

COMMUNITY

Meetings

• UNION — The Union Rural Fire Protection District’s board will meet Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the fire hall.

Briefs

Video delves into ‘Race and the Politics of Medicare’

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Rural Action Healthcare Reform Action Team presents a video screening and discussion of “Race and the Politics of Medicare” at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at Oregon Rural Action, 1112 1/2 Adams Ave., La Grande. The video explores how the defense of racially segregated health care in the South left the nation with the compromise that is Medicare, according to the announcement from Oregon Rural Action. The free presentation is in recognition of Black History Month and is open to the public.

Class of ‘54 meets for lunch

LA GRANDE — Members of the La Grande High School class of 1954 will meet for lunch Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. at the Cock ‘n’ Bull Villa Roma, inside Pat’s Alley, 1414 Adams Ave., La Grande.

Learn how to identify weeds

ISLAND CITY — The Oregon State University Master Gardener program’s individual classes are open to the community for \$5 each. Tuesday, Sam Bernards, of Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management, and Brian Clapp, of Union County Weed Control, will teach “Weed Identification.” The class will be in the conference room at the OSU-Union County Extension Office, 10507 N. McAlister Road, Island City. For more information and to RSVP for classes, call the Extension Office at 541-963-1010. Photos, upcoming classes and links to research-based gardening information is available on the Union County Master Gardeners – Oregon Facebook page.

Fish for free this weekend

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced the public is free to fish, crab or clam anywhere in Oregon on Saturday and Sunday in recognition of Presidents Day weekend. That means no one needs any fishing licenses or tags for residents and non-residents. While anglers don’t need licenses or tags, all other fishing regulations apply, including closures, bag limits and size restrictions. Go to www.eregulations.com/oregon/fishing/ to find out more.

Highway 204 repairs underway

Observer Staff

ELGIN — Work began Thursday to restore a portion of Highway 204 from Summerville Road to Andes Prairie that had been closed due to

slide activity and erosion that washed out part of the road and shoulders. The Oregon Department of Transportation reported the highway is open between the two points to one

lane with pilot cars escorting vehicles under 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight through the work zone.

The department announced it awarded a contract to restore drainage and protect the remaining road infrastructure and crews have started the work. The contractor, however, cannot properly restore the

road until after the snow melts, so the pilot car operation looks to last into spring.

In addition, the department stated the weather forecast for the area predicts another 2 feet of snow this weekend, making the evaluation of damage and repairs difficult. Snow removal, the repair work and a steep highway

along the creek with multiple chain-up areas complicates the pilot car operation. The work zone is about 10 miles long, and winter weather will affect single lane travel.

“Drive with caution,” ODOT advised, “and expect delays anywhere between 30 minutes and two hours, depending on conditions.”

OBITUARIES

John L. Wallsinger

Formerly of La Grande
1946-2019

John Lowell Wallsinger, 73, formerly of La Grande, died May 9, 2019, from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis at Auburn Multi-Care Hospital in Auburn, Washington. A memorial service was held May 18 at Mountain Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Kent, Washington.

John was born Feb. 9, 1946, in La Grande, to Thomas and Hazel Wallsinger. The Wallsinger and Woodell families came to the valley in 1862, and the Wallsinger family farm was on Market Lane, south and east of Alicel. John attended Alicel School, La Grande High School and what is now Eastern Oregon University.

Surviving relatives include his wife of 49 years, Julia Wallsinger of Auburn; daughter, Jessica Wallsinger of Reno, Nevada; son and daughter-in-law, Jeremy and Christina Wallsinger of Spanaway, Washington; three grandsons; siblings, Colleen Byers, Tom Wallsinger and Kathy Humiston; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Thomas and Hazel Wallsinger, and brother, Howard Wallsinger.

Mary K. (Johnston) Damewood

La Grande
1933-2020

Mary Kathleen Damewood, 86, of La Grande, died Feb. 6 at her residence. A celebration of her life will be held at 2 p.m. Feb. 22 at the La Grande First Christian Church.

Nicknamed Mary K., she was born Aug. 23, 1933, in Munising, Michigan, to Roy and Marie (Prentis) Johnston. She resided in Ironwood, Michigan; Cashmere, Washington; Corvallis; Brunswick, Maine; and La Grande, where she lived for 57 years. Mary K. attended Wenatchee Junior College and Washington State University. She married Leroy Damewood in Cashmere, Washington, on Sept. 11, 1955.

Mary K. was employed as a proofreader at the Wenatchee Daily World while in junior college and then in the personnel office for Boeing in Seattle. She also worked as the secretary in the journalism and information office at what is now Oregon State University. During her two years in Maine, she was a volunteer switchboard operator at the Brunswick Hospital and a member of an ad hoc committee for a new senior program.

From 1963-1983, Mary K. worked for Ross Hearing, an

attorney, and she spent the past 30 years as a bookkeeper for the Carey, Joseph & Mendiguren Law Office. She was a member of the Grande Ronde Hospital Auxiliary and was awarded for her service as the volunteer secretary for the Grande Ronde Hospital Foundation. She also volunteered as a bookkeeper for the Elks Lodge in the 1980s.

As a young girl growing up in Ironwood, Mary K. loved to ice skate and play the piano. She enjoyed gardening, playing bridge with two different bridge groups, canning, baking, sewing, knitting and camping.

Her favorite moments were spent with her grandsons and her family.

Surviving relatives include her husband of 64 years, Leroy Damewood of La Grande; daughter and son-in-law, Sally Ann Damewood-Wight and Mike Wight of Portland; two grandsons; and nine nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Roy and Marie Johnston, and brother, Bradley Prentis Johnston.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

Kenneth A. Skillings

Wallowa

Kenneth A. Skillings, 82, of Wallowa, died Feb. 12. Bollman Funeral Home is entrusted with the arrangements.

TEN DEPOT STREET

Next Week:
Mon-Fri Blue Plate \$12:
Grilled Coconut Chicken
with sticky rice and asian salad


Wednesday, 8pm
Shot-skis, Ski-flicks and Drink Specials
541-963-8766
tendepotstreet.com



Dock Wallen Baker, 94

February 20, 1925 - February 7, 2020

Dock Wallen Baker, 94, of La Grande, passed away on Friday, February 7, 2020 at Grande Ronde Hospital. A memorial service will be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday, February 29 at The Presbyterian Church in La Grande. Following the service, a reception will be held at the PFC.

Dock was born on February 20, 1925, in Norton, Virginia to James Andrew and Vera (O’Neil) Baker. Dock and his seven siblings were raised in and around Kingsport, Tennessee. In 1942, at age seventeen, Dock enlisted in the army. He was deployed to the Pacific Theater where he served as an anti-aircraft gunner. He took part in the island invasions of the South Pacific, and he served for a short time in Australia and as part of the forces that first occupied Japan.

After the war, Dock—along with several brothers and sisters and his mother—moved to Southern California in search of a good job and a future. But he found only jobs that paid little more than bus fare and lunch money.

Oregon beckoned. Two sisters, a brother, and an uncle had already moved from Southern California to Bend, Oregon. In 1947 Dock headed north and quickly found jobs as a school custodian and a pumice truck driver.

In his free time, Dock played on a city league basketball and softball team. His softball coach was an Oregon State police sergeant. The coach knew Dock was drawn to the outdoors, and he saw an honest man of promise and principle. The coach encouraged Dock to apply to be an OSP game officer. He got the job and was assigned to the La Grande office.

Before joining the police force, while in Bend, Dock met Ernestene (Ernie) Marie Baller of Redmond. Ernie was the friend of Dock’s youngest sister, Jean. Jean set them up on a date, and the rest is history—Dock and Ernie married in Redmond on September 9, 1950. The newlyweds honeymooned on the Oregon coast before heading to La Grande to begin their new lives together.

Dock was assigned to game enforcement for Union and Wallowa Counties as well as parts of Baker, Umatilla, Malheur and Grant Counties. Dock worked six days a week for many years. During the busiest times of the year, elk and deer season, he worked 10-14 hours a day, seven days a week. For his last years on the force, Dock worked as an investigator, at which time he hung up his uniform and wore civilian clothes until his retirement in 1981 after 31 years service.

Not one to be idle for long, Dock began working for the La Grande City Parks during the summer. He enjoyed being outdoors once again, mowing the grass and tending to the flowers. He also worked as a substitute janitor for the public schools. He enjoyed being around the students and visiting with the staff.

In September, 1951, Dock and Ernie’s first son, Bruce Roger, was born. Their second son, Keith Duane, followed in



1953. In December 1968, during Bruce’s senior year in high school, he lost his battle with leukemia. Keith taught elementary school in La Grande public schools for seven years before moving on to a career in writing and illustrating children’s books. He now lives in Walla Walla.

From 1959 until now, Dock and Ernie have resided at 1805 3rd

Street.

During his seventies and eighties, Dock spent many hours at the college gym, lifting weights and swimming. Dock and Ernie traveled to the American Southwest, and they took two memorable trips to Ireland, Scotland and England. But rather than travel the world, Dock preferred to stay home and enjoy the beauty of Eastern Oregon.

Dock played penny ante poker Thursday night for fourteen years, he watched Jeopardy every evening, and he baked whole wheat bread once a week.

After retirement, Dock and Ernie began walking every morning with their little dogs. Over the years their walking loops became shorter and shorter, but they never skipped a day. On the day before Dock died, at 5:00 in the morning, he walked around the block with their little dog Molly.

Dock was a keen observer, a trait that served him well in his work and in the enjoyment of the day to day. The sparrows in their garden hedge, the glow of the moon, the acrobatics of the squirrels—the little things gave him the most pleasure.

Dock spoke slowly and softly with a thick southern accent, a touch of Tennessee twang. He was a great story teller. His stories were slow, gentle, and heartwarming. The stories of his mother and his brood of siblings were the funniest and most tender.

Dock lived a long and healthy life, one full of integrity and compassion for every human and animal alike. He never said an unkind word about anyone he ever met—or ticketed or arrested. He treated everyone with respect and decency. He gave people the benefit of the doubt, and he considered the individual’s circumstances before making judgements and administering the law. He was fair, he was generous, he was considerate. But he wasn’t a pushover, and he did not suffer fools. Dock never missed an opportunity to be kind—that has to be his greatest achievement and legacy.

Dock is survived by his wife of 69 years, Ernestene Baker of La Grande; son, Keith Baker of Walla Walla, WA; and 9 nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; 4 sisters, 3 brothers; and son, Bruce Roger Baker.

The Baker family would welcome and appreciate any memories or re-telling of Dock’s stories. Those may be posted online at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Blue Mountain Humane Association, 3212 Highway 30, La Grande, OR 97850; or to La Grande City Library, 2006 4th St, La Grande, OR 97850.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

WEDNESDAY

A caller at 3:18 p.m. reported an abandoned wheelchair on the 1500 block of Fifth Street, La Grande. The parking enforcement officer picked up the wheelchair and took a report for found property.

La Grande police at 3:41 p.m. responded to two juveniles fighting at Cove Avenue and 27th Street. Turned out they were only playing.

Law enforcement at 4:04 p.m. responded to the 1800 block of Fourth Street to speak to someone about possible drug activity. Police determined the substance was burnt coffee.

THURSDAY

La Grande police at 7:46 a.m. received a report of two white, short-hair dogs missing from the 1600 block of Y Avenue. The animal enforcement officer found and returned the dogs to the owner.

The school resource officer at about 12:20 p.m. received a report of an assault involving a student in Union. The officer talked to people involved about options.

La Grande police at about 6 p.m. arrested Dustin Michael Webb-Davies, 27, of La Grande, on two counts of first-degree sexual abuse. Webb-Davies was in the Union County Jail, La Grande, at the time of the arrest on charges of felony assault and criminal mistreatment of a child younger than 10.

According to state court records, the district attorney’s office on Wednesday indicted Webb-Davies on the sex crime charges, accusing him of molesting a girl younger than 14. The court records indicate the two cases against Webb-Davies have different victims.

And La Grande firefighters responded to five calls for medical assistance on Thursday and six on Wednesday.

UNION COUNTY SENIOR CENTER
1504 N. ALBANY ST., LA GRANDE
LUNCH MENU
FEB. 17-21

Served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

age 60+ \$3 suggested donation, others \$6,

MONDAY: closed for Presidents Day.

TUESDAY: tomatoes stuffed with chicken salad, salad greens, fresh fruit, bread, dessert.

WEDNESDAY: shepherd’s pie, spinach salad, cottage cheese, fresh fruit, dessert.

THURSDAY: Southwest chili, layered salad, fresh fruit, cornbread and honey (alternate meal: chicken noodle soup).

FRIDAY: turkey sandwiches with cranberry sauce, cup of soup, vegetables, fresh fruit.

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