



VOL. 131 N.O. 9 8 Pages Wednesday, February 29, 2012 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

## Local man collects WWII memorabilia

By Andrea Di Salvo

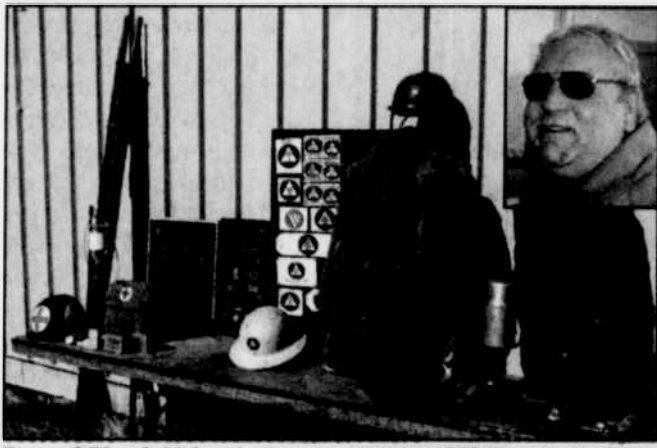
Local history buffs will have a chance to peruse a stunning collection of World War II memorabilia this weekend.

The collection belongs to Lexington resident Charles "Chuck" Nelson. The 61-year-old began collecting World War II artifacts six years ago, but says his fascination with the period goes back much further.

"To understand my love of history," says Nelson, "you have to understand my history, where I've been."

A true Morrow County native, Nelson was one of the first children born at Pioneer Memorial Hospital when it first opened. (Interestingly, his daughter, Courtney, was the last scheduled birth at the hospital.) He was raised on the Nelson family farm near Lexington and graduated from Ione before going on to attend Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR. He later obtained a four-year science degree in agronomical crop science from OSU.

Nelson inherited a love of history from his mother, Jean, who was one of the founding members of the Morrow County Historical Society. His interest in World War II began later, when he served in Germany



Part of Chuck Nelson's (inset) extensive WWII traveling display. —Contributed photo

at the end of the Vietnam War. He was drafted while in college, Nov. 2, 1972, in the first lottery for Vietnam.

"I was sitting in the TV room in the dorm at Oregon State," said Nelson, who recalls that his draft number was 48. "Anybody who went through that might forget their wedding date, but they won't forget their lottery number."

Nelson entered the U.S. Army. When the Army saw his math scores, he was assigned to fire direction control in the 5th Corps Artillery. His job dealt with the technical, computer-related aspects of big artillery guns, such as the amount of powder needed, firing direction and angles, and accounting for wind, temperature and the rotation of the earth. Rather than being sent to Southeast Asia, though, Nelson ended

up in Darmstadt, Germany, near Frankfurt. There, the U.S. troops were housed in World War II barracks.

In fact, everywhere Nelson looked, he says, he saw history. He saw the Berlin Wall and the Eagle's Nest, stayed in a hotel that once housed Hitler's generals, and went to former concentration camps all over the country. He bought a car and traveled throughout Europe, drinking in the history, especially the history of the second world war.

"There are some things in human history that have changed the history of the world," Nelson says. "This man (Hitler) was in the right time to do this. It wasn't in a good way, but the things he did are still felt now."

Nelson says Germany was ripe for Hitler's rise, with hyperinflation at an all-time high after World War I. He remembers, especially, seeing a picture of a woman going out to buy bread and cheese with a wheelbarrow full of money.

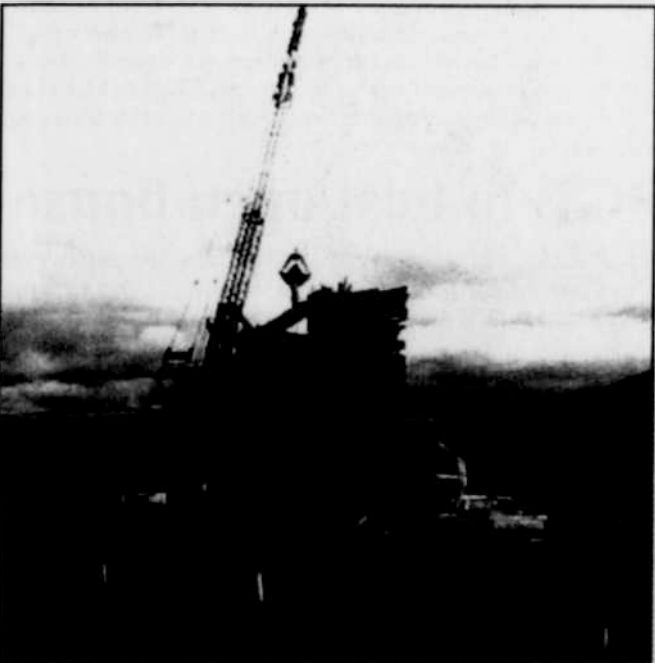
"Hitler promised work and food. Everything he promised, happened. He just didn't mention he'd start a war to do it."

It was while stationed in Germany that he met his wife, Lisa. Her father was an Army chaplain from North Carolina, and she was attending school in Munich. After Nelson's deployment ended, they were married and moved back to Oregon. Nelson has worked on the family farm ever since, while Lisa spent 16 years as a teacher in Heppner.

Nelson's collection didn't begin, though, until a trip to visit his wife's family in North Carolina. It was while browsing an antique

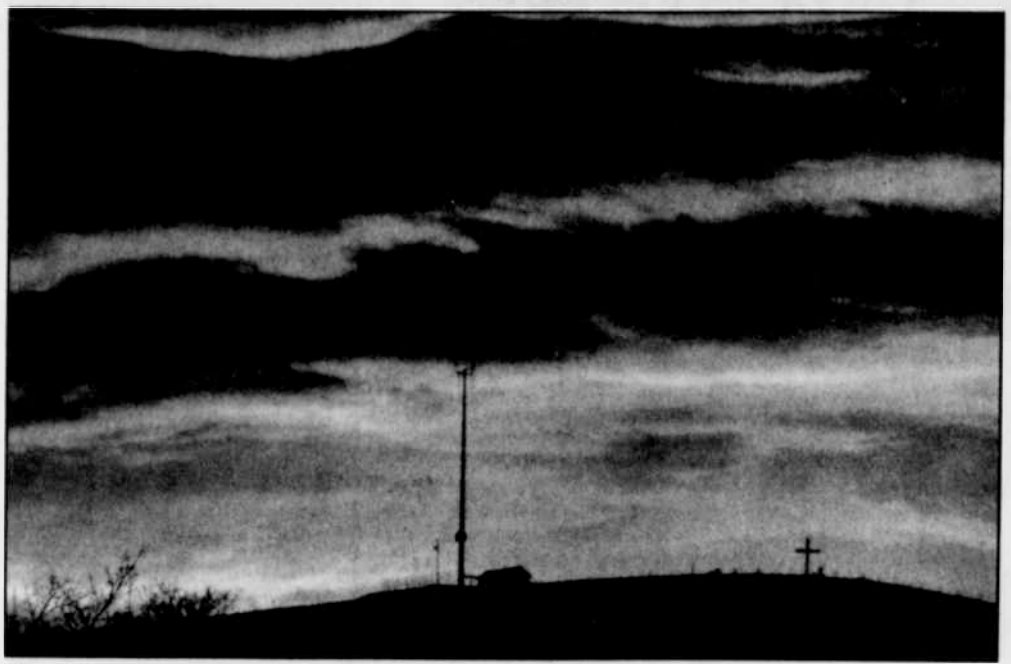
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## Piece of history comes down



The McNab grain elevator west of Ione was last week in the process of being torn down. An exact date of the elevator's construction was not available; however, the Gazette-Times did learn that on April 1, 1940, Morrow County Grain Growers purchased the assets of Farmers Elevator Company, adding Heppner, McNab and Ione elevators. —Photo by Terry Harper

## Rising sun puts on light show on Heppner Hill



The rising sun put on a glorious display of color over Heppner Hill recently...a sight only enjoyed by true early birds like the one who captured this sunrise on film. —Photo by Dick Paris

## Simulated hot air balloon tour part of new visitor center

Port of Morrow Commissioners talk to Heppner Chamber of Commerce

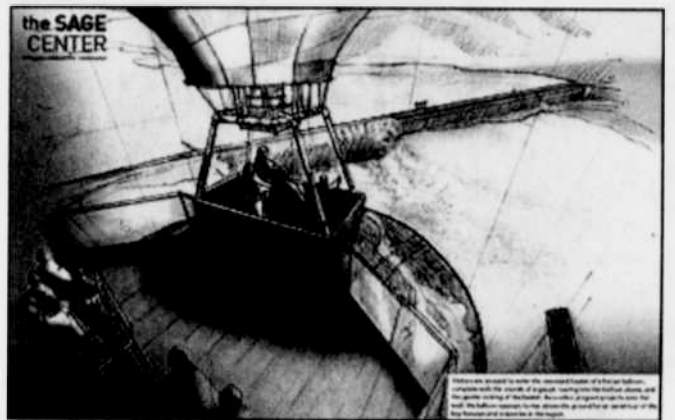
By David Sykes

All Port of Morrow directors, as well as general manager Gary Neal, attended the Heppner Chamber of Commerce meeting last week and gave a report on the current activities at the Port, especially the new visitor center.

The new interactive visitor center is in construction and, when completed next year, will feature among other things a 13,000-square-foot, two-level exhibit space, gift shop, 200-seat theater and other displays that will provide an inside look at not only the Port of Morrow facilities but the rest of the county. Called the SAGE Center, the facility will also show the economics of the county in a broad range, from farms and dairies to the food-processing facilities and tourist opportunities.

Commissioner Marvin Padberg from Ione talked about one of his favorite activities at the center, the simulated hot air balloon ride. The balloon tour was filmed by a helicopter crew and will show all of Morrow County, including the south end.

"The simulated hot air balloon ride will tour the whole county," Padberg



An oversized basket hanging beneath what seems to be a hot air balloon is a portal for visitors to the SAGE Center to visualize an aerial overview of the region's key features and industries.

told the Chamber. "This (the SAGE Center) is not your old dry museum; everything is interactive."

Padberg went on to describe how the virtual balloon ride would take 10 people at a time, rise high into the air, and take participants on a bird's-eye view tour of the county.

Padberg said the tour would show, among other things, how irrigation has changed the north end, a look at the OHV park, dry land wheat farming and other activities.

"We are natural-resource based and this will educate people from the west side on what we do here," added Gary Neal when explaining the SAGE center experience.

Neal said the cen-

ter would not only cater to tourists off the freeway (it is being built along Interstate 84 between the Port and city of Boardman exits) but would also accept field trips and provide educational opportunities for students.

A Portland design company, the same one that designed the Maritime Museum in Astoria, is behind the design of the center.

Seed money to construct the center came from \$2.7 million of state lottery funds previously secured by state Rep. Greg Smith.

In addition to serving as an interactive visitor center, the facility will serve as an event center for fundraisers, wine-maker dinners, and civic and social events.

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## Health district to proceed with Irrigon Medical Clinic plans

By April Sykes

Gail Sargent of Sargent Architects, Hermiston, presented preliminary plans for the proposed remodeling of the Irrigon Medical Clinic at the Morrow County Health District Board meeting Monday night in Boardman.

The board voted to go forward with the plans, which would increase the size of the clinic from 1,694 square feet to 2,670 square feet with an estimated building cost of around \$194,800.

Board Chair Larry Mills estimated that the total project will come to around \$250,000 with additional costs for architect fees and clinic furnishings.

The remodel would add a family-size exam room at 110 square feet;

increase the size of the nurse's station from 51 to 75 sq. ft.; increase the size of the lab from 46 to 100 sq. ft.; increase storage from 65 to 150 sq. ft.; increase a provider office from 80 to 100 sq. ft.; add a flex work station, which could be used by various clinic employees, at 80 sq. ft.; add a private office for use by the district's EMT, who is currently using a small space at the Irrigon Fire Hall, at 100 sq. ft.; increase the size of the staff restroom from 22 to 50 sq. ft.; add a break room/conference room/kitchen at 200 sq. ft.; increase the janitorial space from 10 to 36 sq. ft.; increase the space for electrical/computer server/phone system from 14 to 20 sq. ft.

Sargent told the

board that they should be ready to bid by the end of April or May with construction to begin in mid-June and completion hopefully by the end of October.

Mills directed MCHD CEO Michael Blauer and Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney to come to the board's next regular meeting with financing options for the remodel.

Also at the meeting, the board approved spending in the neighborhood of \$35,500 to replace the fire protection sprinkler system at Pioneer Memorial Hospital, as mandated by the state fire marshal. The board opted to go with General Fire Equipment out of Baker City. They had also

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