

MORGAN:

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ic events of August 1945 brought an end to the conflict.

"They dropped the two big (atomic) bombs, and the war was over," he said. "By the time we would have gotten there, Japan was obliterated. Really, I didn't get into the war, you might say."

The 90-year-old said the abrupt end to the war brought mixed feelings among the younger reinforcements who never made it to the battlefield. He said they were an "eager bunch of young fellows" ready to fight. On one hand, they didn't face the possibility of being killed in action, Morgan said, but on the other, they felt guilt because so many others did not return.

"We thought we had been lucky in a way but wanted to show that we wanted to contribute to winning the war," he said. "I felt that way all my life. I felt that I might not have done enough, because I was trained for war."

Becoming a bombardier

When Morgan enlisted in the Army, he was accepted in the air cadet program. He trained in Colorado, Montana and California before at-

tending aircraft gunnery school in Arizona and then bombardier school in New Mexico.

Morgan said he was sent to Walla Walla where he trained with a squadron that flew B-24 bombers up the Columbia River to practice their craft at the Boardman bombing range.

When the pilot navigated the plane close to the intended bombing site, Morgan said, he would turn over control of the aircraft to the bombardier who would adjust the course of the plane and release the bombs before the pilot took control again.

"The most interesting thing was flying in a formation with bombers," he said. "They wanted you to put the wing in the waist of the bomber next to you — that close together — so that the fighter planes couldn't get into your squadron and tear it apart."

Morgan said he trained in a 16-plane squadron, but some of the formations that flew over Germany had more than 100 planes. Many of those airmen, he said, never made it home.

"During the peak of the war in Germany, they were losing an average of 30 crews a day — that was 300 men," he said. "We were the younger boys that, if the war had lasted



STAFF PHOTO BY SEAN HART

Umatilla resident Ray Morgan, 90, shows a picture of himself when he was 19 in the U.S. Army air corps during World War II.

longer, we were the ones who would have probably finished up the war."

Honoring the fallen

When the war end-

ed, Morgan said he and others were given three options: going to Germany as occupation troops, going to Bikini Atoll for atom bomb testing or go-

ing to college while staying in the Army Reserves for seven years.

Morgan chose education and earned a forestry degree at the University of Washington. He worked in forestry and as an engineer and owned a golf course before retiring and eventually moving to Umatilla, where he has lived for the last 15 years.

While living near the Columbia River and the bombing range at which he trained, Morgan said he always wanted to fly the training routes he had flown more than 70 years before. About five months ago, a local pilot, Gene Maahs, made his dream a reality.

"He took me to Walla Walla, and we followed the bombing run up the river and then to Boardman," he said. "We got a clearance to fly over the bombing range, because they weren't using it that

day. So Gene has given me some memories of flying."

In September, Morgan crossed another item off his bucket list when he made his first trip east of the Mississippi River with 50 other veterans on an expenses-paid Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. The group toured the many war memorials and Washington landmarks. Morgan said it was an honor to be selected as one of two to place a wreath from the state of Oregon on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Morgan called it the "trip of a lifetime," but it was also an emotional experience.

"I choked up a lot of times. I'd see all these graves, men that were lost," he said, while fighting back tears. "I was the lucky one."



STAFF PHOTO BY SEAN HART

World War II veteran Ray Morgan, Umatilla, folds a flag that once flew over the United States Capitol, which he received during an Honor Flight in September to Washington, D.C.

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the agenda for subsequent meetings until five councilors vote for or against it.

Councilors John Kirwan, Doug Primmer, Clara Beas Fitzgerald and Jackie Myers voted in favor of the ordinance while Rod Hardin and Doug Smith voted against. Manuel Gutierrez abstained, citing his position on the Good Shepherd Health Foundation board, and Lori Davis was absent.

Under rules laid out by the Oregon legislature the city has until the end of 2015 to pass an ordinance banning commercial marijuana activity or refer the question to the voters. If the council can't get the votes to pass an ordinance before then, it still has a provision in its code banning land uses not allowed under federal law. But if federal laws ever changed, marijuana dispensaries would become legal in the city.

Kirwan said other city councils in the area are deciding the issue on their own, but he supported turning the issue over to the voters in November 2016.

"People have a whole year to educate themselves," he said.

On Monday the city council also approved a noise ordinance waiver allowing the Oregon Department of Transportation's contractors to work at night to complete a repaving of

Highway 395 planned for 2016.

The project will run from Southeast Fourth Street near Safeway to Highway 730. ODOT project leader Tim Rynearson said work will begin sometime in March 2016 and end Aug. 31, 2016. At least one lane of travel will remain open in each direction during the duration of the project.

During the repaving project ODOT will also replace the flexible yellow poles recently installed at the intersection of Highway 395 and Elm Avenue with a low cement barrier.

"We're already seeing some good results there," Rynearson said.

He said he understood it was inconvenient for drivers to not be able to turn left in and out of businesses there, but between 2011 and 2013 there were 34 wrecks at the intersection, which is the busiest in all of northeast Oregon.

"We feel it's our responsibility to do what we can to try and mitigate those accidents," he said.

Rynearson said ODOT is working with McDonald's and Wal-Mart to eventually move the McDonald's entrance on Elm Street further east so it doesn't interfere as much with traffic waiting to cross the highway. The rest of the plan would close the current entrance to McDonald's on Highway 395 and direct traffic through a shared entrance with Wal-Mart farther north.



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