

Enterprise

Park Rapids

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Pearl Harbor hero finally laid to rest

By Robin Fish

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If Neal Kenneth Todd had died last week, he would have been 101 years old. Instead, the remains laid to rest Saturday at the Akeley Cemetery were those of a U.S. Navy fireman who gave his life on Dec. 7, 1941 during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Todd's ship, the USS Oklahoma, sank quickly in the waters off Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. His was one of 429 lives lost on board.

Although the Oklahoma sailors' remains were recovered later in the 1940s, most of them remained unidentified until they could be identified through recent genetic tests.

Todd's remains were identified on Feb. 11. As his funeral program states, "He is no longer considered Missing in Action. He is finally home."

Todd's burial Saturday in the Akeley Cemetery, between his half-brother Alfred Staffenhagen, Jr. and his mother Irena, was accompanied by full military honors. These included a three-volley, three-gun salute; U.S. military service flags presented to three members of Todd's family; two U.S. Air Force flyovers; and a white-glove treatment by both active and retired service personnel.

"This is one of the highest honors I'll ever have in my entire career," said Kevin Cease with the Cease Family Funeral Home. "This is such a unique situation, in that we get to bring somebody home after all these decades and all these years: somebody who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country, on Pearl Harbor Day! He gets to come home. I'm moved beyond tears."

Voyage home

It was a long journey home - nearly 80 years long.



Photos by Robin Fish / Enterprise

Above: Six U.S. Navy sailors pull Neal Todd's casket off the back of a horse-drawn funeral caisson for his burial with full military honors Saturday at the Akeley Cemetery. **Right:** Lt. Derek E. Martin, USN, presents a folded U.S. flag to Todd's niece, Diane Harris, on behalf of the Neil K. Todd memorial at the Akeley Paul Bunyan Historical Museum. Seated to the right of Harris is Todd's adopted sister, Karyn Stiffler of Akeley, who also received a flag; her husband, Glen; sister-in-law Delores Staffenhagen of Rogers and her husband, Orville, who is Todd's youngest and only surviving brother.

"It's a long overdue homecoming," said Todd's nephew, Tony Staffenhagen. "We feel that he's our hero, and he's a Minnesota hero."

Fireman 1st Class Neal K. Todd was one of nine brothers and three sisters raised by Irena Todd Staffenhagen and her two husbands, Robert Todd and Alfred Staffenhagen.

Eight of her sons served in

the U.S. armed forces; Neal's brother, Wesley, was actually on board the Oklahoma when it was attacked, but he survived.

Born in Bemidji, Neal graduated from Akeley High School in 1938. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in October 1940 at age 20, and was 22 when he gave his life for his country.

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Nevis BBQ Challenge satisfies appetites

By Shannon Geisen

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Everyone in Nevis on Saturday gorged on BBQ ribs.

Within 40 minutes of the first annual Bands and BBQ Challenge, 209 racks of smoked ribs were devoured, according to Nevis Municipal Liquor Store Manager Erin Rhoades.

Rhoades teamed up with Shawn Dudley and Nate Ott, owners of the Iron Horse Bar & Grill, to organize the contest. All proceeds go to the Nevis Fire Relief Association.

The feast attracted 15 contestants. Rhoades



Shannon Geisen / Enterprise

Dave Thomas dishes up a teriyaki, pineapple pork chop kabob, a creation of his sister-in-law's, Tammie Zallar.

said barbecue pit masters even Iowa. "There were a lot of locals," she added.

hailed from Moorhead, southern Minnesota and **BBQ:** Page 14

Traffic stop led to 21 years of sobriety

By Lorie Skarpness

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Every Fourth of July for the past 21 years, Jim Kimblin has called Hubbard County Chief Deputy Scott Parks to thank him for arresting him.

It was approaching midnight on July 4, 2000 when

Kimblin was pulled over by Parks, a Park Rapids police officer at the time. He was heading back from his uncle's place near Detroit Lake to his home near Hackensack with his two



Jim Kimblin

young children in the back seat.

"I call Scott every July 4 because that arrest truly saved my life," Kimblin said. "My life was spiraling

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Esox defeat Wolf Lake in Lake & Pine League action - Page 10



NEWS

Menahga celebrates midsummer: Saturday's grand parade entertained - Page 3

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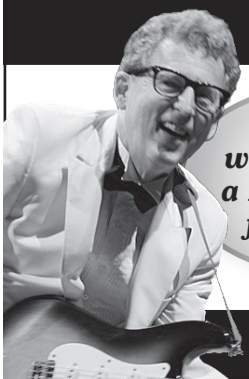
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