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Good day to our valued subscriber Steve Crowell of Cove

School District to add award winner

By Dick Mason
The Observer

An award-winning educator from Olympia, Washington, may soon be joining the administrative staffs at Central Elementary School and La Grande Middle School.



West The La Grande School District has announced that Monica West, the principal of McLane Elementary School in the Olympia School District in Washington, has been selected to become the new half-time Central Elementary School assistant principal and half-time LMS assistant principal. George Mendoza, superintendent of the La Grande School District, will recommend that the school board vote to hire West when it meets June 12.

West has been chosen to take the two half-time assistant principal positions currently held by Chris Wagner, who is scheduled to become LMS's new full-time assistant principal in 2019-20. Wagner will succeed Brett Jackman, who will be leaving to take a position with the Nyssa School District.

West has worked for the Olympia School District for 25 years. She has been an elementary school principal the past seven years and prior to that was an assistant middle school principal.

McLane Elementary School, which has about 300 students, has received a number of awards during West's tenure as principal. They include the 2018 Center for Education Effectiveness' "School of Distinction Award," which recognizes continuous growth in English language arts and math over a five-year period. In 2016, McLane Elementary School received the "Washington Achievement Award" for closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities.

Individual awards West
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Dick Mason/The Observer

Grandview Cemetery in La Grande was awash in color at Monday's annual Avenue of Flags ceremony.

SALUTING THOSE WHO 'NEVER GOT TO TAKE THE UNIFORM OFF'

By Dick Mason
The Observer

America's fallen veterans need people who will stand up for them and make sure their stories of sacrifice are never forgotten.

Doran Hopkins of Summerville, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel, made this point in compelling fashion Monday during an address at a Memorial Day ceremony at the Summerville Cemetery.

"There is a story with each flag (at a cemetery headstone)," he said.

Hopkins was a voice of his family's military legacy Monday, recounting stories of courage, loss and uncommon honor dating back to the Spanish American War of 1899-1901. Hopkins' grandfather, who lived in Imbler, fought in the war for the U.S. Army. He was not injured in the war in the Philippines, but he paid a lifelong price.

"My grandfather (Benjamin Franklin Hopkins) came home and lived with the effects of malaria and dysentery the rest of his life. He received a disability payment for his service in the jungles," Doran said.

Benjamin Franklin Hopkins and Mary Ann (Green) Hopkins had four sons who served in World War II, and two were killed in action: Frank, a National Guardsman in the U.S. Army, and Earl, a U.S. Marine.

Frank Hopkins was sent to Australia where he served from 1942 to 1945. He was part of campaigns in New Guinea during this time where the Allies were protecting Australia from an invasion by Japanese forces.

"He was badly wounded in June of 1944 and evacuated to a hospital in Australia. He wrote a letter to one of his brothers stating that he did want to return home because his face was badly disfigured," Doran said.

Frank, who received a Purple Heart,



Dick Mason/The Observer

Doran Hopkins, who served in the U.S. Air Force for 28 years, speaks at the Summerville Cemetery Monday morning.

later accompanied his unit to the Philippines where he was killed in action in March of 1945. The pain of his death was magnified for his family by how close he came to returning home alive.

"He was the last casualty of his unit and it was the last time his unit fought in action," Doran said.

Earl Hopkins, a La Grande High School graduate, also fought in the Pacific during WWII. He was badly wounded in Saipan in July of 1944. He survived the war only to be killed in the Korean Conflict during the battle

of Chosin Reservoir in late 1950.

Frank and Earl Hopkins are buried side by side at Arlington Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Doran said his grandparents' third son in combat was Olin Hopkins, a graduate of Imbler High School. He served as a medic aboard an aircraft carrier, the Belleau Wood in the Pacific. Olin was never seriously injured, but a horrific incident exacted a psychological toll that he struggled to come to grips with.

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More hearings set for B2H

By Jayson Jacoby
WesCom News Service

Officials from the Oregon Department of Energy recommend a state council approval for Idaho Power's controversial plan to build a power transmission line through Eastern Oregon. Idaho Power, which is partnering with the Bonneville Power Administration and PacifiCorp, first proposed B2H in 2007. The 500-kilovolt line would run for nearly 300 miles between Hemingway, in Southern Idaho, to Boardman in Morrow County.

Local residents will have a chance to express their opinions about the Boardman-to-Hemingway project during public hearings in June. Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Council, the seven-member group that reviews and issues construction certificates for major utility projects such as power lines, has scheduled hearings in each of the five Oregon counties — Malheur, Baker, Union, Umatilla and Morrow — through which the B2H power line would pass.

A hearing in Baker City is scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. June 19 at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, 2005 Valley Ave. An employee from the Oregon Department of Energy will explain the project, with public testimony starting at about 5 p.m. A Union County public hearing is set for 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. June 20 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th St. in La Grande.

Groups of local residents have opposed the project since its inception. Baker and Union county opponents claim, among other things, that the metal towers, some as tall as 180 feet, would mar scenic views through Baker Valley, Grande Ronde Valley, the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and other places. Critics also contend that the project would not benefit Baker County, as the line would not supply power to the county.

Most Baker County residents buy their power from Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. Idaho Power does have customers in the eastern parts of the county.

Mitch Colburn, resource planning and operations director for Idaho Power, said B2H would benefit Eastern Oregon counties through increased property taxes from Idaho Power and spending during construction of the line. Colburn also contends that the line would make electricity less expensive and service more reliable for OTEC and other providers.

The sections that have prompted the most concern in Baker County include the

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