

Back Achers' owner to give his back a rest

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Ben Deal is going to give his back a rest come March when he turns over the operations of Back Achers building supply in Wallowa to his son, Jack.

“That’s what they tell me starting in March,” Jack Deal said.

Now 75 and having recently become widowed, the elder Deal figures it’s time.

“I’ve been doing this for more than 60 years,” the 75-year-old said.

He started in the Rogue Valley with his first store at age 12. He’s owned and operated hardware stores, built houses and when he moved to Enterprise in 1992, he began to put down roots in Wallowa County.

“Actually, I came up here to retire in 1992,” he said. “Then I started a lumber yard.”



Ben Deal shows some of the lumber he sells at Back Achers building supply store in Wallowa. He said about 75% of his sales come from building supplies, though he has a wide variety of other items for sale.

He ran the lumber yard in Enterprise until 2011, when the economy forced him to shut down. Then, the following year, he and his late wife moved to Wallowa.

“JoAnn and I ran it and our kids have helped out,” he said, referring to their four sons. “This spring, I’m going to turn it over to Jack and let him hire some employees.”

The store has four employees, including Jack, his dad said. The younger Deal said he has virtually grown up with the business.

“Since I was knee-high to a tall grasshopper,” he said. “I’ve worked in other lines, like construction and stuff, but I’ve always been around building materials.”

Jack is married to the former Raenita Bennett, whose family owns Big Bear Drive-in in Wallowa. She’s a third-generation Wallowa County resident. The couple has two daughters and a son —



Jack Deal, left, and his father, Ben, stand amid the wide variety of merchandise available at Back Achers building supply in Wallowa. Ben, who has operated the store since 2012, will turn it over to Jack in March.

and grandchildren.

“We keep on putting down our roots here,” Jack said.

While about 70% of what Back Achers sells is lumber and other building materials, it has a wide

variety of offerings.

“I guarantee you that you’ve never been in a store like this,” Ben said. “I sell

just about anything under the sun, new and used.”

That was quite evident during a brief tour of the 10,000-square-foot store at 801 N. Douglas St. Shelves are stocked with a wide variety of tools for as many uses, trailer equipment, welders, tarps, outdoor gear, electrical and plumbing fixtures and supplies, automotive supplies, cabinet hardware, gardening essentials, coats, boots, toys, games, kitchen items, clocks, some clothing, fasteners and much more.

You could say there’s everything — including the kitchen sink.

One of the more unique items is an old eye examination chair from 1950s.

“This will probably go to Portland for someone to put in their house,” Ben said.

There are also items of local history, including a sign from the Bank of Wallowa County that is now

Community Bank.

“I saved that because I thought someone might want to make it into a door,” Ben said.

The store also has a wide variety of antiques and collectibles that draw customers from all over.

“I’ve got people coming here in the summertime from Spokane, Seattle and Portland to buy stuff to resell,” Ben said. “It’s a one-of-a-kind store. There’s just about anything you can think of.”

In addition to drawing customers far and wide, Back Achers delivers far out of town. The pink company truck will take deliveries to Lewiston, Idaho, La Grande and all over Wallowa County.

“I painted it pink to get attention two years ago,” Ben said of the truck.

Back Achers also has a 10-square-foot storefront in downtown Wallowa at the site of a former mercantile. Although it’s not a retail outlet, passersby can view the many antiques and collectibles through the windows. A phone number on the window is posted.

“If they want something, they can call and I’ll come down and sell it to them,” Ben said.

Outside at the Douglas Street main shop, the Deals have decorated the main building to look like storefronts from the Old West. They also have a couple semi-trailers they’ll do like-wise with.

As for future plans, Jack hopes to have spots for a flea in the trailers he can rent to vendors. But he said he plans to largely keep things the same. He also hopes to remodel the upper floor of the main building to add more retail space.

“We’ll just keep on and do what we need to survive in Wallowa County,” he said.

Vaccinations begin for Oregon teachers; farmworkers to wait

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon began vaccinating teachers for COVID-19 on Monday, Jan. 25, but farmworkers and other workers considered to be essential will have to wait until May under the state’s latest schedule.

In a press briefing Jan. 22, Gov. Kate Brown defended her latest decision to reject federal guidelines and prioritize teachers and other school staff for the vaccine before the elderly

or people with underlying conditions.

Oregon Health Authority said seniors ages 70 to 74 will be pushed back to Feb. 28 and those 65 to 69 must now wait until March 7.

Essential workers, including those in the agricultural sector, will become eligible for vaccines in Phase 1b of a four-phase plan, meaning they are now fifth in line after health care workers, educators, people 65 and over and those with underlying conditions.

“I know there will still be some who disagree with

this choice,” Brown told reporters. “I also know there are many Oregonians who are eager to get the vaccine. The harsh reality is we are managing a scarce resource right now. I wish we had more vaccines to give.”

Jan. 12, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services urged states to prioritize aging people and those with underlying health conditions. Other states complied, but Oregon went its own direction.

See, **Vaccines**/Page 3B

Cherries a ‘pandemic powerhouse;’ sales top \$1 billion in 2020

Pacific Northwest cherries reaped record revenues, through strong consumer demand

By DAN WHEAT
For the Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — The coronavirus pandemic factored into the Pacific Northwest cherry industry grossing more than \$1 billion for the first time last year, but Little Cherry Disease and China tariffs remain key concerns.



Rainier cherries at harvest June 26, 2019, in Handley Orchard, East Wenatchee, Washington. Pacific Northwest cherries sold at record prices in 2020.

As the coronavirus shut down restaurants, grocery store shopping increased 20% and online promotions championing health benefits of cherries resonated with consumers resulting in “the strongest demand in the past decade,” B.J. Thurlby, president of Northwest Cherry Growers, in Yakima, told the association’s 78th annual Cherry Institute. The Jan. 21 meeting was held virtually because of the coronavirus.

“When we talk to retailers this spring, we will say cherries were amazing last year. They were a pandemic powerhouse. They had the single most dollar growth, 86.5%, between March and September of any produce item,” Thurlby said. “We have great data as a powerful kickstarter

coming into the 2021 season.”

Northwest Cherry Growers shifted a lot of its promotions from traditional advertising to online with good results, he said.

Washington typically is 80-85% of the Pacific Northwest crop that includes Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Utah. Washington makes up about 60% of the national crop.

The late May to early September Northwest crop totaled 19.8 million, 20-pound boxes, down 15% from 23.3 million the year prior and well below the record of 26.4 million in 2017.

Five rain storms between May 25 and June 5 and wind cost some Washington early growers their entire crops, Thurlby said.

The average FOB price of red and yellow cherries was \$55 per box in

2020, up from \$35 in 2019, according to the Northwest Cherry Marketing Association.

Good quality and fruit size helped demand. A 20-day overlap with California’s April to June 5.9-million-box crop was insignificant because of high demand, Thurlby said.

Cherries decrease inflammation and boost the immune system. Texas A&M University research is ongoing relative to effects on the body from the gut to the brain and on breast cancer.

“We have established ourselves as a super fruit and will continue down that road with stronger messages,” Thurlby said.

The industry’s No. 1 issue, he said, is Little Cherry Disease that cost 2 million to 2.5 million boxes of lost production due to orchard removal to fight the disease.

Lone Rock Resources buys Abby’s Legendary Pizza

IAN CAMPBELL
The News-Review via AP StoryShare

EUGENE — Abby’s Legendary Pizza has been purchased by Lone Rock Resources, according to a joint press release both companies sent last week.

Lone Rock will purchase 100% equity ownership of the 36 pizzerias throughout Oregon and Washington.

“We are very excited with this opportunity to further our commitment to this area and continue Abby’s commitment to its customers,” said Lone Rock Resources CEO Toby Luther. “We fully appreciate the long-term oper-

ation, experience, and growth of the Abby’s business. Over the past three years we’ve visited every Abby’s location and have fallen in love with the high-quality employees, loyal customers and family-oriented business model.”

The companies plan to continue Abby’s 57-year-old brand, staffing and locations.

“Their investment will take the company to even greater heights, and provide our one-thousand employees more opportunities to grow within the company,” said Mills Sinclair, one of the principal owners. “We’ve been working with

Lone Rock for three years and we all believe this means Abby’s will continue to be headquartered in Roseburg for generations to come.

Lone Rock Resources is a family-owned company founded in Roseburg in 1950. Originally timber based, today the company has a variety of investments and employs over 110 in Douglas County.

Abby’s operates 36 restaurants in Oregon and Washington. The restaurant was founded by Roseburg residents Broughton and Harrell. The company will celebrate its 57th anniversary this year.