World War II vet recounts service and life after war

All eyes on **Tony Grgurich**

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BY CASSANDRA MCCARTY
Features Editor

When Tony Grgurich walked into Washington Street Java Co. with the help of his wife, he sat down at the coffee table, fingered his World War II veteran's hat and began recounting his time spent serving his country and the life he made with his wife after the war.

Grgurich was 20 years old and working for the Rock Island Railroad when he was drafted into the Army during World War II. When he left his parents and 13 siblings in Novinger — a town in Adair County — he did not lay eyes on them again until four years later.

"It was 1942 when I went to the Army," Grgurich said. "I went in January, and I wasn't out 'til October 1945. I went overseas in April 1942 and landed in Australia. We trained there for some time, and on Sept. 18 we went to New Guinea."

Grgurich was a member of the 32nd Red Arrow Division that saw combat in New Guinea. He described working patrol when the fighting occurred.

"I tried to keep my composure," Grgurich said. "There were two boys killed and one wounded, and my patrol caught two prisoners. It was five and a half months of combat all the time. It was a miserable life."

Grgurich said his overseas locations made it difficult to maintain correspondence with his family back on the farm. Contact was also difficult to maintain because although his father spoke English, his mother could only write and speak in Croatian.

One Christmas, Grgurich received a special gift.

"On Christmas day, I got 25 letters at one time from my folks," Grgurich said. "I copied all of the letters from Croatian into English so I could read them."

When the war ended, Grgurich was in the Philippines. Because of his station, he said he didn't know the war was over until a couple of days later. He was unable to return home immediately because he contracted malaria.

"The malaria hit temperature at 105 degrees, and during that time I had to walk to the field hospital with the fever," Grgurich said. "I was sick for two years with malaria after I got home — I was in bad shape. I weighed 180 pounds when I went in, and I weighed 150 when I got home. I was a sorry case."

Grgurich said that after he recovered from his illness, he spent a year in St. Louis with his older brother. During that year, he bought his first piece of construction equipment, and he started his own construction company. Although he has since turned the ownership over to his youngest son, he still enjoys working.

"I liked it, and up to this day I still [bulldoze] a little," Grgurich said. "Over 60 years I owned the company Grgurich's Construction."

Grgurich said he met his wife, Bonita, while she was working at a desk in Woolworth's in Kirksville. He said that later he and a buddy were going to a dance, and both of them liked one young woman his future wife was with. However, Grgurich's friend ended up with the girl they liked, and Grgurich ended up marrying Bonita. Grgurich said they will be celebrating their 59th anniversary May 6.

Grgurich explained that the 32nd Red Arrow Division has a long history. They were a part of World War I and World War II, and they also are serving in Iraq. However, Grgurich is the only remaining member from his time spent in combat.

"They are all gone," Grgurich said. "There were five families that we got together with, and went somewhere every year, but now we are the only ones left."

Grgurich was honored with four Bronze Stars that represent his time served in combat, his unit and division insignia and a blue strip which was the presidential insignia given out by President Roosevelt.

"If I was young again, I would join and help out," Grgurich said. "That's how I feel about my country."

Krista Goodman/Index
World War II veteran Tony Grgurich spent four years in combat with limited communication with his family. However, during one Christmas day, Grgurich received 25 letters from his parents in Novinger, a town in Adair County.

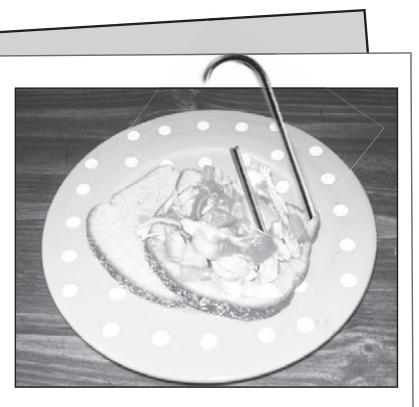
Cooking with Julia: Pulled Pork Sandwich

Julia Hansen

This is my very last column — can you believe it? During the past three semesters, I've written about chicken enchiladas, chocolate chip banana bread, African pineapple peanut stew, macaroni and cheese, chili, salsa and countless other recipes, and I've loved every minute of it. Joining the Index my sophomore year was the best thing I have done at Truman. It opened the door for many opportunities — I've learned a lot and met a lot of wonderful people, including those who work for the paper and those I interviewed. I always thought it was funny that people never said much to me when I wrote news and features stories for the paper, but once I started writing a column, people frequently talked to me about it. I love it when I meet someone on campus and they say, "Oh yeah, don't you write that cooking column?" Once one of the bouncers at Dukum asked me about my column, and we talked for quite a while, which made me laugh and made my night. Last semester I was in astronomy with Dr. Beaky, who told me he read my column and was waiting for me to do an astronomy-themed recipe. This week when I was deciding what to do for the recipe, I looked around for some kind of astronomy recipe but didn't have much luck other than moon pies. I therefore decided to nonsensically name this week's recipe in honor of Dr. Beaky, even though I know he's a vegetarian and would never make this. I included this recipe because I think it would be good to make for a graduation party, and because I've never done a pork recipe.

After college, I plan to continue cooking and take cooking classes in my spare time — maybe even teach some of my own. This summer I will be on Columbia's local variety show Pepper & Friends doing a cooking segment for the Columbia Farmers' Market. I am very excited, but a little nervous because I've never done a live cooking show. Someday I hope to open my own apple orchard and farm where people can come and pick their own apples and learn about sustainable living. I'd like to have a small café at the orchard where I can continue cooking for people. I suppose my future is somewhat unknown, but I know I always will continue cooking for fun and for people I love. In signing off I would like to thank you for reading my column, whether this is the first time you've read it or the 50th. I hope you enjoyed the recipes I've shared, and that this column has inspired you to cook for yourselves or others.

Ingredients:

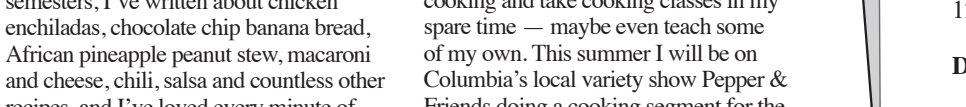


1 large onion, chopped
1/2 cup ketchup
1/3 cup cider vinegar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup tomato paste
2 tablespoons paprika
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
1 1/2 teaspoons garlic salt
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
4 pounds boneless pork shoulder blade roast (fresh pork butt), cut into 4 pieces
12 soft sandwich buns or rolls, warmed

Directions:

1. In a 4 1/2- to 6-quart slow-cooker, stir onion, ketchup, vinegar, brown sugar, tomato paste, paprika, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt and pepper until combined. Add pork to sauce mixture and turn to coat well with sauce.
2. Cover slow cooker with lid and cook pork mixture on low setting as manufacturer directs, 8 to 10 hours or until pork is very tender.
3. With tongs, transfer pork to large bowl. Turn setting on slow cooker to high and cover. Heat sauce to boiling to thicken and reduce slightly.
4. While sauce boils, pull pork into shreds with two forks. Return shredded pork to slow cooker and toss with sauce to combine. Cover slow cooker, and heat through on high setting, if necessary.
5. Spoon pork mixture onto bottom of sandwich buns and replace tops of buns. Serve sandwiches with cole slaw, pickles, potato chips and hot sauce if you like.

Recipe slightly modified from www.goodhousekeeping.com.



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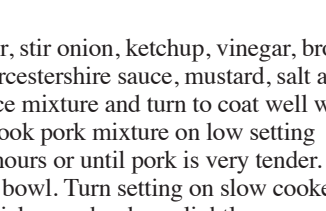

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