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The Journal of Olympia, Lacey & Tumwater

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LOCAL HEROES

100 Years and counting - it's Barbara Nichols Month!

Army Nurse of Three Wars – WWII, Korea & Vietnam



(/uploads/original/20220809-184813-File039 copy.jpg)

Lieutenant Colonel Barbara Nichols accepted the City of Lacey Proclamation honoring her service and life at the city council meeting August 4, 2022.

PHOTO BY GLORIA TOWNE | ALL AROUND TOWNE PHOTOGRAPHY



Posted Tuesday, August 9, 2022 9:04 pm

By Shirley A. Stirling

She's small, standing under five feet, but her dress uniform shows medals and ribbons giving evidence of big service to the USA in three wars, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

She is Lieutenant Colonel Barbara J. Nichols, US Army (Retired) of Lacey, a battlefield nurse.

Last week the Lacey City Council declared August as Barbara Nichols month, celebrating her 100th birthday, August 19, 2022!

City Council Proclamation

At the city council meeting on August 4, 2022, Barbara listened intently as each council member



([https://www.thejoltnews.com/stories/ready-to-go-](https://www.thejoltnews.com/stories/ready-to-go-to-the-library-again,1017?)

[to-the-library-again,1017?](https://www.thejoltnews.com/stories/ready-to-go-to-the-library-again,1017?))

read a section of the proclamation, describing her life and career. Then, the city council thanked her for her service with a bouquet of flowers. She gave a short message afterward and exclaimed, "Wow, I can't believe I'm 100 years old!" She thanked and saluted the council for their civic service.

You might have seen her:

- Interview on Erik's Heroes, KIRO television in May;
- Raise the 12 flag at a Seattle Seahawks military game;
- Accept a medal of gratitude from the South Korean government at the state capitol campus;

With an extensive nursing career and world travel, she started in an unlikely place, an airplane factory!

Boeing Aircraft Assembly

As a teenager during WWII, Nichols worked with her parents at Boeing in Seattle, where she was promoted from the assembly line to a precision job, installing the Plexiglas nose onto the B-17 bombers. It was a top assignment, and she was perfect: small enough to fit inside and exacting in her work. When the 5,000th B-17 left Boeing, she was one of the workers who autographed it. They were proud of "The Flying Fortress."

Cadet Nurse Corps & WWII

Then, she grasped an opportunity with the Cadet Nurse Corps for free schooling! After a three-year program, she graduated as valedictorian of the nursing class of 1947 at Everett General Hospital.

With the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 and her credentials, she was



(<https://www.redwindcasino.com/riverwaterbarandgrille/>)

commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army. The WWII inclusive dates for service are December 7, 1941 – April 28, 1952, and her career began with the last leg of the American Theatre Campaign. Many female soldiers returned home and married after the war, but Nichols signed on again, for active duty.

Korean War

In 1950, Nichols was one of the first nurses to land in Korea, and at the end of the war, one of the last to evacuate. Once in Pusan, she was ordered to catch the night train to Seoul, then make her way on her own “by any means possible, given the exigencies of war.” With delays due to damaged bridges and blown-up railroad tracks, she reached the 8055th MASH, near the border of the two Koreas. With her surgical skills, she was soon reassigned as chief nurse for the Army’s Third Field Hospital. So she then made her way back precariously, to the outskirts of Pusan!

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Caring for All

Whenever possible, Nichols helped local missionaries in the care of orphans and provided gifts to the children, sent from her hometown in Everett via her mother, and through her niece's efforts in Friday Harbor.

By 1951, Nichols had overseen more than 10,000 patients, many of whom were prisoners of war. She cared for all patients with equal compassion, whether American soldiers, refugees, orphans, or Korean POWs. She received captain's bars in a battlefield commission.

Vietnam, Germany, and Ike

In Vietnam, she was awarded the Bronze Star for her "heroic, skilled and dedicated" service on the battlefield. She also served in other locales, including Germany - her favorite tour!



(<https://www.thepetworks.net/locations/olympia>)

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Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, DC, Nichols served as a personal nurse to President Eisenhower when he went there for emergency surgery. She says got to know both him and Mamie quite well. Nichols retired in 1969, two years after promoting to Lieutenant Colonel, the highest rank a woman could achieve at the time.

Agent Orange

Nichols is proud to have served her country, even though she experiences chronic peripheral neuropathy from Agent Orange exposure, a 100% combat disability. She still suffers from it but looks back with pride on her career.

Leisure

Nichols is a life-long hiker and camper and loves Mount Rainier. As a retiree, she joined several volunteer groups.

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Nichols traced her ancestry to the American Revolution and the Mayflower. A skilled genealogist, she joined the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in 1988, Tacoma's Mary Ball Chapter, establishing four patriots: Henry Amick, Abel Nichols, John Nichols, and Asa Corbin. In 2016, she transferred to Sacajawea Chapter, near her home at Panorama.

Off to Shari's

Following the city council meeting, she traveled with an entourage of friends from the DAR and Panorama, to a pre-birthday celebration with pie at Shari's Restaurant in Lacey.

Comments

2 COMMENTS ON THIS ITEM PLEASE LOG IN TO COMMENT BY CLICKING HERE (/LOGIN.HTML?REFERER=%2FSTORIES%2F100-YEARS-AND-COUNTING-ITS-BARBARA-NICHOLS-MONTH%2C6810)

 Tracym1959

WOW! Very impressive. Thank you so much for your service. And HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10 REPORT THIS (/REPORT_ITEM.HTML? SUB_ID=6810&COMMENT_ID=1156&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2F100-YEARS-AND-COUNTING-ITS-BARBARA-NICHOLS-MONTH%2C6810)

 **Cobbnaustic**

I salute you Lieutenant Colonel Barbara Nichols.....Thank you for your service.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 11 REPORT THIS (/REPORT_ITEM.HTML? SUB_ID=6810&COMMENT_ID=1165&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2F100-YEARS-AND-COUNTING-ITS-BARBARA-NICHOLS-MONTH%2C6810)

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Saving lives with Naloxone (/stories/saving-lives-with-naloxone,7032)

K9 deputies Jaxx and Dexter retire from Thurston County Sheriff's Office (/stories/k9-deputies-jaxx-and-dexter-retire-from-thurston-county-sheriffs-office,7030)

County proclaims National Preparedness Month and offers free tools to get prepared (/stories/county-proclaims-national-preparedness-month-and-offers-free-tools-to-get-prepared,7029)

County approves open space application (/stories/county-approves-open-space-application,7028)



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customer for the sake of an ice
cream cup.



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An advertisement for AYCH Electronics. At the top left is a logo consisting of a red 'A' and 'Y' inside a circle. To the right, the text reads "AYCH Electronics" in bold, followed by the slogan "Computer Repair at a Price That's Fair." and contact information "www.aych.com info@aych.com". The central graphic shows a laptop with a blue screen displaying "VIRUS DETECTED" and "SYSTEM ERROR". A large orange starburst graphic over the laptop says "MOST REPAIRS ONLY \$59.99". To the right of the laptop, a list of services is provided: "Computer Repair", "Security Systems", "Malware Removal", "Phone/Tablet Repair", "Web Development", "Graphic Design", "Programming", "Tech Support", and "IT Services". At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the phone number "(360) 539-5156" in white.

(<https://aych.com/electronics/>)

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@theJOLTnews · Aug 29

The Olympia School Board approved a \$175,646,680 budget for 2022-23.

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Olympia School District approves 2022-23 budget



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@theJOLTnews · Aug 29



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