



Growing up with Josephine County

The Daily Courier celebrates 125 years by holding up a mirror to the people and their times

March 25, 2010
Section E

The times; 1940-1980



■ **1941:** Pearl Harbor is bombed, leading to U.S. entry into World War II. In Grants Pass, lights are blacked out initially, and many people rush to join the armed services. A call goes out for nurses to volunteer, and a camp to house 33,000 soldiers is planned for White City.

■ **1948:** Dec. 5, 1948, Grants Pass High School football team bus crashes on Mount Sexton, killing Sterling Heater and Al Newman. The Caveman had won the state title a day earlier in Portland, defeating Jefferson 6-0. The tragedy put a damper on the celebration, as the town waited for the bus to return home.

■ **1948:** Cave Junction incorporates, the second and last city to form in Josephine County. The 1950 U.S. Census counted 283 people there, compared with about 1,400 now.



■ **1949:** Daily Courier begins operating out of its current location, 409 S.E. Seventh St.

■ **1953:** First Rooster Crow festival held in Rogue River, as a means of attracting attention to downtown merchants. The event features the National Rooster Crow Championship. Music, food, vendors, activities, a parade and a "human crow" contest have become part of recent festivals.

■ **1955:** The last passenger train comes through Grants Pass. The Southern Pacific depot was at Seventh and G streets, where Safeway now sits. An earlier depot near fifth and G streets, where Town Center Plaza now sits, had become a freight depot.

■ **1956:** On July 30, 17 floats participate in the First Aquatic Gladiolus Parade on the Rogue River, part of the long-standing Gladiolus Festival. Montgomery Ward's float of a locomotive was named winner.

■ **1959:** Grants Pass Airport opens near Merlin, replacing an airstrip in north Grants Pass where Washington Boulevard now runs. The old passenger terminal at the former airstrip is now the Beacon Bar & Grill, 2030 N.W. Vine St.



■ **1959:** Hellgate Excursions opens to offer "a jet-propelled ride on the famous Rogue River!" Price per adult passenger is \$4. "The jet boat is a new concept ... especially designed to navigate the white water and shallow riffles of the Rogue River," an advertisement states. "Hellgate Canyon ... is one of the wonders of nature."



■ **1964:** Dec. 23, Flood of the Century hits Grants Pass, as Rogue River rises over 35 feet, 15 feet over flood stage in Grants Pass. The flood came nine years after another big flood that lost momentum going to build Lost Creek and Applegate dams for flood control.

A four-week look at who we were, 1848 to present

Welcome to the Daily Courier's 125th anniversary edition. The first edition came out April 3, 1885.

To celebrate, the Daily Courier is

publishing stories about and photos from the histories of both Josephine County and the Daily Courier, since they've been so intertwined over the many years. The newspaper has been "Growing Up With Josephine County" for most of the county's existence. Their stories are being told in four

special sections that are appearing on Thursdays from March 11 through April 1. The sections are appearing chronologically, with the earliest events in the first one. Reporters were split into two-person teams to cover four different eras and turned loose. They were excited as they uncovered tidbits, such as

the sacred rock of local Indians, and wrote about interesting happenings, such as the county's most sensational murders.

We hope readers enjoy the sections and savor the tidbits on this stroll through history.

— Dennis Roler, editor

Grants Pass marches off to war

By Shaun Hall
of the Daily Courier

The stories, headlines and advertisements of the Daily Courier on the eve and morning of war in late 1941 depict a community and country on edge, but also neighbors living day to day. Here's a sampling from those pages, which give a snapshot of those times:

■ **SATURDAY, OCT. 18:** On Page One: Myrtle Point beats Grants Pass in football, 20-6, with Bud Jerke scoring the lone Cavemen touchdown. Also on the front page is a story headlined "Joseph H. Jerke Dies Saturday." He was Bud's father. Headline: "Girls Tell What Boys Should DO." The story is based on a survey of Grants Pass High School junior and senior girls by the Rev. Harold Shaw of the First Baptist church: "They don't mind if you smoke. They don't want you to drink. And they very definitely don't expect you to kiss them every time you take them out."

Only six of 145 girls agreed that "necking promotes friendship." Yet another front page story mentions the raging German-Russian battlefield in front of Moscow.

■ **WEDNESDAY, NOV. 19:** Page One: In a Thanksgiving message, President Franklin Roosevelt prays for "a speedy end to strife." Oregon Gov. Charles Sprague, meanwhile, says that the profits of farm and factory are high, and that labor has been fully employed. "The fevers of prosperity have driven out the chills of the late depression."

News item: "Held up by the recent rain storm, crews resumed work Wednesday clearing and grading the new highway on Sexton Mountain." Another headline: "Mills Start Sawing at Merlin."

Advertisement: "Learn to be a specialist in aviation. Free training worth \$1,500. And remember — the Navy pays you while you learn." Another ad: "Probst Flower Shop will be open until noon on Thursday. Order early for Thanksgiving."

■ **FRIDAY, NOV. 21:** Page One: Thursday was clear and cold, and "one of the most beautiful Thanksgiving days ... the surrounding hills tinged with frost." Rev. S. Darlow Johnson,



The 1943 Cadet Corps of Grants Pass High School marches in formation during drills.

pastor of Newman Methodist church, spoke of a world without war.

Editorial: Railroad crossing signals are still not up on Sixth Street, due to "wartime matters."

■ **SATURDAY, NOV. 22:** Banner headline: BRITISH SMASH SIEGE OF TOBRUK

News items: Red Cross fundraising drive continues with door-to-door canvassing. Lumber use up 11 percent over previous year. Fire Chief Homer Gates helps Don McGregor, chairman of the retail merchants committee, with donated Christmas toys.

■ **MONDAY, NOV. 24:** KUIN radio schedule includes 7 a.m. rise and shine, 7:25 a.m. Courier-KUIN news, 8 a.m. morning devotional and 8:45 a.m. Capt. Blackbeard. Later, a concert is set for 8 p.m., with silence after 10 p.m.

Montgomery Ward ad: A nine-tube radio for \$71.95 ... "You get foreign reception!"

■ **THURSDAY, NOV. 27:** News items: Fake Red Cross worker going door-to-door taking donations. Councilman Sam McConnell's 1941 Chrysler coupe was stolen.

Ad: Apples are 5 cents a

pound at Safeway.

■ **FRIDAY, NOV. 28:** News items: Road constructed to new Schroeder Park. County turkey growers likely won't be able to meet local demand this holiday season.

■ **SATURDAY, NOV. 29:** Headline: Japanese See War 'Inevitable.'

News item: Judge H.K. Hanna faced an empty courtroom Saturday for a regular session of circuit court. Sheriff A. Donley Barnes and District Attorney Orval J. Millard were out of town.

■ **MONDAY, DEC. 1:** News: Children find 64 sticks of dynamite at an H Street warehouse near Gilbert Creek. Police Chief Carl Dallas burned the explosives.

■ **TUESDAY, DEC. 2:** News item: Mrs. C.J. Moser suggested creating hospitality huts for traveling servicemen, so they don't have to hitchhike in the rain.

■ **WEDNESDAY, DEC. 3:** News items: The Red Cross is assembling 25 comfort kits for servicemen, complete with paper, envelopes, diary, jack-knife, deck of cards, needles and thread.

■ **THURSDAY, DEC. 4:** Ban-

ner headline: COUNTY FINDS 'MISLAIN' \$35,000. The story quotes a state audit that uncovered poor bookkeeping, but the found money negates the need for a general tax levy.

Other news items: County seeks federal money for an airport five miles north of Grants Pass.

■ **SATURDAY, DEC. 6:** News items: Mrs. Lillian Jester reported the theft of a washer off her back porch at 624 B St.

The weather forecast for Sunday, Dec. 7: cooler with morning fog in the west.

Editorial headline: "We're ready to Shoot Japanese, Too."

■ **MONDAY, DEC. 8:** News on the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed: Recruiting offices stampeded. R.W. (Bob) Fuhrmeister, a city council member and the owner of Bob's Paint Shop, is leaving for Navy duty in San Francisco. Pvt. Jack Bertrand won't be home on furlough due to "the turn of events."

Editorial: "Our tough little brown brothers went to work on us Sunday morning in the way to which they have been accustomed, with trickery, deceit and bombs ... We will succeed, knowing we will face destruction if we fail. It will be the labor

and the blood and tears of years, perhaps."

■ **TUESDAY, DEC. 9:** News: Naval and air forces to check for the enemy off the Oregon Coast. Local American Legion cancels holiday party, to concentrate on civil defense work.

■ **WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10:** News: Oregon State Police Cpl. Lyle Harrell opines that tin cans painted black make great headlight covers. G. A. Winetrot said he didn't get the blackout announcement on Monday, thus he left the lights on at his used car lot.

■ **THURSDAY, DEC. 11:** News item: Four Local Men Join Air Corps, including Owen (Duke) Badley, butcher of the City Market, who is due to leave tonight on the train for Portland.

In other news: Four high school boys confessed to stealing 30 pounds of chocolates from The Shack. Also: An Army camp for 33,000 men is planned for Medford.

In addition: Mrs. Eleanor Anderson also received a wire from her son, Ed Anderson, who is on patrol duty with the 42nd bombing squadron, saying he was all right and would not be home for Christmas.

The logging business is rich with history



JEFF DUEWEL/Daily Courier

Jim Ford founded Ford Brothers Logging with his brothers Lloyd and Bill, and ran it for 50 years. He has logging memorabilia inside and outside his shop, including the hooks, couplers and sliders for cable logging at right.

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

Jim Ford still drives out and watches logging operations when he can to keep up on the work he spent much of his life pursuing.

"What amazes me is the new mechanical equipment — stripper, delimber, buncher ... there's hardly anybody on the ground. You never see a choker anymore."

Ford kicked back in the "Deacon's Chair," where the elder loggers sat in the bunkhouse, in his logging shop on the edge of town. A pungent small pile of Port Orford cedar lay nearby. "They used that in submarines," he said.

Ford, 83, ran Ford Brothers Logging with his brothers Bill and Lloyd for a half century, 1946 to 1996, although Bill got out around 1970 to become a Josephine County commissioner. Lloyd died in 2002, Bill in 2006.

Millions of board feet of wood was needed during World War II, when Ford was in his teens. Then the post-war building boom fueled the heyday of logging in Oregon.

"I quit high school in ninth grade, lied about my age and worked over on the coast. You could get a job anywhere. I'd quit school in the spring as soon as logging weather started. The superintendent collared me and said 'I'll get your classwork ready, you can take it with you.'"

"During the war all the young guys went into the service, so they

got a bunch of old guys to come back. They were pretty ornery. I was in the bunkhouse for six weeks before they'd even talk to me."

It was dangerous work, setting chokers and slinging riggings around huge logs on steep hills with impatient yarder operators waiting to bring the logs up.

"There was an old saying, when the rigging went down in the brush, 'You ran in to save your job and you ran out to save your life.'"



"You could chew tobacco, but you couldn't light a match for a cigarette," he said, soon enough pinching a wad in his lip during his storytelling.

Later Ford specialized in the powder work, building roads and skidding logs on heavy equipment.

"I was pretty lucky; I got to do everything."

Sawmills anchored every valley — Dollar, Gregory and later Superior in Glendale; Cabax in Kerby, Ben Dierks in Murphy, K&C in Wolf Creek, Spalding in Murphy and later Grants Pass, SH&W on Union Avenue, Murphy Creek Lumber in Murphy, Rough and Ready in Cave Junction, Webco in Williams, Timber Products in O'Brien, Bates in Merlin. The wigwam burners that

are almost all gone were the church steeples of lumber country.

Swede Basin Lumber Company's vast log yard filled an area along the railroad tracks in the 1950s that covered Mill Street to beyond present day Fire Mountain Gems. Ford Brothers cut a good chunk of that wood.

"We decked 20 million feet in there one year, right in town," Ford said.

All of the big sawmills in Grants Pass are gone, Spalding the last to go in 1998.

"When the environmentalists hit, that really slowed things down. But we logged a lot of places that never should have been logged. There were times the government was wrong. We had a place up there along Steve Fork, an OSU professor came down and called it a meeting place of trees — Port Orford cedar, sugar pine, Douglas fir, white pine — the Forest Service put a unit in there and logged it. That never should have happened."

While logging boomed often, there were also busts. A huge slump hit in the late 1970s and early '80s — unemployment hit 13.5 percent — before a comeback fueled the largest harvests of all time during the mid-1980s.

By the mid-1990s protection of the spotted owl and other species, automation and a decade later a bust in the housing industry has dropped harvests and production to their lowest levels in decades.

Amid his personal museum of logging, Ford looked around and soaked it all in.

"That old wood is easy to work with. I still think there's a demand for it."