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Good day to our valued subscriber Dick Staab of La Grande

Warming station debate rages on

■ Facility on hold due to an appeal submitted on Oct. 8

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

With temperatures 20 degrees or lower on the way, the contention in La Grande over the warming shelter continues to heat up.

After two locations in as many years, the organizers of the Union County Warming Station thought they found a suitable site at 2008 Third St., La Grande. But local businessman Al Adelsberger appealed the La Grande Planning Commission's conditional use permit for the shelter to the city council. The appeal put the brakes on renovating and readying the facility.

Becky Noll lives in La Grande and volunteers at the warming shelter. She said the public service is for anyone who needs a warm place to sleep during the winter months.

"We serve all kinds of people," Noll said. "I feel like some people have incorrectly judged those who are being served. The warming station serves anyone who has a need."

Noll said the shelter also serves as a community connector, providing information to those who may need or want additional services. She and those who support the warming station see it as a community service, an act of kindness that keeps people out of the cold during the winter months. In October, The Observer reported 112 people used the Union County Warming Station a total of 1,400 times during the 2018-19 winter.

However, opponents of the warming station fear it will enable the current homeless population.

When Joe Beans co-owner Colleen McLeod joined the conversation about the warming station's move into

See **Debate** / Page 5A

Local veteran recalls being on HIGH ALERT during a forgotten missile crisis

■ Ellis Mickey, U.S. Air Force veteran who lives in Summerville, recalls tense time



Dick Mason/The Observer

Air Force veteran Ellis Mickey of Summerville has been flying for 62 years. He is shown here with his plane at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The Cuban Missile Crisis, which put the United States on the verge of a nuclear war in October of 1962 is well chronicled.

What history has forgotten is that the United States was dangerously close to using nuclear force against Cuba about 18 months earlier.

Just how close?

Ellis Mickey, a U.S. Air Force veteran who lives in Summerville, knows better than most.

Mickey was serving at the Strategic Air Command Biggs Air Force Base in El Paso, Texas, when U.S. intelligence learned in late 1960 or early 1961 that Cuban President Fidel Castro had allegedly requested nuclear missiles from the Soviet Union. The United States took no chances for very soon afterward two B-47 jets, each loaded with a nuclear bomb, were placed on the runway at Biggs Air Force Base.

"They were on high alert. They were fueled, loaded and ready for take off (for Cuba) in five minutes," Mickey said.

Everyone at Biggs Air Force Base

See **Mickey** / Page 5A



Dick Mason/The Observer

Ellis Mickey checks the engine of his Piper Super Pacer recently at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

"They were on high alert. They were fueled, loaded and ready for take off (for Cuba) in five minutes."

— Ellis Mickey, a U.S. Air Force veteran describing the two B-47 jets, each loaded with a nuclear bomb, on the runway at Biggs Air Force Base in El Paso, Texas, in late 1960 or early 1961.

Political fight could be resolved

■ Voters could be asked to decide future of Oregon's forestry practices

By Sam Stites
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A political fight over how Oregon manages its forests and timber activity could resolved by voters next fall.

Two separate sets of ballot initiatives with contrary views of forestry in Oregon have been filed with the state Elections Division. One side seeks to insulate current practices from change and the other aims to create new regulations that prohibit certain techniques they feel are harmful to the environment and Oregonians.

Jim James and his fellow chief petitioners filed initiatives they're calling the "Health Forests and Wildfire Reduction Plan." They would keep the regulation of forest and timber practices on all state and privately owned lands in the hands of professional foresters, scientists and the Oregon Board of Forestry.

The plan would require the state Forestry Department to report new forestry regulations to the state board for review. The measures would add four members to the board representing scientific forestry fields and timber interests. The package also would amend Oregon's constitution so that the state compensates landowners if state actions reduce property values.

James is a professional forester based out of Foster and the executive director of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association, a lobbying group that advocates for private forest owners. The initiatives he's promoting were filed in response to a set of prospective measures called the "Oregon Forest Waters Protection" package.

Ag stars saluted during Farmer-Merchant Banquet

■ 71st annual Farmer-Merchant Banquet draws capacity crowd

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The Union County Farmer-Merchant Banquet started in 1949, the year 45 rpm records were first sold in the United States.

Today 45 rpm records are as rare as steam-powered tractors, but the Farmer-Merchant Banquet appears

to be as popular as ever. The 71st annual rendition of the banquet on Thursday drew 350 people, its largest crowd in at least four years.

"We were at maximum capacity," said Karrine Brogoitti, The Observer's publisher and past president of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, which puts on the banquet each year.

Those saluted this year at the banquet included Debbie Murchison of Cove, who received the Ag Woman of the Year award. Murchison has

been helping her family raise cattle for decades. She said the long hours of work have been a labor of love, one which creates inseparable family ties.

"No other industry holds families together like this one because none of us can do it all alone. We need each other," Murchison said.

Murchison worked for the Cove School District in its custodial department for at least two decades before retiring several years ago.

"Since then she has been work-

ing 24/7 on the ranch," said Cheryl Martin, the 2018 award recipient who presented Murchison with her award.

The Cattleman of the Year honor was awarded to Union rancher Sam Baker. He received a traveling trophy, one passed on each year to the new recipient. The names of previous winners are engraved on it. Baker appeared humbled after being handed the hardware by John Hefner, the 2018 recipient.

See **Banquet** / Page 5A

INDEX

Classified.....3B	Home.....1B	Opinion.....4A
Comics.....7B	Horoscope.....5B	Sports.....6S
Crossword.....5B	Lottery.....3A	Sudoku.....7B
Dear Abby ... 10B	Obituaries.....3A	Weather.....10B

WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
34 LOW
Partly cloudy



Tuesday
54/37
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Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.

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