection for U.S. and Iraqi military posts and patrols throughout the region, not to mention the "intimidation factor" a 68-ton tank rolling down a road can instill in insurgents.

But Iraq's blistering summer temperatures and rough terrain can take their toll on military vehicles, even tanks. C Company is also charged with conducting resupply missions, adding more wear and tear on the tanks.

The mechanics collectively stated that for every hour a tank is operated, about six hours of regular maintenance is required to keep the tank operable, "give or take."

"There will always be something to fix, and when there are problems with it, troubleshooting can be extremely difficult," said Cpl. Travis P. Bellamy, one of C Company's tank mechanics who works with 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment near the Iraqi-Syrian border.

"For example: a wire harness with 200 wires in it. If one of those wires is faulty, you have to figure out one by one which wire it is that's bad," continued Bellamy, a 22-year-old from Heppner, Ore.

As tank crews roll their tanks back onto the Company's wide-open lot, commonly referred to as "the ramp" by the Marines who work here, it's the mechanics' responsibility to perform both routine maintenance and assess and repair damage.

But working on a tank is not like cracking open the hood of a car and going to work, according to the mechanics.

An M1A1 has thousands upon thousands of various components and systems, which mean the mechanics are constantly learning as they work.

"The manual's not always going to tell you what's broke and how to fix it," said Lance Cpl. Robert S. Collins, who says he "learns something new every day" as a mechanic. "These tanks are logging in some time, and you are constantly working."

At 25, Collins is the group's junior Marine, and mechanic. He joined the Corps in October 2004, after returning to high school to earn his diploma - "The day I had all my credits in my transcript, I went to the recruiter's office," said Collins, a native of Atlanta, Ga.

Aside from "the Gunny," Morangomez is the crew's senior man - he serves as the "ramp chief" noncommissioned officer - a billet normally filled by a sergeant or staff sergeant. As such, he's responsible for the facilities and equipment used on the large, open lot where C Company houses and maintains their tanks and other vehicles.

Serving his third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Morangomez says he's worked on about 60 tanks in his four-plus years in the Corps. Like the rest of the mechanics, he said he couldn't imagine doing anything else in the Marines.

"Where else can you go and work long hours?" he said. "Yeah, we're workaholics, (but) I love it. There's no other way to describe it."

By the end of their third day tearing apart this particular tank, the mechanics have discovered that the root of the problem - a dented fuel cell - is repairable, which saves the company from losing the tank entirely.

Tanks which can't be repaired by the mechanics have to be shipped elsewhere for repairs, or replaced all together. That means one less tank on Iraq's roads, which is unacceptable to the mechanics.

"These boys did a good job assessing it," said Hyrne, a 14-year Marine veteran and the mechanics' immediate supervisor. "We have to be able to get her up and running. You don't want a tank out there and it breaks down."

"The maintenance is required and cannot be put off like you can put off maintenance on a car," adds Bellamy. "If the work is not kept up daily the tank will not run."

Hyrne gave a bit more blunt example - "If they (mechanics) made even little mistakes, the engine could blow-up, and the tank would not operate at all."

In addition to maintaining the Company's tanks and various other military vehicles, they're also responsible for recovering tanks, trucks, and other vehicles which break down "outside the wire" - Marine-speak for pretty much any location outside the protection of a base or outpost.

Utilizing a large, treaded, tank-like vehicle fitted with a large tow crane and cable, the mechanics can tow a broken-down tank or other vehicle back to their base so they can assess any damage and immediately begin repairs.

Peering over his shoulder and breaking just long enough from his work on the tank to get a few words in, Cpl. Stephen R. Unizkiewicz, of Centereach, N.Y., recalled

the time the crew had to recover a tank which hit a mine and lodged itself into the side of a hill.

"It was brutal - 10 hours to get that tank moving," said Unizkiewicz, a 21-year-old who is slated to marry his girlfriend in New York next year. A first-time deployer to Iraq, he tries not to worry his family with too many details of what he's seen while serving in Iraq, he said.

"I'm not worried...but it's harder for the family," he said. "I've seen IEDs go off, and you get nervous, but your training kicks in. It's hard to explain that to the family, though."

About five months into a seven-month deployment, C Company's mechanics all have family

and friends back in the States eagerly awaiting their return - girlfriends, wives, mothers, children, parents.

But these Marines, whose once-tan coveralls and combat boots now carry grease stains and worn spots, try not to think about home too much or what they're missing back in the U.S. Instead, they stay focused on the task at hand - keeping the Company's tanks up and running, so the Marines "on the ground" who daily combat a seemingly ever-present insurgency in western Anbar have a bit more firepower and protection.

After all, tanks, and lives, are at stake.

"I don't keep track of time out here," said Morangomez. "I keep track of how many tanks we fix."

**Over the Tee Cup**

Fifteen ladies gathered at Willow Creek Country Club, Tuesday, Aug. 15 for ladies' play.

Virginia Grant took low gross of the field. Sandi Hanna, Evonne Severson and Bernice Lott tied for low net of the field. Joanne Barbee, Betty Christman and Pat Edmundson tied for least putts of the field.

In flight A, Karen Thompson took low gross and long drive; Corol Mitchell took low net; and Eva Kilkenny took least putts and was closest to the pin on hole #10.

In flight B, Lois Hunt took low gross; Luvilla Sonstegard took low net; and Hanna took long drive and closest to the pin.

In flight C, Lorrene Montgomery took low gross and long drive; Pat Dougherty took low net and closest to the pin; and Suzanne Jepsen took least putts.

Hanna had a birdie on hole #10 and Grant had a birdie on hole #18.

Be sure to prepare for the Club Championship/Eddi Skow Tournament set for Sept. 5 and 6.

**Area non-profits receive grants**

The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) has announced that in July, \$5.5 million in designated grants were disbursed to 227 Oregon nonprofit organizations. OCF's designated funds are those funds from which donors name one or more specific organizations they wish to receive annual support.

OCF is a permanent endowment built from funds created by donors who are dedicated to improving the quality of life in their communities. Established in 1974, over the past three decades OCF and its donors have distributed more than \$305 million in grants and scholarships throughout Oregon.

In total, July grants of \$70,000 went to nonprofits in Eastern and Central Oregon. Highlights of the grants made in Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler counties are: Blue Mountain Community College (Pendleton)-\$10,317 for scholarships for nursing students; Morrow County Museum (Heppner)-\$3,728 for the purchase of books and materials; Cities of Fossil, Mitchell and Spray- \$1,112 each for volunteer ambulance services.

Founded 32 years ago, the Oregon Community Foundation works in partnership with individual, family, business and organizational donors to improve the lives of Oregonians through philanthropy and by building an endowment- now more than \$768 million- for Oregon's future. OCF provides more than \$42 million annually in grants and scholarships statewide.

For more information, visit [www.ocf1.org](http://www.ocf1.org) or call (503) 227-6846.

**Red Hat meetings suspended**

The Red Hat Rowdies will suspend further meetings, due to lack of participation. Anyone wishing to lead this group back to being active may call Sally Walker at 676-9112 or Julie Saling at 676-9957.

**HHS to hold student registrations**

Heppner High School will be holding new student and returning student registration for students in the seventh through 12th grades on Aug. 25, from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-3 p.m.

Student fees are: Student Body fee- 7-12 grades, \$15; towel fee- \$2; computer lab fee- \$5; and yearbook (optional) \$30. Student sport pay-to-participate fees are: grades 7-8, \$50 and 9-12, \$75 per sport. There is a \$150 maximum sport fee per student per year and \$300 maximum per family per year.

**4th Annual Fund Raising Dinner**  
to benefit the Ione Education Foundation  
**AUCTION and RAFFLE ITEMS**  
Saturday, September 23rd  
Social hour at 6 p.m. / Dinner at 7 p.m.  
at the Ione American Legion Hall

Menu: Prime Rib, Crab, Shrimp, Salad, Baked Potato, Dessert. Two drinks included with meal (choose from beer, wine and soft drinks).

**Ticket Prices:**  
Adults - \$25.00  
Children 12 and under - \$10.00  
6 and under - free  
Tickets available at Bank of Eastern Oregon, Ione

**Come enjoy a fun evening and help support the Ione School.**  
The Ione Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

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