

GRAY

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Mary Lynn Townsend, who worked for the Union County Justice Court for many years until recently retiring, said her office received letters from people who said Gray helped turn their lives around when he cited them.

"They said it was a wake-up call," Townsend said.

Gray, who specialized in traffic patrols, said he was always all business when making traffic stops yet strived to take steps to ease the tension. He noted very often when he wrote someone a ticket the motorist would say, "I don't deserve this." The reserve deputy would respond by agreeing with them.

"I would tell them, 'You are right. You don't deserve this — you earned it,'" Gray said.

Most motorists found they could not argue with this.

Speeders could never quibble with Gray because he always brought out a portable laser tracking device that indicated how fast they were going. Sometimes they would argue that the device must have been tracking someone else, but then Gray would explain how it locks on to a single vehicle.

Gray often found people he pulled over for speeding or minor traffic violations were afraid they might go to jail or get a criminal record. He did his best to reassure them that tickets for traffic infractions are minor compared to crimes.

Gray said drivers who were respectful of him had a better chance of getting a reduced fine. For example, someone speeding at 93 miles per hour faces a fine in the \$400 range under Oregon law, but someone clocked at 90 will get a ticket in the \$200 range. Gray said when a driver clocked at 93 miles per hour was polite he would write a citation for 90 miles per hour.

Gray always wore sunglasses when making a traffic stop during daylight hours because this prevented people in the vehicle from seeing what he was looking at.

"I wanted to have an edge," he said.

Gray said the sunglasses made it easier for him to see if the vehicle he stopped had weapons or contraband.

He said he ended each traffic stop by earnestly telling the driver to drive safely.

"I never said, 'Have a nice day,' because I knew their day was al-



Dick Mason/The Observer

Jim Gray retired Wednesday from his position as deputy for the Union County Sheriff's Office.

ready a bad one (because of the ticket)," he said.

Gray never encountered anyone who was violent while on patrol, but he had his share of harrowing experiences. For example, last fall he pulled over a woman for speeding on I-84. After talking with her Gray went to his patrol car to write a ticket. About a minute later, a semi passed the woman's parked car and clipped her driver's side mirror, right where Gray had been standing.

"It blew it off (and) shattered

the mirror," Gray said.

He shudders to think what would have happened if he had been standing there when the semi went past.

"If I had been there, I would not be here today," Gray said at a retirement party Wednesday at the office of the Union County Sheriff and the La Grande Police Department.

Gray said one should never underestimate the danger of being on a freeway.

"When you are out there, you have to watch for traffic because it is

not watching for you," the now-retired law enforcement officer said.

Gray worked as a volunteer for the sheriff's office until 12 years ago when he began getting paid for 20 hours of work a week. He credits the efforts of Sheriff Rasmussen with finding room in the budget to compensate him for his time.

He worked without pay for years because of his lifelong interest in law enforcement.

"It is fascinating," Gray said.

In retirement, Gray said, he is looking forward to spending more time with his wife, Mary, and with his grandchildren. One of his grandchildren, Paige Hughes, is an emergency services dispatcher. Hughes has been a dispatcher many times while her grandfather was on duty, including Wednesday. At the conclusion of his last shift, Gray communicated the police code indicating that his work day was over. Paige then took an unusual step, reviewing her grandfather's career over the radio and lauding him for his years of service.

"I was honored to be able to do it," Hughes said.

Gray said he was moved by his granddaughter's gesture.

"It brought a tear to my eye," he said. ■

ART

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"From there I burn the screens and I print yellow first and on top of yellow I print the magenta," she said. Next she prints the cyan ink, and finally black.

"Black goes on top; it ties everything together. It's really fun to go through this long process and see how it turned out," she said. She described watching the different colors, like the purples and oranges, emerge with the addition of each of the central ink colors.

White's artwork for her installation displays an imaginative world of her creation.

"There's a lot of space theme, and a lot of sky. A lot of intangible, uncatchable things. I also play a lot with scale, so small people with big things or big people with small things," she said.

White has been interested in art since she was a child, but she didn't switch her major until she transferred to EOU her sophomore year, having first attended North Idaho College. She plans to continue making art, especially screen prints, after she

graduates.

White said she is excited for the gallery opening, and she knows the other artists as well.

"We have been working towards this since the beginning of the school year," she said.

Audrey Lind's installation in the gallery explores the idea of relationships between humans and animals, and how humans treat different species of animals.

"We participate in a lot of categorization, so certain animals, this one's a pest, this one is my best friend, like my dog. This one we use for fill-in-the-blank product," she said.

Lind said she chose this topic because she is interested in conservation, and because she loves animals and has romanticized them from a young age when she remembers watching cartoons featuring talking animals.

Lind's medium for this installation is blind contour drawing and painting. She also plays with taking 2D art and making it 3D. She cuts out the subjects in her pieces and mounts them away from the wall using acrylic rods. She

said making them 3D gives them life, and she likes the shadows that they cast.

Lind said she has always been interested in art, and her family supported her creativity.

"I like to draw and my parents were like, go for it," she said. Lind said it was her mother who encouraged her to major in art.

"It's really important to just follow your passion," she said.

Tanisha Willis' installation deals with the past and childhood.

"It's about loss, it's about obsession, it's about growing up and throwing away the past and coming into the future," she said. She works with subtractive drawing, a process in which the surface is covered in charcoal and the image is created by erasing.

Willis said she became interested in subtractive drawing in a class she took this year after transferring to EOU from a school in San Antonio, Texas. Willis is originally from Georgia.

"I took art in every grade up into high school, but after high school my art kind of stagnated until I went to

EOU," she said.

She switched her major to art her junior year, after transferring.

Willis will also have zines at the gallery to accompany her art. A zine is a self-published and produced magazine.

For Berenice Chavez Meraz, her installation is very personal. Her photographs serve as a form of documentation for her mother, who is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico.

"These photographs take the place of the legal citizenship that my mother does not have. They are proof that she belongs," she wrote in her artist's statement.

Chavez Meraz said she and her family grew up with a constant worry that her mother would be deported. She described writing a letter to the immigration services that explained why it was important that her mother stay in the U.S. in 6th grade. Her mother is currently in danger of being deported again, for the third time in Chavez Meraz's life.

"Most kids don't have to worry about someone just coming and taking their mom," she said.

Chavez Meraz's family lives in Umatilla. She said she started visiting and taking film photos of her mother in her home, doing normal day-to-day things.

"I started taking pictures of the things that she collects and the way she hangs things on the wall, the things that she's bought for us and photos of her and what she does around the house," Chavez Meraz said.

Chavez Meraz said although she recognizes that immigration is a political issue, her artwork is not meant to make a political statement so much as it is meant to capture the feeling of family, belonging and a place to call home.

Chavez Meraz is double

majoring in anthropology and art, and said she plans to continue creating fine art through film photography. She said she also plans to continue her project of taking photos of her mother and her family, whether her mother goes back to Mexico or not.

"I just love my mom, it's been a great way for me to spend time with her and my little sister," Chavez Meraz said. "At the end of the day, I'm proud of the work I made and I'm glad that I could incorporate my mom and my family into my work, because my parents came here so I would be able to do this, so it's the least I could do to make them a part of the work I'm making." ■

MERKLEY

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border and who are stopping innocent families with guns in their faces," she said. "What's going to happen in the future with the border patrol situation?"

Merkley, who was the first member of Congress to visit a detention facility in 2018 during the president's zero tolerance child separation policy, said he's involved with immigration issues because "any time we deliberately injure children, it takes a piece of our soul."

"I think it erodes the human spirit and is an evil thing to deliberately traumatize children as an immigration strategy. I'm appalled by what the president chose to do on child separation, and I went down there to stop it," he said. "All of our spirits are affected by the actions of our nation. We often criticize other nations that are engaged in the violation of human rights or doing terrible things to children. This time it unfortunately was us."

Senator Merkley told his own story of visiting the border, where he met a woman fleeing the cartel in Hondu-

ras with her newborn child.

He said her family had borrowed a loan from what was likely a cartel bank, and because they couldn't pay it back in time, the cartel was going to take her life as compensation. She knew they wouldn't kill her if she was pregnant, so that gave her family more time to pay back the loan.

But when she reached eight months and the debt had still not been paid, she fled her home country for America. The cartel took her uncle's life in her stead.

She gave birth to her child while on her three-month journey and reached the border when her baby was 65 days old. Merkley said she told him that after she was denied three times at the pedestrian port of entry where she sought asylum, she crossed the border by wiping the windshields of cars across the vehicle port of entry until she reached America.

"That's the type of situation we're talking about," the senator said when he finished telling her story. "I don't know if she'd be able to demonstrate that in front of an immigration court or not, but let's treat her with decency and respect."

Presidential

In early March, Merkley recanted his decision to run for the democratic presidential nomination for 2020 and chose to run for re-election in the Senate instead. He said that's where he felt he could get the most work done.

"It comes down to this: no matter who is in the Oval Office, they won't be able to accomplish anything without a functioning Senate," he said. "I laid out a lot of plans on how to make the Senate work better, and I feel that's where I can contribute the most."

When asked if the growing number of democrats running for the presidential

nomination had anything to do with his decision, Merkley said it only "made me want to be in it more to be in the conversation."

Merkley returns to the west side of the state with his next town hall at 11 a.m. Saturday in Columbia County, 52265 Lower Columbia River Hwy, Scappoose. To check for more town hall dates and locations or to read more about Senator Merkley's history, policy or vision, visit www.merkley.senate.gov. ■

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