

Story by local women wins 1st place

Nancy Burch and Noni Andersen were informed last month that a story they had submitted to the Oregon Rural Communities Explorer story competition placed first, earning a cash prize of \$200. It will surprise no one who knows Burch, the Vernonia librarian, or Andersen, a "semi-retired" journalist and editor, that they plan to donate their prize to the Friends of the Vernonia Library.

The award letter described the story, *Vernonia: Rising over Adversity*, as "well-written, interesting, and awe-inspiring... an exceptional job illustrating the intricacies of life in a rural Oregon community."

The Vernonia story will be featured this winter, along with other winners, on the Rural Communities Explorer website. The story will be accompanied with photos taken by Donna Webb, president of the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce.



Left to right; Noni Andersen and Nancy Burch, authors of prize-winning story.

Oregon Rural Communities is part of Oregon State University's Extension Service program for Family & Community Health. No date was specified for when the stories would be on the website: www.oregonexplorer.info/rural

The Vernonia story will also

be permanently archived in ScholarsArchive@OSU, Oregon State University's digital service for gathering, storing and making available the work of the OSU community.

For local readers, the story is in this issue of *The Independent*, starting on this page.

Vernonia: Rising over adversity

Vernonia is both blessed and cursed to be located in a "Pocket in the Woods". When Portland State University Professor Ann Fulton chose this title for her book, published in 1997, she was referring to Vernonia's location at the confluence of the Nehalem River and Rock Creek, and to the surrounding trees that make it truly a "pocket in the woods".

The early settlers to this area were mostly farmers whose first order of business was clearing land for crops and livestock. While they marveled at the majesty of the old growth timber, they sometimes cursed the trees as they struggled to prepare tillable land needed to provide the necessities of life for their families. At the same time, these early farmers felt blessed by the mild climate, fertile soil and endless streams of clear water.

To utilize the plentiful supply of trees, small mills were built to supply lumber for the developing community. Then, in the early 1920s, the value of this seemingly endless supply of trees (mostly Douglas Fir) was recognized by the "outside" world and exciting news came to the valley: The largest all-electric sawmill in the world would be built in Vernonia! As the news spread, a huge influx

of people arrived, bringing with them businesses, hotels, churches, schools and civic organizations, and Vernonia was promoted as "the fastest growing city in the northwest." Population soared from 150 to 2500 residents when the mill, at the peak of its operation, employed 750 workers. Railroads were built to haul logs from the forest and take milled lumber to markets. The city prospered. Vernonia was blessed by being in the midst of these remark-

able trees...until the 1929 crash of the stock market and the Great Depression. With no market for lumber and the resulting curtailment of production in the timber industry, the mill closed and the jobs were gone. Although the mill resumed operations with full employment, devastating fires in the nearby Tillamook forest in 1933, 1939, 1945 and 1951, combined with the vast amount of timber that had already been

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Senior News

By Karen Miller



Christmas happenings at the Center:
 • December 16, Wednesday, join us for Christmas lunch.

• December 25, 1:00 to 7:00 p.m., fourth annual Free Christmas Dinner, here at the Vernonia Senior Center. All are welcome to come. Brought to you by the Friends of Vernonia.

Join us Mondays for Bingo at lunch. Maple bars available daily for \$1.00. Connie's Breakfasts on Friday mornings from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. for \$3.50.

Christmas decorations for sale, along with all the other great deals in the Thrift Shop here.

Get your ticket to win a decorated Christmas tree. Tickets are \$1.00 each or six tickets for \$5.00. Drawing the winner on December 9.

Congratulations to Ruth Grimsrud of Vernonia, the winner of the Senior Center Quilt Raffle. Thanks to all who bought tickets as the raffle earned \$1,100 for the center.

Welcome back to the Golden Oldies Band, Eleanor Thompson. We love you!

Vernonia Senior Center: 503-429-3912.

In The Service

Army Pvt. Jeffrey A. Walston has graduated from basic infantry training at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga.

During the nine weeks of training, the soldier received training in drill and ceremonies, weapons, map reading, tactics, military courtesy, military justice, physical fitness, first aid, and Army history, core values and traditions. Additional train-

ing included development of basic combat skills and battlefield operations and tactics, and experiencing use of various weapons and weapons defenses available to the infantry crewman.

Walston, a 2007 graduate of Vernonia High School, is the son of Suzanne Paleck of Vernonia.

She shall bring forth a song and you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.' Matthew 1:21
'If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.' Romans 10:9-10

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