

TODAY IN HISTORY

TODAY

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2021. There are 346 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On Jan. 19, 1981, the United States and Iran signed an accord paving the way for the release of 52 Americans held hostage for more than 14 months.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1809, author, poet and critic Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston.

In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1937, millionaire Howard Hughes set a transcontinental air record by flying his monoplane from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

In 1944, the federal government relinquished control of the nation's railroads to their owners following settlement of a wage dispute.

In 1955, a presidential news conference was filmed for television and newsreels for the first time, with the permission of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1980, retired Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas died in Washington, D.C., at age 81.

In 1987, Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding George C. Wallace.

In 2005, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer had passed heart disease as the top killer of Americans age 85 and younger.

In 2006, Osama bin Laden, in an audiotape that was his first in more than a year, said al-Qaida was preparing for attacks in the United States; at the same time, he offered a "long-term truce" without specifying the conditions. Vice President Dick Cheney defended the administration's domestic surveillance program, calling it an essential tool in monitoring al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

In 2009, Russia and Ukraine signed a deal restoring natural gas shipments to Ukraine to end to the nearly two-week cutoff.

Ten years ago: Chinese President Hu Jintao, visiting the White House, declared "a lot still needs to be done" to improve his country's record on human rights; the exchange with President Barack Obama over human rights was balanced by U.S. delight over newly announced Chinese business deals expected to generate about \$45 billion in new export sales for the U.S.

Five years ago: Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump received the endorsement of Sarah Palin, giving the businessman a potential boost less than two weeks before Iowa's kick-off caucuses.

Rally draws positive response

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The United States electoral process received a heartfelt show of support Sunday, Jan. 17, in downtown La Grande.

Three Union County residents expressed their support of the 2020 presidential election results at a two-hour rally outside La Grande City Hall at the corner of Fourth Street and Adams Avenue. The trio held signs displaying "Don't Believe the Lies," "Support Democracy" and "Support the Election."

The FBI warned of demonstrations and possible violent protests objecting to the 2020 presidential election results at state capitals and in Washington, D.C., as the Wednesday, Jan. 20, inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden approaches. Toby Neuman of La Grande, who organized the event, said violence certainly was not the point of Sunday's demonstration in front of La Grande City Hall.

"We wanted to show our support in a positive way," Neuman said.

He said the event, which ran from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., was not about partisanship.

"We were not trying to take a stand for one side or another. We were trying



Dick Mason/The Observer

Union County residents Toby Neuman, left, and Sean Lerner participate in a rally Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, in downtown La Grande to show support for the 2020 presidential election results and the science regarding the pandemic.

"We were not trying to take a stand for one side or another. We were trying to show support for our democracy. We wanted to have a positive influence."

— Toby Neuman, La Grande

to show support for our democracy," Neuman said. "We wanted to have a positive influence."

Neuman's wife, Meghan Moore, their 3-year-old son, Jasper, and a friend, Sean Lerner of La Grande, joined in the showing.

"A lot of people honked in support or gave us a

thumbs-up," said Neuman, who relied on text messages rather than social media to organize the event and talked with La Grande police about it as well.

Neuman said only two people openly objected with obscene gestures.

The party's signs also included one stating,

"Believe in Science." Neuman explained this was to encourage people to take seriously the information medical professionals are providing about the COVID-19 pandemic. Neuman said it is unfortunate many people are ignoring what doctors are saying because of an anti-intellectual sentiment.

Lostine residents feel earthquake

By **RONALD BOND**

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY

— Gay Behnke was up reading late Monday evening, Jan. 4, when she heard what she first thought was a sonic boom.

"I just happened to be up, about 11:30 at night, (and heard) this loud boom, and I mean a boom," she said. "I have since learned that that does accompany an earthquake. I did not realize that."

Her home, on Tamarack Road about 7 miles south of Lostine, started shaking shortly after.

"I have a real old antique lamp, and it started swaying," she said.

Behnke and her neighbors — two who were awake at the time and six others who were awakened — had felt the shaking from a small tremor, a magnitude 2.4 on the Richter scale. The quake shook about 9.3 miles southwest of Lostine — and just under 7 miles west of Behnke and her neighbors — at 11:30 p.m.,

according to data on the United States Geological Survey website.

It's not the first time Behnke has been close to an earthquake.

"I was over in the Willamette Valley when the big earthquake hit and did damage in Sublimity," she said, referring to a 5.6 magnitude quake east of Salem in 1993.

This quake, though, had an element she hadn't heard in Sublimity — the loud boom.

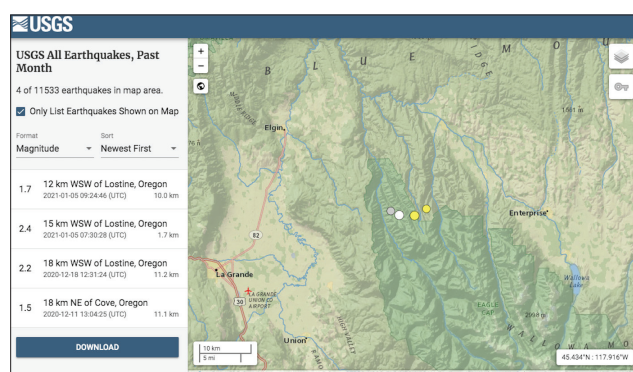
"This was new to me," she said. "I have been in earthquakes."

She noted a couple differences between the two quakes.

"First, there was no boom to get my attention," she said of the Sublimity shake. "The ground just started rolling. My house did shake, and it was early in the morning."

The quake early this month was one of two that hit in the same region that night.

A second quake was recorded early Tuesday morning, Jan. 5, at



United States Geological Survey/Screenshot

Two earthquakes, including one felt by residents south of Lostine, hit during the overnight hours of Jan. 4-5, 2021. The two were among four earthquakes in less than four weeks that had an epicenter in Wallowa County, though none of the other three were reportedly felt.

1:24 a.m. The quake was smaller at magnitude 1.7, but was about 1.9 miles closer to Lostine.

The first quake that night was relatively shallow at just over a mile deep. The second quake, which was not felt, was registered at a depth of 6.2 miles.

The earthquakes are actually the third and fourth in Wallowa County reported by the USGS in the past month — all of them in the same region.

A magnitude 2.2 quake was reported at 4:31 a.m. Dec. 18, 2020 — though about 7 miles deep — and a week earlier, on Dec. 11, a quake of 1.5 magnitude just after 5 a.m. hit at a depth of 6.9 miles.

Behnke, a retired educator, said she didn't expect to be feeling any quakes — even small ones — after moving to rural Wallowa County.

"I just thought I was done with earthquakes," she said.

Umatilla prison COVID-19 outbreak claims three more lives

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Three inmates who tested positive for COVID-19 in the ongoing outbreak at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla died over the weekend, according to press releases from the Oregon Department of Corrections, bringing the death toll among adults in custody at the prison to seven since January began.

More than 500 inmates and 74 staff at TRCI have tested positive for COVID-19 since infection began to spread rapidly through the prison in December. The institution is suffering the largest outbreak among prisons in Oregon, with 268 active cases among AICs as of Jan. 14, according to data from the Oregon Department of Corrections.

The first two inmates who died over the

weekend were between 75 to 85 years old and died Saturday, Jan. 16, the press releases said. The third was between 55 and 65 and died Sunday. Each died at a local hospital.

The corrections department did not disclose the names of the inmates who died. It also did not disclose whether or not they had underlying health conditions.

Two Rivers has reported more COVID-19 cases among AICs than any other prison in Oregon since the pandemic began, with 599 cases, and the third most among staff, with 107 cases, according to ODOC data.

Since the pandemic began, 32 inmates in Oregon prisons have died after testing positive for COVID-19. In all, nearly 2,994 inmates and 744 staff have tested positive.

Warm glow of a winter wonderland



Phil Wright/The Observer

The display on the evening of Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021, in the front window of Clank-Tronix in downtown La Grande is just one of the treasures inside. Clank-Tronix owner and operator Tim Osterloh said he has managed to keep the business that buys, sells and trades everything from video games to comic books going through the pandemic with the help of grants and the customers who continue making appointments.

Baker City has new mayor

SAMANTHA O'CONNOR

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Kerry McQuisten is Baker City's new mayor.

City councilors, who choose the mayor from among their colleagues, elected McQuisten by a 6-1 vote Tuesday night, Jan. 12, at city hall. Councilor Lynette Perry nominated McQuisten.

Councilor Heather Sells voted for Shane Alderson. Sells and Alderson are, like McQuisten, new councilors who were elected Nov. 3.

"I feel humbled by the confidence voters and then the other elected councilors have shown in me," McQuisten said. "I'm also grateful for the chance to do some good in the community as mayor. My hope is that more citizens will turn out and start making their voices heard. I think the new city manager and council will bring some positive new changes, which is exciting."

The council, also by a 6-1 margin, elected Perry as vice mayor. Councilor Jason Spriet voted for Alderson. McQuisten nominated Perry.

Baker City's charter

Baker County back in extreme risk category

By **JAYSON JACOBY**

Baker City Herald

BAKER COUNTY — Baker County's respite from Oregon's most extreme COVID-19 restrictions will last just two weeks.

The county, which moved from the extreme-risk category to the high-risk on Jan. 1, returned to the extreme designation Friday, Jan. 15. Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said he was disappointed.

"I thought I could lobby our way out of extreme," said Bennett, who has served as the county's incident commander during the pandemic. "We're not happy. It's not what we wanted."

Restaurant owner Tyler Brown shares Bennett's dismay. Brown owns Barley Brown's Brew Pub and Tap House, and his family also owns Sumpter Junction restaurant, all in Baker City.

Sumpter Junction has been closed since March because the layout of its booths makes it unfeasible to operate even with limited indoor dining. But Brown said his pub has been open for indoor dining — albeit with a limit of 50 people, including staff and customers — since Baker County dropped to the high-risk category.

Business was brisk last weekend, and Brown said he had nine to 10 employees working.

With the county returning to the extreme-risk category, and restaurants limited to takeout, Brown said he'll need just three or four workers.

"It's incredibly frustrating," Brown said of the biweekly shifts from limited indoor dining to takeout. "We are not in control of our future."

As a county with a population between 15,000 and 30,000 (Baker County has about 16,800 residents), Baker is in the extreme-risk category if it exceeds either of two measurements:

- a test positivity rate of 10% or higher during a two-week measuring period.
- 60 or more new cases over the two-week measuring period.

The county's risk level, for Jan. 15-28, is based on COVID-19 figures from Dec. 27 through Jan. 9.

doesn't give the mayor veto power. The mayor presides over city council meetings, enforces council rules and signs ordinances and resolutions.

The vice mayor assumes those duties when the mayor isn't available.

The 20-minute meeting was the first for five of the six councilors elected Nov. 3 — McQuisten, Sells, Alderson, Joanna Dixon and Johnny Waggoner Sr. Spriet, the lone incumbent on the Nov. 3 ballot, also was elected.

Perry was elected to a four-year term in 2018 and was not on the ballot.

It also was the first meeting for City Manager Jonathan Cannon, whom the previous council hired in November.

All seven councilors attended the meeting in person at city hall.

Four of the new councilors — McQuisten, Dixon, Waggoner and Alderson — gathered on the front steps of city hall Jan. 12 at 4 p.m. to be sworn in. The councilors requested that option due to occupancy limits in city hall prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.