

DAILY PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Monday, April 22, the 112th day of 2019. There are 253 days left in the year.



TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On April 22, 2000, in a dramatic pre-dawn raid, armed immigration agents seized Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy at the center of a custody dispute, from his relatives' home in Miami; Elian was reunited with his father at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington.

ON THIS DATE

In 1864, Congress authorized the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins.

In 1898, with the United States and Spain on the verge of war, the U.S. Navy began blockading Cuban ports. Congress authorized creation of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, also known as the "Rough Riders."

In 1952, an atomic test in Nevada became the first nuclear explosion shown on live network television as a 31-kiloton bomb was dropped from a B-50 Superfortress.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$2 million
1-9-10-11-21-38

Mega Millions: \$192 million
18-25-43-44-57-25-x4

Powerball: \$150 million
3-27-30-63-65-PB 1-x3

Win for Life: April 20
3-12-48-66

Pick 4:

April 21
• 1 p.m.: 1-6-1-0
• 4 p.m.: 7-3-4-6
• 7 p.m.: 6-6-1-8
• 10 p.m.: 3-2-9-0

Pick 4:

April 20
• 1 p.m.: 6-8-4-7
• 4 p.m.: 4-1-9-1
• 7 p.m.: 6-3-9-5
• 10 p.m.: 8-8-1-0

Pick 4:

April 19
• 1 p.m.: 0-4-0-8
• 4 p.m.: 6-0-7-7
• 7 p.m.: 4-7-3-9
• 10 p.m.: 3-5-9-6

ROAD REPORT

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

Every effort is made to deliver your Observer in a timely manner. Occasionally conditions exist that make delivery more difficult.

If you are not on a motor route, delivery should be before 5:30 p.m. If you do not receive your paper please call 541-963-3161.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What's vice today may be virtue, tomorrow."
— Henry Fielding, English novelist (born this date in 1707, died in 1754)

Q: When was La Grande's Sacajawea Hotel torn down?

A: 1970



Photo courtesy of Bob Bull

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Forty-nine years have passed since the Sacajawea Hotel, a seven-story regional landmark, disappeared from the local skyline.

The building's demise ended a glorious four-decade run highlighted by countless community gatherings, visits by celebrities and daily marches of Army Air Force cadets. Sadly the hotel's story was also one of painful paradox, for it was ultimately betrayed not by weakness, but strength.

Constructed in the late 1920s, the Sacajawea was torn down in 1970 in part because it would have been extremely difficult to remodel so it could be leased for use as something other than hotel rooms. Hotels were falling out of favor with travelers at the time, victims of the growing popularity of motels.

The owner of the

Sacajawea Hotel was having a hard time making money and wanted to convert it into a space that could be rented for business offices and other purposes. This was not feasible, though, because the Sacajawea's walls were so thick and solid they could not be easily torn down to allow for remodeling, according to the late Jack Evans, a highly regarded La Grande historian who died in 2006. Evans spoke to The Observer many times about the history of La Grande's buildings.

The Sacajawea Hotel was built by La Grande businessman Julius Roesch in 1927 and officially opened Feb. 18, 1928, according to Robert Bull's book "A Little Bit of This and a Little Bit of That: La Grande and Union County Trivia."

The 95-room hotel was one of the tallest buildings between Boise and

Portland according to Bull. The buildings features included a ballroom, mezzanine, hand carved walnut tables, "exquisite furniture designs" and many architectural features according to articles in February 1928 editions of The Observer. A story in the Feb. 6, 1928 Observer described the building's architecture as "imposing."

A number of Oregon governors visited the Sacajawea, including Gov. Douglas McKay, who stopped at the Sacajawea Hotel in 1951 to get a haircut during a visit to La Grande. Other well-known visitors to the Sacajawea Hotel were members of the east of the 1956 western "Pillars of the Sky," which was filmed in the La Grande area, and Gov. Tom McCall.

The Sacajawea Hotel, during World War II, was home to many Army Air

Force cadets training to become military pilots. The young men were attending classes at Eastern Oregon University, then named Eastern Oregon College of Education, as part of the first phase of their training. Each school day they would march in formation to and from Eastern, according to a March 12, 1970, Observer article. A military patrol guarded the Sacajawea Hotel each night "to prevent young cadets from slipping out to enjoy the night life," the story said.

The Sacajawea Hotel's popularity began falling in the 1950s when more people began traveling by automobiles rather than train, according to the 1970 Observer article. More travelers began using motels as a result because they were more convenient to stop at.

La Grande's most famous hotel was not alone when it closed.

"Hotels in small cities have long since given way to the motel. One could make an impressive list of the ones over the state and nation that have gone out of business and many more that are in troubled financial waters," an editorial in the March 12, 1970, Observer stated.

With its popularity waning, the Sacajawea Hotel's level of service began to decline. For example, room service was discontinued in 1961.

Businesses and organizations that had to find new homes with the closure of the Sacajawea in 1970 included KLBM radio, the La Grande Chamber of Commerce and a barber-shop. The hotel's coffee shop and Sand and Sage lounge were closed permanently.

The Sacajawea was long a big part of La Grande's social scene for it allowed

many community groups meet at the hotel for no charge.

"There is hardly an organization of note that has not had to use of the two ballrooms or smaller rooms for meetings," the editorial stated.

The editorial also stated perhaps it would have been better, financially speaking, if the Sacajawea had charged groups for meetings. This, though, would not have kept in line with the hotel's community spirit.

"The Sacajawea has been a good citizen," the editorial said.

The hotel was torn down after U.S. Bank made an offer for the land the building was on, according to a February 1970 issue of the Eastern Oregon Review. U.S. Bank wanted to start construction of its new building in 1970 at the site of the Sacajawea Hotel, necessitating that the structure be torn down.

The demolition of the Sacajawea attracted so many onlookers that a small grandstand was set up across from it, according to a June 23, 1970, Observer article. A sign at the spectator site described the Sacajawea's destruction as "The Biggest Show in La Grande." ■

MUSIC

Continued from Page 1A

"It's awesome. They love it," she said, noting there have been more people attending each week. "It has been really cool to watch the progression."

The class had music games as well as songs. One involved going around the room and introducing each person to a rhythm. Another included a "magic drum" where one person played a drum pattern and everyone else repeated it — call and response style — using their tambourines and shakers. Some residents were content to watch the activities and listen to the music while others sang along enthusiastically. Many requested songs for the next class.

Sonya Adams is one of the students who led the class.

"I was a little nervous about it at first because I'm not a huge social person," she said. "The first class went really well. Things just fell into place and I left in a really good mood. Ever since then it keeps getting better. I've gotten more comfortable with it and I think (the residents) really like singing and stuff. They don't get a lot of opportunities to do it otherwise."

Nikki Randal is another EOU student leading the class. She explained the classes have evolved and changed a lot as the students have gotten to know the residents and what they enjoy doing.

"Every time you come here, it's always trial and error," she said.

Resident Darlene Bartlett said she enjoyed the class and thought the students were fantastic. She said she will return for more.

Zondra Hensley also said she would return. "I do hope they keep it up," she said. Of the EOU students she said, "They have very good manners."

Gekeler agreed the students are especially kind with the residents. "The level of engagement for such young people and the amount of caring — they remember everyone's names — I can't say enough about how awesome they are," she said.

Dottie Wilkes sat in the front row and participated wholeheartedly. "I loved it," she said. "I love anything with music." ■

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