



Hot honor in Prairie City

Jim Sullens is feted for 50 years of firefighting

By Cheryl Hoefler
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — In just the course of a week or a month, firefighters — and other emergency personnel — are likely to see an array of tragedies.

Imagine 50 years of being “on call” for such incidents?

Jim Sullens of Prairie City is being lauded for doing just that.

Sullens was recognized during the Prairie City Fire Department’s Christmas party Dec. 6 for 50 years as a dedicated volunteer with the department.

At the event, Chief Dean Hicks presented him with a wall clock and plaque mounted on a large burl wooden base, crafted by Dale Duby of Prairie City.

Sullens’ 50 years service includes several positions held with the department: 13 years as assis-

tant chief, 17 years as fire chief and currently, six years as deputy chief. He also served about three years representing the district on the Fire Standards and Accreditation Board, and 11 years as Grant County fire defense chief.

There were only a few short periods during his life when other life events pulled him elsewhere, such as working his way through college in the late 1960s, and serving in the Army as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Sullens said his first thoughts of becoming a firefighter date back to childhood days living in Bates.

“My mom backed up too close to the cookstove while getting us ready for school, and she caught her nightgown on fire,” he said.

About 12 years old at the time,

he helped put the fire out. She wasn’t badly hurt, but, he said, “It scared the crap out of us.”

That experience helped him see how serious fire could be and helped fuel his interest in helping fight them.

Which he did just as soon as he was able, joining the department in December 1964, shortly after his 16th birthday.

Other firefighters at that time, Sullens said, were Floyd Rynearson, Virgil Chapman, Larry Stark, Otis Howard, Cecil and Larry Bradford, Ernie Blair, Rich Looney, Jerry Maley and more. Vernon Reynolds was the fire chief.

He said it didn’t take him long to learn the objective to being on the department wasn’t money or prestige, but to help your neighbor, friends and family when they needed it.

“When that fire siren blows,



Contributed photo

Jim Sullens, right, receives a hearty handshake from Fire Chief Dean Hicks at a Dec. 6 presentation honoring Sullens’ 50 years of volunteer work with the Prairie City Fire Department. Sullens has no intention of slowing down and continues to serve the department.

someone is having one of the worst days of their lives,” Sullens said.

Sullens graduated from Prairie City High School in 1967. He and his wife, Lynette,

whom he married in 1975, have three children, Jeremy, Tiffany and Brady. The couple enjoy traveling and helping out with local community events such as the Grant County Health Fair.

He worked mostly in outdoor jobs over the years, such as firefighting with the Forest Service and logging, retiring in 2010. His hobbies include remote control aircraft and fishing, though he said he doesn’t get to do the latter much anymore.

Sullens credits his length of service with the fire department to his supportive family, noting that all three children also served as firefighters on the Prairie City Department at one time or another.

He added there are a couple of other members of the department with lengthy terms of service, Marvin Rynearson and assistant chief Ed Negus — both of whom have over 45 years under their firemen’s boots.

So, is 50 years enough for Sullens?

Nope — no retirement plans. He intends to remain with the department and be “as active as physically able.”

Police nab suspect

Juniper Ridge patient breaks fence, eludes officials for several hours

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — A 25-year-old Union County man was apprehended Monday evening by local police after escaping from Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility, where he was being observed on a detainer from Union County Jail.



Trevor Frizzell

Travis Frizzell was captured at 6:30 p.m. near the Budget 8 Motel, following a five-hour search by local and state law enforcement officers. Frizzell had broken and squeezed through a fence at the secure acute mental health facility on Ford Road.

John Day Police Chief Richard Gray said Frizzell was in Union County Jail on marijuana charges, and while there he allegedly assaulted a public safety officer which put him on post-prison supervision in 2013 according to Gray.

Frizzell was not armed at the time of his apprehension and no additional charges were filed.

Kimberly Lindsay, Executive Director of Community Counseling Solutions, the company which operates the 2-year-old facility, said Frizzell was admitted to the sub-acute side of the facility. She said he went out into the fenced area unsupervised, as permitted by state law, when the escape took place.

Lindsay said he didn’t jump the fence — he broke it, through a flaw in its design. Frizzell broke a corner of it and squeezed through. The fence was fixed the day of the incident.

Subcontractor of the fence, Boyd Britton Welding, is taking additional steps with the fence to prevent this from occurring again, at no cost to the facility. Britton reinforced the fence and will attach it to the building, which will compensate for the design flaw and give the fence a support structure.

According to Lindsay, staff at the facility became aware of Frizzell’s absence within two minutes of the escape. An employee did a sweep of the property and within three minutes after his departure Lindsay, who was on site, was notified and contacted the police. Police reached the scene within five minutes of his escape.

“How this was handled was better than textbook,” said Lindsay. “I want people to know this happened, but at the point we went from prevention and into action, our action was excellent. I am so proud of our staff.”

Employees on site and those off duty assisted in the search.

“On behalf of Juniper Ridge, we want to thank the John Day City Police, Forest Service, Sheriff’s Office and State Police for their assistance. They were great to work with,” said Lindsay.

According to Police Chief Gray, dispatchers received a call at 1:19 p.m., from Juniper Ridge staff saying that Frizzell had just escaped.

Law enforcement personnel responded, pursuing reports of sightings in the John Day area.

At 5:51 p.m., four officers responded to a report by two women that Frizzell was seen

See ESCAPE, Page A14

CHANGE COMES TO GRANT WESTERN

Yard at crossroads as timber industry regroup

Sawmill auction, new chip venture coincide

By Scotta Callister
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Grant Western Lumber Co. is bidding farewell to its large-log sawmill this week, but saying hello to opportunity — albeit smaller scale — on another front.

James G. Murphy Co., a commercial auctioneering company, is auctioning the sawmill and equipment at the site on the west end of John Day.

The auction will include an array of mill and yard equipment — panel saws, a log loader, a whole log chipper, board edgers, trimmers, and more. A preview day was held Tuesday, with the sale set to begin at 9 a.m. Wednesday and Thursday.

The equipment is commercial grade, not for hobbyists, although some sheds might attract the interest of ranchers or large landowners, noted Dan Bishop, timber manager for the site’s parent company, D.R. Johnson Lumber Co.

The closeout of the sawmill reflects the changes in forest management and the accompanying decline in the availability of large timber from the federal forests.

“It’s sad,” said Bishop. He noted how many large trees are allowed to burn each year in wildfires, and yet the mills go wanting.

“But that’s the way it goes now,” he added.

On the plus side, the yard



The Eagle/Scotta Callister

Grant Western’s 988B Caterpillar loader grabs an entire trailer load of small logs delivered to the millsite last week.

is seeing increasing activity of another sort, as trucks laden with small logs roll in for processing.

The increased traffic is the result of a joint effort by D.R. Johnson and T2 Inc., a Sweet Home-based company that specializes in chipping, thinning and biomass uses across the Northwest. The work will use equipment and workers from both companies.

Jeremy Totman, T2 owner and manager, said his company is using the site to chip up logs — pine and some fir — it purchased from the Cub SBA Sale, on the southern Malheur National Forest.

Rick Kriege Logging began hauling loads to the yard last week. Forest conditions permitting, the deliveries should

continue through the winter. If delayed by weather, the work will pick up again in spring and summer, Totman said.

“We hope to see three to four loads a day,” he said.

The wood will be chipped at the yard and trucked to the Boise Inc. paper mill in Wallula, Wash., Totman said. The bark also will be processed and sent to Wallula, he added.

He said T2 has been working with D.R. Johnson in Grant County for about seven years, in timber sales and earlier at the now-closed Co-Gen operation in Prairie City.

However, he said there hasn’t been “a large wood basket here until recently.”

He said chipping contracts are on the rise in 2015, and his firm is ready.

“We are here, we have the equipment to unload the material, and we are buying chip wood,” he said.

Bishop noted that when the dust settles from the auction, the entire mill building — even the metal siding — will be gone. The office building, the scales, and the large truck shop building will remain in use, and the company will continue to work on other timber sales and operations.

He expects to see a growing log deck in the yard for the chipping project.

He said Grant Western’s chipper could handle 15 to 20 loads a day, if the wood’s available.

Totman said Grant Western

See YARD, Page A14

Valley View residents’ collection include hats, stamps, more

By Cheryl Hoefler
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Ever collect anything, either as a kid or a grown up? Not counting your thoughts, troubles or dust bunnies, that is.

Joan Metlock of John Day has accumulated a collection of hats — 109, at the most recent count earlier this week.

And she only started her hobby about eight years ago, after moving to Valley View Assisted Living in March

2006. Metlock does say she has always loved hats, ever since her mother insisted on she and her sister having new hats for Easter each year.

Most of her toppers are gifts or ones she buys at Valley View Assisted Living where she resides. She uses the “Valley View bucks” she earns to purchase hats — as well as other goodies — at regular auctions held for the residents.

The collection includes hats of all styles, patterns and colors, for all seasons, several holidays and everything

in-between. There are several knitted ones and ball caps, including one for her favorite baseball team, the Chicago Cubs.

Her favorite is a green John Deere cap a Valley View friend, Ken Kulis, gave her, in memory of her father, who was faithful to the John Deere equipment brand.

She also has a growing group of stuffed animals, many of which — of course — come with their own matching hats.

Her other hobbies include painting

and ceramics, which has launched other collections — albeit smaller ones. Portraits of birds adorn her living quarters, as well as various small statues, crafted during sessions at Valley View led by Donna Adams of Dixie Creek Ceramics.

The various treasures create a lively splash of color and comfort to her warm home.

She is also a gifted singer, who has performed at Grant County Fair talent shows over the years.

See HATS, Page A5

