

SWAT

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sheriff Jef Van Arsdall said sheriff's deputies had a "contact" with Chase — he wasn't arrested — in November 2017. Van Arsdall didn't have details of that contact.

He said the sheriff's office has a record of only one other contact with Chase, which also didn't result in an arrest, from 2014.

The Northeast Oregon Regional SWAT team, which includes law enforcement from

Union County, was called out about 2:34 p.m. Tuesday, after officers from the sheriff's office and the Baker City Police Department had tried, without success, to persuade Chase to exit the converted school bus he was driving, according to the sheriff's office.

He had driven to the east side of the airport, where he parked and stayed inside the bus.

The airport is about three miles north of Baker City, and just east of Interstate 84.

The SWAT members

arrested Chase "without incident" after he "willingly" walked out of the bus, Van Arsdall said.

Police found firearms inside the bus.

Reports to police about Chase actually started early Tuesday in Halfway, where Chase allegedly drove into a shop or garage at Pine Telephone Co., Van Arsdall said.

That incident prompted the hit and run charge.

Chase arrived at the airport around 8:30 a.m.

Tuesday.

Dustin Stephens, the chief pilot for Baker Aircraft, which runs the fueling, flight instruction and other services at the city-owned airport, said he watched the bus drive onto a taxiway beside the airport's main runway. That's an area open only to aircraft, Stephens said.

He said he and two other employees drove out to talk to the driver of the bus, who rolled down the window and "started screaming at us,"

Stephens said.

He said the man told the Baker Aircraft employees that a "big jet" was coming to pick him up, and that the plane would also haul away his bus.

Stephens said the man claimed to have "nuclear" materials on the bus.

Stephens said the man drove away, the bus going fast enough that when he turned the vehicle tipped significantly.

Police closed the airport as well as South Airport Lane, which leads to the

airport entrance.

Troy Woydziak, Baker Aircraft owner, said he issued a notice to pilots alerting them to the closure. He re-opened the airport Tuesday evening.

The Baker City Airport has three runways, but depending on the amount of snow, at times only the main runway is open, Woydziak said.

He said air traffic volumes vary, but on a typical winter day three to 10 planes land per day, most seeking fuel.

AVIATION

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known for the numerous mercy flights he made for those who needed help.

"The mercy missions of Zimmerly became so numerous that people in the mountain vastness of Idaho accepted as routine the arrival of a Zimmerly ambulance plane which landed on spots never intended by nature to be landing fields," Roth wrote.

One of Zimmerly's best known mercy flights was made in 1939 to rescue a rancher in Hells Canyon who had just suffered a serious stroke. Zimmerly landed his plane on the bottom of Hells Canyon, becoming the first pilot to land there.

"This was a pioneer undertaking as no one thought landing in the canyon was possible," he wrote.

Zimmerly had a reporter for the Lewiston News Tribune and a physician with him as passengers. When making the landing, Zimmerly told his passengers, "This will be the smallest field you ever landed on," Roth wrote.

The author described the landing: "The field was rutted with irrigation ditches and the landing was made crosswise to them and parallel to the ditches."

Not surprisingly, the landing was about as rough as Zimmerly feared.

"The heavy ship bounced, groaned, and almost screamed with terrific jolting," Roth wrote.

Regardless of where he was

flying, Zimmerly, who lived in Lewiston, Washington, often tried to put those flying with him at ease.

"He would tell passengers, 'A bird doesn't go down and neither does a plane,'" Roth said.

Zimmerly's Empire Airlines had a perfect safety record, for none of its planes ever crashed and no passengers were lost. The same could not be said for Zimmerly, who while on mercy missions and personal flights took many chances. A plane he was flying in October of 1934 crashed near Elk City, Idaho, when it hit a tree, but both Zimmerly and his passenger walked away from the crash.

About 14-1/2 years later he was flying alone on a trip from Spokane to Clarkston, Washington, when he suffered fatal injuries in a crash near Pullman, Washington. To some it must have seemed like the odds had finally got the best of him.

"Up until the time of his death he flew into many places that required extremely skillful flying and involved a high degree of skill. Bert flew into areas that many pilots would not even attempt," Roth wrote.

The many people who paid tribute to Zimmerly after his tragic death included Roben Maaske, who was then the president of Eastern Oregon University, then named Eastern Oregon College of Education.

"Bert was a fine, kind and generous person and I al-

ways thought very kindly of him," Maaske said in a quote from "Empire in the Sky."

Maaske likely was familiar with Zimmerly because in the early 1940s his company, Zimmerly Brothers Air Transport, ran a military flight training program at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

French Ellsworth, a close friend of Zimmerly's, spoke of Zimmerly in a fashion similar to Maaske in a quote in Roth's book taken from a Feb. 18, 1949, edition of the Spokane Daily Chronicle.

"There was a wholesome quality about the personality of Bert Zimmerly that made his presence inspiring company," Ellsworth said.

Zimmerly's son, Bert Zimmerly Jr., said his father always wanted to get people to buy into his "project."

"He believed that if people worked with him, he could make things work and get people caught up in his enthusiasm," said Bert Zimmerly Jr., who lives in Hillsboro.

Bert Zimmerly Sr. died about three years after leaving Empire Airlines — he had been voted out of the company by its board for reasons that are still not known today. He then continued operating Zimmerly Air Transport, which provided services including aerial crop spraying, pilot training and airplane repair. His wife, Edna, ran the company for four years after his death before selling it in 1953.

Meanwhile, Empire Airlines merged with West

Coast Airlines in 1952. "It was good merger," Roth said.

He explained there was not a lot of flight route overlap because Empire served the east part of the Northwest and West Coast served the west side. Another plus was that both companies used only DC-3 aircraft, thus nobody had to learn how to fly or fix aircraft they were not familiar with.

West Coast Airlines provided passenger plane service in La Grande through the early 1960s, Roth said. West Coast pulled out of the area because of declining passenger volume. Roth attributes part of this to better driving opportunities.

"Cars were getting better and so was the highway, so a lot of people were driving to Portland instead of flying," he said.

Roth also said ridership slipped because the economy in the 1960s was not as strong as it was in the 1950s and that fewer people were flying just for the sake of flying.

"Air travel was still a novelty in the 1950s," said Roth, noting one pilot told him in 1950 just 10 percent of Americans had ever flown in an airplane.

Roth was among those in the Grande Ronde Valley enthralled with flight, and the chance to see the DC-3s of Empire and West Coast airlines come into the valley provided him with an unforgettable thrill.

"They flew so low I could almost see the passengers



George Neer photo from Empire in the Sky

Eastern Oregon Livestock Show queen Joan Skeen, right, at 1948 ribbon cutting ceremony for local Empire Airlines flight service.

inside when I stood on the third floor at Hot Lake (then a health care facility)," Roth said.

He also recalls watching the pilots of these passenger planes struggle a bit while getting started on their trips to Pendleton.

"They would have to circle the Grande Ronde Valley twice to get enough altitude to get over the Blue Mountains," said Roth, the author of four books about Hot Lake and "The Central Railroad of Oregon — Oregon's Blue Mountain Route," which is about the old railroad between Union and Cove.

The La Grande/Union County Airport has not had passenger air service since around 2001, according to a story in the Feb. 29, 2016, Observer. Roth believes it would be more difficult today for someone like Zimmerly to start an

airline service for small communities in the Northwest. He said one reason is there are many more government security and environmental regulations that have raised the cost of operating airlines.

Still, Roth believes if Zimmerly were a young man today, he would be a successful entrepreneur in the airline business.

"He was always thinking about the future. He was ahead of the curve while everyone else was trying to catch up," Roth said.

"Empire in the Sky" was proofread by David Yerges of Summerville, and its cover design was created by Patrick Rodwell of Seattle.

A copy of Roth's book is now at Cook Memorial Library. For information about obtaining a copy of "Empire in the Sky," email Roth at randbroth@comcast.net.

ACA

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which is on top of 2017's 90 percent cut in advertising programs, but Cronen said this has not affected Oregon's promotion of enrollment on HealthCare.gov as it has in other states.

"Unlike most states that use HealthCare.gov, we have Oregon-based, Oregon-funded, by Oregonians, for Oregonians outreach teams that do boots-on-the-ground, person-to-person outreach all around the state in addition to our own paid media advertising campaign that we operate here at the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace," she said.

OHIM used a \$1.8 million budget in 2017 from the state to purchase billboard advertisements, broadcast ads and digital ads. This was in addition to the grants they gave to community partners, such as NEON. Cronen said her department is "acutely aware" of the vast diversity of the state and that what works in Portland may not work in Eastern Oregon.

"It's one reason the community partner program is so valuable," Cronen said. "We are able to offer competitive grants to organiza-

tions to do what they do best in their communities: offering free, local assistance in getting enrolled and coming up with the outreach ideas, strategies and tactics they know will be effective."

During the enrollment period for 2019 health coverage, Sorensen reported NEON assisted 177 individuals in filling out applications for the OHIM. In total, NEON helped more than 500 individuals apply for health insurance through both OHIM and the Oregon Health Plan in 2018. NEON's budget comes solely from state and federal grants and it does not accept any form of payment from individuals it helps. Eric Griffith, NEON executive director, said the organization attempts to help as many people as possible with the

grants it receives.

"It's not a business model, it's not us making money off the people we serve," Griffith said. "We have a set amount of money and we do the most we can with that."

NEON's outreach efforts include advertisements on local radio stations, posters in businesses, digital signs and even a pre-movie ad at the Granada Theatre.

While often times people with lower incomes seek NEON's assistance in signing up for the Oregon Health Plan, individuals with a wide range of income enroll for ACA health insurance programs through the government website.

Sorensen said she has seen a favorable shift in the local opinion of ACA in the past few years.

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"At first there was a lot more pushback on the Affordable Care Act and 'Obamacare' and it has shifted gradually," she said. "Our final reporting for the federal grant (shows) that people were a lot more open to it. They received some benefit (because of the) ACA."

While the open-enrollment period for 2019 plans has concluded, Sorensen said individuals who lose health insurance or have

a change in their family status — such as gaining or losing a dependent, or a change in marital status —

may enroll in ACA insurance via HealthCare.gov if they do so within 60 days of the change.

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When should you be treated in the Emergency Room?

- When a loved one is unconscious or unresponsive
- When you suspect a heart attack — chest pain, shortness of breath, etc.
- When you suspect a stroke — facial droop, weakness on one side, slurred speech
- After an accident or injury where you suspect a concussion, broken bone, internal injury, or other serious condition.

For most other health concerns, call your primary care doctor or provider. For life-threatening emergencies, call 9-1-1.

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