

Bundy takeover top Oregon story of 2016

STEVEN DUBOIS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND — It was truly a story for all of 2016. Ammon Bundy and his followers seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on the day after New Year's and remained in the headlines through December. Unsurprisingly, the armed takeover and its aftermath was overwhelmingly selected Oregon's story of the year in the annual vote conducted by The Associated Press.

Every editor or news director who submitted a ballot of 10 top stories included the takeover on his or her ballot, and nearly everyone had it No. 1.

After that, it was a jumble. The gap between Bundy and the second-biggest story — the defeat of Measure 97 — was larger than the gap between the No. 2 story and the 10th-place finisher.

Here are 2016's top 10 stories:

1: RANCHING STANDOFF — Ammon Bundy, joined by his brother Ryan and a small band of followers, took a "hard stand" against federal control of Western lands and the imprisonment of two ranchers. They seized a wildlife refuge in Harney County and spent weeks in a slow-motion standoff with authorities.

The Bundys were eventually arrested in a Jan. 26 traffic stop that included the fatal shooting by police of occupation spokesman Robert "LaVoy" Finicum. Four holdouts remained at the refuge until Feb. 11.

Eleven men pleaded guilty ahead of a fall trial that ended with the surprise acquittals of the Bundy brothers and five co-defendants. In an explosive ending, a team of federal marshals tackled defense lawyer Marcus Mumford as he yelled at the judge. Paperwork flew as Ammon Bundy's attorney writhed on the ground, screaming.



Dwane Ehmer, a supporter of the occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, holds a U.S. flag as he rides near Burns on Jan. 7.

The year closed with some defendants trying to withdraw their guilty pleas and government prosecutors pressing ahead with a February 2017 trial for seven remaining defendants.

2: MEASURE 97 — Concerned about paying higher prices, voters rejected a measure that would have required corporations with at least \$25 million in Oregon sales to pay more in tax to help fund education and other services. Opponents and supporters of Measure 97 battled bitterly during the campaign. More than \$43 million was spent, making it the most

expensive ballot measure fight in Oregon history.

3: TRAIN DERAILMENT — A Union Pacific train moving crude oil derailed June 3 while traveling through the Columbia River Gorge. The derailment in Mosier released 42,000 gallons of oil and sparked a massive fire that burned for 14 hours. Protesters and some government officials said the crash showed that transporting oil by train is dangerous, unnecessary and should be prohibited.

4. HIGHER MINIMUM WAGE — Lawmakers boosted the minimum wage, agreeing to a tiered, geographical system that gained national attention. On July 1, Oregon's minimum wage increased to \$9.50 in rural counties and \$9.75 in urban counties. It was the first of several increases scheduled to take effect every July through 2022. In that final year, Portland's minimum will be set at \$14.75, smaller cities at \$13.50 and rural areas at \$12.50.

5. MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION — The decision by Oregon voters to approve recreational marijuana was the No. 1 story of 2014 and putting it into practice ranked No. 3 last year. It hit the Top 5 again in 2016 as communities grappled with ordinances to regulate the hours of operation and the locations of producers, processors, wholesalers, as well as retailers and medical marijuana grow sites. Scores of communities approved local sales taxes on recreational marijuana sales. Some places that had opted out of allowing marijuana businesses reversed course.

6. GOP VICTORY — Dennis Richardson became the first Republican to win a statewide race in 14 years with his victory over Democrat Brad Avakian in the race for secretary of state. The last Republican secretary of state was Norma Paulus, who held the position in the

1980s.

7. ORACLE SETTLEMENT — The state's long-running legal battle against Oracle over the failed Cover Oregon health exchange reached a quiet conclusion. Oregon said the company defrauded the state by charging \$240 million for a health insurance website that didn't work. After seeking \$6 billion in damages, the state settled for \$25 million in cash plus software licensing agreements and technical support. Oracle also agreed to contribute \$10 million to a state technology education program.

8. NO COAL — In a victory for environmentalists, Oregon lawmakers approved a bill to eliminate coal from the state's energy supply by 2030 and provide half of customers' power with renewable sources by 2040. The legislation made Oregon the first state to eliminate coal by legislative action, and placed it among a handful of other states with renewable energy standards 50 percent or higher.

9. TRUMP PROTESTS — Progressives in Portland were in the vanguard of protests following the presidential election that sent Donald Trump to the White House. Though most marchers remained peaceful, some blocked traffic, vandalized storefronts, sprayed graffiti and smashed car windows. More than 100 people were arrested during two weeks of demonstrations.

10. DUCK DYNASTY COLLAPSES — In January 2015, Oregon played in the first College Football Playoff national championship game. This year, the Ducks won just two Pac-12 Conference games, capping their worst season since 1991 with a 10-point loss to, gulp, Oregon State. The swift collapse of a team known for its high-octane offenses and ever-changing uniforms led to the firing of coach Mark Helfrich.

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Smith; Rookie of the Year, Brady Woodward; Jim Terhaar, lifetime membership award; Excellence in Service awards presented to Ray Dandeneau and Keith Veit.

April

Silver Falls School District learned that rural Victor Point Elementary School was among the schools included as seismic-improvement grant recipients this year. It stands to receive \$1,167,400 in this round of grants.

American Red Cross volunteers took part in the regional "Home Fire Campaign" by locally installing free smoke detectors at residences in Silverton, Mt. Angel and Scotts Mills. The groups, which included a number of Silverton High School Students and Silverton Fire Cadets, engaged in the fire-safety activity locally just as a number of others have in communities throughout the region.

Oregon Garden hosted its 17th Earth Day Celebration, presented by Marion County, with a 2016 theme of "Clean Water, Clear Skies." The Garden presented its 2015 Volunteer Awards: Silverton recipients included Steven Kuhn (Rookie of the Year), Richard Meganck (Veteran of the Year), Gordon Knutson (Events Volunteer of the Year), Stephanie deMoll (Greenhouse Volunteer of the Year), Kathy Fleury (Guest Services, Information Booth), and Gary Schmidt/Les Schwab (Rediscovery Volunteer of the Year). From Mt. Angel, Rebecca Pirkel (Oregon Garden Foundation Board Award) and Tom Maurer (Events Volunteer of the Year) also received recognition as did Stayton's Judi Maulding (Membership Volunteer of the Year).

May

Small Business Revolution on Main Street project recognizes Silverton as one of two finalists for its makeover project, putting the city in the running to receive \$500,000 for a downtown makeover from Deluxe Corporation. Silverton would eventually finish as the runner up to Wabash, Indiana.

Damp weather didn't dampen spirits as children took to the streets in Silverton for the annual pet parade.

After three years on the job, Mt. Angel City Manager Eileen Stein announced that she will depart to a new job in West Linn.

A good turnout visits Silver Creek Coffee House for the inaugural Creekside Chat, including Sue Roessler, Judy Lowrey, Jennifer Côté and kid-among-grownups Josh Burgeson to promote Silverton's After School Activities Program.

June

Silverton High School's reinstituted marching band ended its second year by performing for a large crowd as it marched in the 2.5-mile Starlight Parade and earned second place in the parade's marching band category. The Foxes' dance team led the band with choreography matching the music and helped people get into the groove of Prince's "1999" and the school's fight song.

The Oregon Garden Brewfest embraces its natural side, relocating from a traditional indoor setting to the forest of the garden. "We have really outgrown the building that has hosted the event for the last 11 years," Regional Marketing Manager Sara Hammond said. Marion County celebrates Gallon House Bridge's century mark. "This bridge cost us \$1,300 (to build) back in 1916," Marion County Public Works Director Alan Haley mused. "I don't think I could get some paint on it for \$1,300 today." Silverton's Gus Frederick would eventually be among the winners of a county-hosted photo contest commemorating the bridge.

July

The monks of Mount Angel Abbey share a farm-to-fork picnic and their own craft beer at the Saint Benedict Festival.

Children's musician Rich Glauber holds July gigs scheduled in Mt. Angel, Lyons and Jefferson, a feature provided through the Oregon College Savings Plan, dubbed "Music in Action!"

Charles Baldwin sat down at Silver Creek Coffee House for a Creekside Chat to impart this year's bicycle themed Homer Davenport Community Festival, while expanding on the broader two-wheeled objectives of Silverton's Bicycle Committee and Friends of Eastside Trails, which defines its mission as to promote safe walking and bicycling trails and lanes, as well as bicycle safety, along the east side of Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Descendants of Thomas and George Geer congregated at the GeerCrest farmstead in the rural Waldo Hills, located between Silverton and Sublimity, for the triennial national Geer family reunion, hosted by the non-

profit GeerCrest Farm & Historical Society.

Ten Oregon artists will have their work placed throughout the Oregon Garden for the return of the Art in the Garden exhibit.

August

A feast for the eyes at Coolidge-McClaine Park in Silverton; the 16th annual Silverton Fine Arts Festival. Over 80 artists displayed work, including paintings, pottery, fiber, jewelry and other media, in addition to art demonstrations and hands-on art activities for all ages.

Sophia Borgstahl, a seventh-grade student at Scotts Mills School, wins first prize in a statewide contest for her "If I Were Mayor..." essay, sponsored by the Oregon Mayors Association's annual statewide civic awareness contest.

The artificial turf work at Silverton's McGinnis Field is completed Aug. 9 and is used during practice, prepping for the inaugural events, a JV football game against Sandy Sept. 1 and a varsity home opening at Sept. 9, against Redmond.

Speaking of facilities, the most obvious difference between an elementary and a middle school facility is its playground — or lack thereof — and Mark Twain makes that part of its transformation as Mark Twain Elementary School transitions from a middle school into an elementary school.

Silverton's free community picnic at Coolidge-McClaine Park features a free picnic dinner, family photos, crafts and games, free swim at the Silverton Pool; sponsor by Silverton Senior Center, Silverton Together, Silverton Kiwanis, Silver Falls YMCA and City of Silverton.

September

Strategic Economic Development Corporation honored local businessman John Gooley at its annual awards luncheon. Gooley, who works for Withers Lumber in Silverton, was named Outstanding SEDCOR Construction Alliance Member.

City of Silverton purchases an 8,200-square-foot residential lot at the intersection of North Water and Brown streets for \$57,000. City Manager Bob Willoughby said the property, and others around it, may be needed for the future development of a new civic building.

Heavy rain showers didn't stop hundreds of visitors from flocking to Mount Angel's Oktoberfest.

Silverton City Manager Bob Willoughby kept his pledge to work five

years before retiring. After Willoughby announced that the hourglass is up on that pledge, the city began its search for a new manager.

A lit cigarette allegedly thrown by a woman outside the Silverton Community Swimming Pool sparked a chain of events — giving a fake name, grabbing for an officer's gun and squeezing another officer's genitals — that led to the arrest Megan Frays, 25, of Salem.

October

One buyer's offer was replaced by another's in the school district's ongoing effort to sell the empty Eugene Field School building and property in downtown Silverton. Listed for \$1.45 million, the property entertained one buyer in May, who rescinded the offer Sept. 30. A second offer surfaced and moved into first position and, under contract, began a 60-day due diligence period.

More than 40 different musical acts played approximately 120 hours of music in Silverton during the fifth annual Sidewalk Shindig, which brought people from across Oregon to the city.

Four residents launch write-in campaigns for the city council seat soon to be vacated by retiring Silverton City Councilor Ken Hector.

Mt. Angel Mayor Andy Otte, Council President Kelly Grassman and Councilor Pete Wall are all running uncontested in the Nov. 8 general election.

Mt. Angel City Council

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Happy New Year

As the calendar turns the page, we wish you the very best in the year ahead.

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