

WEATHER
Scattered snow showers tonight and south area Friday; highs 25-35; low 8-18 with zero some valleys.

LA GRANDE OBSERVER

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Five Cents



FIRES PLAYED BIG PART

Downtown fires in La Grande this year received their play of the news headlines and figured near the top in this area's major news stories. This picture shows four downtown stores being consumed by flames during a period last February when fire losses here totaled almost a half million dollars.

period last February when fire losses here totaled almost a half million dollars. Fire loss from these business establishments added up to \$265,000.

Oregon Posts Grim Record In Number Of Auto Deaths

NEW MARK OF 486 BREAKS 482 FIGURE SET IN 1946

By United Press International Oregon's official all-time highway death toll mark was broken Wednesday, the next to the last day of 1959. Two Tillamook residents were killed in a two-car collision near Lebanon; a seven-year-old boy died after being struck by a car near Keno, and another boy, 11, died in Hillsboro from injuries suffered earlier in the week.

That brought the toll for the year to 486, according to the State Traffic Safety Commission in Salem. The previous mark was set in the post-war year of 1946 when 482 persons lost their lives in traffic accidents.

December Toll High With one day to go the December toll was 55, compared to 37 on the same date last year.

Ernest Young, 11, Crescent City, Calif., died in a Hillsboro hospital Wednesday from injuries suffered on the Sunset highway Monday in a two-car collision. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Young, and a brother were injured.

Killed in the collision near Lebanon Wednesday night were Joe L. Bennett, 26, and Eunice Violet Eummeberger, 48. Three other persons were injured.

Lawrence Flock, young son of S. Sgt. and Mrs. Norman V. Flock, Kelso, Wash., died in a Klamath Falls hospital Wednesday from injuries suffered when struck by a car on a bridge at Keno. The father is stationed at Kingsley Air Force Base at Klamath Falls.

Another accident Wednesday night saw seven cars and a Greyhound bus skid into the ditch near Willamette pass after two refrigerator trucks jackknifed on the icy highway. Two persons were injured.

More Passenger Miles The Traffic Safety Division said that in 1946 when the previous high was set about 4,500,000 passenger miles were traveled. The figure this year will be about 7,500,000 passenger miles.

Also, in 1946 there were 470,154 motor vehicles registered compared to about 875,000 this year. The 1958 death toll was 449 while 468 died in 1957, now the third worst year on record.

The department confines its figures to traffic accidents occurring on a "trafficway" or public road. It does not include accidents which occur entirely on private property.



RUSSIAN LINQUIST — Mrs. Lucille F. Lamoreaux, teacher of the Russian language for the past five years in Canada, next week will conduct a course in beginning Russian here. Her classes will be held on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9:45 p.m. in room 23, administration building, Eastern Oregon College. Mrs. Lamoreaux currently resides in Enterprise.

Mishap Delays UP Train

Union Pacific Railroad's streamliner, the Portland Rose, was delayed two hours this morning when two pair of wheel trucks on two loaded boxcars derailed on a west-bound freight train this morning at the Hilgard siding.

Railway officials said both cars remained upright on the tracks and were removed to the siding by a derrick from La Grande. No one was hurt.

The Portland Rose arrived in La Grande two hours behind schedule and mail on the 119 car freight was delayed by the derailment.

No cause for the accident has been determined, the Portland UP office informed The Observer shortly before press time.

Engineer on the freight was H. Deaton, La Grande, and conductor was Dwight Mahoney, also of this city.

CAR WRECKS, FIRES, HUNTING DEATHS MADE HEADLINES IN AREA DURING '59

By BILL BEBOUT Observer Staff Writer Another year is drawing to a close. The world will soon welcome 1960. Now is the time for reflection on the big stories and events in Union County which made headlines in The Observer during 1959.

La Grande and Union County joined in Oregon's Centennial Celebration with a locally written play, the world premier of a folk opera, and a visit from the Centennial Wagon Train.

Farm Programs Farm income dropped during 1959 but county farmers continued to work with Extension Service specialists and the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation office to get Union County agriculture back on the track.

In May, the auctioneer's chant signaled the end of Pondosa and a wind-whipped blaze, less than a month later, let the historic old logging town a smoldering ruin.

Plans for new sewage disposal facilities for La Grande stirred up resentment among Island City residents in November with the city commission - sponsored \$300,000 bond issue going down to defeat by an overwhelming margin.

Union County's school reorganization committee took its lumps as county voters rejected the committee's plans for reorganization.

Snow Closes Schools Some of the other significant news stories of 1959 on the local scene are listed below.

January—Vester O. Varney, Joseph, dies in car crash; heavy snow forces closing of Elgin and Imbler schools; Company E, Oregon National Guard, receives superior rating in federal inspection; Dr. Gordon Clarke named city commission president; Elks hold annual state winter meeting here; Edgar Allen Gilderleeve, Enterprise, killed in car wreck; Nobel Prize winning chemist, Linus Pauling, speaks at EOC.

February—Four La Grande stores go up in flames with loss estimated at \$265,000; Grande-Ronde Apartments destroyed by \$300,000 fire; Bill Lee, 17, receives Silver Award as Explorer Scout; La Grande Observer purchased

from Ray Anderson and Fred Weybret by Riley Allen, Robert W. Chandler and J. M. McClelland, Jr.; EOC faculty protests "disclaimer oath" on federal education loan fund applications; Elgin initiates new \$150,000 Coliseum with ball and pageant.

March—Pondosa mill closed by Mt. Emily Lumber Co.; Kristal Tomjack, 16, elected president of Oregon F.H.A.; Fire Chief Ray Snider recommends new, centrally located fire station; Oregon National Guard reorganized with Col. David C. Baum as Battle Group commander.

3 Die In Wreck April—Sec. of State Howell Applying addresses Chamber of Commerce; Lawrence William Wilmon, Frederick Allen Leslie and Wesley Ernest Andrews die in car wreck. See CAR WRECKS Page 8

Boy Scouts Pick Up Yule Trees Saturday La Grande residents are asked to put their discarded Christmas trees on the curbs Saturday so members of Boy Scout Troop 109 may pick them up. Troop members will cover the city in the annual project in La Grande.

By Radiation? OAKLAND, Calif. (UPI) — A man and three women today awaited results of Navy medical tests for radiation poisoning believed to have come from handling radium salts.

Fred Webb, 26, said he has been gradually losing his hair, has developed rashes on his hands and arms, and has suffered other symptoms since an accident at the Oakland Naval Supply Station six months ago.

SALEM (UPI) — The Highway Department reported dangerous road conditions at many spots in the state today "due to ice and snow."

Packed snow was reported at Government Camp, Warm Springs Junction, Sunset Summit, Detroit, McKenzie Pass, Tiller Trail, Siskiyou, Green Springs, Prospect, Diamond Lake, Maupin, Shaniko, Bend, Santiam Pass, Gehoco Summit, Brothers, Lapine, Silver Lake, Madras, Willamette Pass, Klamath Falls, Bly, Quartz Mountain, Lakeview, Paisley, Meacham, Ontario, John Day, Austin, Seneca, Burns and Basque.

Ice spots were reported at Wilson River, Astoria, Tillamook, Corvallis, Salmon River, Carnas Mountain, Grants Pass, Medford, Cave Junction, Carpenterville, Sisters, Chemult, and Ontario.

City Officials Accept Sanitary Sewer Petition A petition for Sanitary Sewer Improvement 3-23 was accepted and placed on file in an action taken by the city commission at its Wednesday night meeting. The district will cover property not now served or within another sewer district that abuts Cedar Street between A and B Avenues.

The petition carried the signature of more than 67 per cent of the property owners in the proposed district.

Commissioners also approved an application from the firm of Burton and Miller, Elgin, for a "master" Amusement Devices License for 1960. The commission acted on the recommendation of Police Chief Oliver Reeve.

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In keeping with the spirit of New Year's Day, the police department here wishes all a happy day, but there is a firm reminder by Chief Oliver Reeve to motorists that they might be better off at the home firesides than on city streets. His two reasons were simple and terse:

- 1. Slippery streets and hazardous driving conditions. 2. If you have been drinking, don't drive.

Checking Points The same warning has been issued by State Police. They will be out in force and will enforce "to the letter" the laws of driving. Various check points will be manned by the highway patrol units in Eastern Oregon.

La Grande's Public Library will be closed this evening at 5 o'clock for New Year's Eve and will not be open until Saturday at the usual hour.

Tomorrow also has a religious significance for Roman Catholics. A Holy Day of Obligation, Our Lady of the Valley has scheduled Masses at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

The usual holiday Friday also means that federal, state and local municipal buildings will be closed. For some, it means another long holiday period.

Leaden Clouds, Snow To Usher In New Year

By GRADY PANNELL Observer Staff Writer Leaden clouds and sifting snow will usher in New Year's in the Grande Ronde Valley to the tune of a background of government ex-

Ve parties for tonight. The stroke of midnight will be the "witching hour" when the weary old man bows out in traditional ceremonies.

In addition to the club parties, there will be next-door neighborhood gatherings, and much of the discussion will center about tomorrow's annual football bowl games.

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Skier Hurt, Freezes In Position

WILLIAMS, Ariz. (UPI) — George Degele, 38, broke a ski shoe coming down from 9,300-foot Bill Williams Mountain. His feet froze to the hard-packed snow; his knees were literally frozen stiff in a standing position.

Rescuers found him Wednesday leaning weakly against a tree. They had to summon a helicopter to lift his rigid body and end his 18-hour ordeal.

Degele had accomplished his mission on the mountain. He had found and repaired a lightning-caused break in the cable that carries television into Williams.

In a local hospital, Degele was under treatment for severe frostbite of both feet and legs, but attendants said the husky former Marine was in amazingly good condition.

Degele was only briefly out of contact with others, but heavy snows and intense cold slowed rescue operations to an agonizing crawl.

He had been trying since Saturday to reach the broken cable.

Thomas Booher Dies At Hospital

Thomas H. Booher, Rt. 2, La Grande, died in the Grande Ronde Hospital this morning. Death was believed caused by a heart attack.

Booher suffered the attack at the scene of a car accident at Upper Perry at about 10:30 a.m. He was not in the accident but spectators said they thought a member of his family was involved.

There were no injuries reported in the mishap and State Police are investigating.

OUTER SPACE BATTLE FOR 1960

Predict Soviets To Hold Lead In Rocket Space Explorations

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A U.S. space official says Russia's "clear lead" in rocketry will enable it to pull farther ahead of this country in the exploration of outer space.

This forecast is evident in a study of U. S. and Soviet space programs made recently by Dr. Homer E. Newell Jr., assistant director for space sciences of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

According to Newell, the two countries are running about even in scientific investigation of near-by space.

But "in deep space probe work," Newell said, "the U.S.S.R. has definitely taken the lead. This is directly attributable to their clear lead in vehicle technology."

Similar Advancement Russia's rocketry lead has been variously estimated at 2 to 10 years. Newell mentioned no time figure. But he said:

"The side that has the more advanced technology in the way of payload capabilities, guidance, etc., will have the distinct edge.

and by virtue of the increased flexibility and capabilities provided by the more advanced technology will forge steadily ahead. "Thus, one may predict a time lead in vehicle technology will be transformed into a corresponding time lead in the exploration and investigation of outer space."

Newell said the two countries "appear to be at about the same stage of advancement in upper air research" and in scientific "studies of the earth's environs." He said "their instruments are roughly equivalent."

The Russians have "done far less on solar radiations" than the United States but have accomplished "much more" in experiments with animals in space.

Sights Soviet Achievements The United States may have a "slight edge" in close-in space investigations and in instrument designs, but the Russians are superior in rocket power, maneuverability, and size of their scientific packages.

U. S. exploration of the moon "is yet to begin" whereas the Russians have "already achieved significant steps" in lunar investigation.

As for exploration of the planets: The United States, Newell said, "has minimal capability in this area at present, and on the present schedule planetary work is proceeding at a very, slow pace."



PREPARE STRATEGY FOR HEARING

Rep. Don McKinnis, right, and Honce Snodgrass, Chamber of Commerce manager, discuss plans for hearing of the State Water Resources Board in Salem next Tuesday. Chamber representatives will attend the meeting to urge board approval of Pacific Northwest Power Company's request to construct High Mountain Sheep Dam on the Snake River. The chamber membership is on record in favor of the dam construction.

(Observer Photo)

Intrigue Shadows International Search For Missing U.S. Girl

NEW YORK (UPI) — An international search was underway today for a 22-year-old girl and a mysterious colonel on whose missing yacht she said was "first mate."

Authorities sought to learn if the beaten, strangled and decomposed corpse of a young woman found in Tangier, Morocco, could be that of Harriet Elizabeth Benton, Ogdensburg, N.Y., or of another missing American.

Rep. Clarence E. Kilburn (R-N.Y.) said in Washington that meager details of the willowy brunette's disappearance have all the earmarks of international intrigue.

Miss Benton abandoned a promising advertising career with a Boston agency last summer to seek adventure abroad. Against the advice of relatives, she left with \$1,000 last August on a sight-seeing tour of Europe.

Harriet's Syracuse University classmate, Patricia Grant, 23,

Maplewood, N.J., said today she was to meet Miss Benton in Gibraltar in September, but Harriet "missed the rendezvous. The last Miss Grant heard from her was a letter she received in Madrid Oct. 8.

"It's foolish of me to want to go halfway around the world with a man I met yesterday, but we're sailing tomorrow," Harriet wrote from Gibraltar. "I've had a taste of Morocco. It was thrilling. I'm going back, then on to the West Indies."

She said she had found passage on a yacht bound for the West Indies and referred to the man as "Collin." In a postcard mailed Oct. 8 from Gibraltar, Harriet told her parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Benton, she was employed as "first mate" on the yacht Raider, bound for the Canary Islands and the West Indies.

Kilburn said Scotland Yard pinned down the owners of the

Raider as one Col. M. J. Gallon, who carried a British passport. Neither Harriet, Gallon, nor the yacht have been seen since.

Dental Chart Examination Officials said the State Department, Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, the F.I. Scotland Yard, and police units around the world are hunting for the New York girl and Gallon.

A diplomatic courier was reported en route from Tangier to Washington with a dental chart of the teeth of the young woman believed murdered there and her corpse thrown in a sack on the outskirts of the city in October or early November.

The chart will be shown dentists who treated Miss Benton and Helen Mueller, 19, New York, who also went abroad last summer to seek adventure and who vanished in Tangier in early November leaving her belongings in her hotel room.