

TODAY

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 31, the 304th day of 2018. There are 61 days left in the year. This is Halloween.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On Oct. 31, 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh (seek) security guards.

In 1864, Nevada became the 36th state as President Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$1.8 million
8-17-21-28-36-45

Mega Millions: \$52 million
20-31-39-46-49-23 x2

Powerball: \$40 million
8-12-13-19-27-4 x3

Win for Life: Oct. 29
24-25-33-58

Pick 4: Oct. 30

• 1 p.m.: 7-8-7-2
• 4 p.m.: 1-2-7-7
• 7 p.m.: 7-7-5-0

• 10 p.m.: 4-4-6-2

Pick 4: Oct. 29

• 1 p.m.: 5-1-2-4
• 4 p.m.: 7-9-4-1
• 7 p.m.: 3-5-1-1

• 10 p.m.: 9-9-9-0

ROAD REPORT

Numbers to call:
• Inside Oregon: 800-977-6368.
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NEWSPAPER LATE?

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Baker City man recounts his brush with death

■ Roger Coles was thrown from a horse “like a dish rag” during rodeo

By Jayson Jacoby
WesCom News Service

The moment Roger Coles almost died is a mystery to him.

It always will be.



Coles

This is, Roger admits with a chuckle, a curious situation that he finds himself in, at age 64. “In my mind this is like a movie, something that happened, but couldn’t have happened to me,” he said Thursday afternoon, a bit more than three months after a horse, as he puts it, “threw him around like a dish rag.”

Roger knows what happened to him on the evening of July 20 at the annual Baker City Bronc Riding, an event he has been involved with for 11 years.

He knows because he’s talked with many people, most notably his wife of 33 years, Dawn, who saw it happen.

They saw the horse crash into the exit gate at the Baker County Fairgrounds, a place where Roger had been stationed for previous bronc riding competitions, a place where he never felt the slightest trepidation.

They saw Roger flung into the air.

They saw him lying still in the dirt.

“I wasn’t breathing when Dawn got to me,” he said.

Roger remembers none of it.

Not the thunder of the

hooves.

Not the wailing siren on the ambulance that brought him to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City.

Not the roar of the helicopter that flew him to Saint Alphonsus in Boise.

“My memory stops two hours before the show,” Roger said, referring to the bronc riding event. “It doesn’t pick up for a week. It’s blank, as white as the ceiling. Everything I’ve been told has been hearsay.”

Roger suffered what doctors call a “traumatic brain injury.”

His skull wasn’t fractured but his brain bled in two places, one in the front and one in the back.

His neurosurgeon told him the impact was so severe that three nerves in his spinal column “were literally pulled out by the roots.”

Roger said the doctor told him it was very likely the nerve damage would have left his right arm — Roger is right-handed — all but useless.

But that didn’t happen. Roger said he doesn’t have full use of his right arm, and suffers from numbness that has also crept into the fingers of his left hand.

He’ll undergo an MRI in early November that should help the neurosurgeon gauge how much, or whether, Roger’s condition will improve.

But already he feels

fortunate.

“The neurosurgeon was stunned that I had this much mobility in my arm,” he said.

Although Roger said he probably will never remember the accident, his memory and other mental faculties have gradually improved.

“Some things I’ve got to focus a little more on, which drives me crazy because I like to get right on a task and get it done,” he said. “I’m not there yet.”

Roger said he never quite understood the experience they described.

“I’m one of them now,” he said. “It’s an odd feeling. Weird.”

Yet the event still lacks the full sense of reality that comes from a personal memory rather than only hearing others describe their memories.

Even so, Roger said he understands, if not quite completely, how devastating the experience was for some of those witnesses.

One man told him recently that after seeing the horse trample Roger, “I just can’t believe you’re still here.”

Roger himself is convinced he wouldn’t be here if not for the efforts of the Baker City Fire Department paramedics, and doctors David Richards and Steven Delashmatt and the staff at Saint Alphonsus in Baker City.

“I want to extend a special thank you to them,” he said.

Indeed, Roger said he has received “phenomenal” care throughout his ordeal, from the doctors at the

Boise hospital where he spent 20 days, to the many therapists — physical, occupational and speech — who have helped him recover since.

He also urges everyone to buy a membership in Lifeflight. Roger is glad he did so — the helicopter flight cost almost \$50,000.

“It was an expensive ride and I didn’t even get to enjoy it,” he said with a rueful laugh.

Roger, who grew up riding horses and has been bucked off many times, said the incident — what he calls a “freak accident” — has not diminished his love for horses or for bronc and bull riding events.

He has been the secretary for the organization that puts them on for 11 years, and he plans to remain in that position.

“But my wife says I’m not going back to the gate,” Roger said.

Although the effects on his right arm have been the most troublesome physical damage, Roger said he also has lost almost all of his

senses of smell and taste.

His neurosurgeon said that isn’t unusual given the severity of Roger’s injuries, and that’s why his senses might never return.

“I’m a pretty picky eater anyway,” Roger said with another laugh.

In the meantime the physical therapy will continue.

Roger said that although he’s pleased with the progress he’s made, he is also impatient.

“Am I better than I was three weeks ago? Yes. But I want to be back where I was before the accident. Time’s what it’s going to take, but I just have that frustration.”

He pauses then repeats that last word, almost as though it is a mantra.

“Frustration.” But the difficult recovery has been made easier, Roger said, by the encouragement of so many people.

“There’s really a lot of supportive people around here and I thank each and every one of them,” he said.

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Cassie Miller, Rancher (Union)

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