

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, Feb. 25, the 56th day of 2021. There are 309 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On Feb. 25, 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos fled the Philippines after 20 years of rule in the wake of a tainted election; Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1793, President George Washington held the first Cabinet meeting on record at his Mount Vernon home; attending were Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of War Henry Knox and Attorney General Edmund Randolph.

In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving Congress the power to levy and collect income taxes, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox.

In 1919, Oregon became the first state to tax gasoline, at one cent per gallon.

In 1964, Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) became world heavyweight boxing champion as he defeated Sonny Liston.

In 1983, playwright Tennessee Williams was found dead in a New York hotel; he was 71.

In 1994, American-born Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire with an automatic rifle inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank, killing 29 Muslims before he was beaten to death by worshippers.

In 2010, in Vancouver, the Canadian women beat the United States 2-0 for their third straight Olympic hockey title.

Ten years ago: The Obama White House broke decades of tradition, naming Jeremy Bernard the first man to ever serve as social secretary in the East Wing.

Five years ago: Marco Rubio went after Donald Trump during their Republican debate in Houston, lacerating the front-runner's position on immigration.

Baker City barley malter shines in competition

Tom Hutchison buys his barley from Cornerstone Farms in Wallowa County

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Behind the glass of beer, with its photogenic bubbles and foamy white head, there are Tom Hutchison and his bags of Eastern Oregon barley.

Hutchison's place in the brewing business isn't the most prominent.

Yet aside from the typical odes to pure spring water and to hops, the dried flowers that infuse beer with its mouth-puckering bitter bite, the building blocks for a pint of ale or lager are stacked in Hutchison's building near the railroad tracks just off Broadway Street in Baker City.

And when it comes to malting barley, a key ingredient in beer as well as many distilled spirits such as whiskey and vodka, Hutchison occupies a lofty place among his peers.

Hutchison, who started Gold Rush Malt in 2016, swept three awards at the annual Craft Malt Conference put on by the Craft Maltsters Guild Feb. 10-12. He won gold medals for his pilsner and pale malts during the online awards ceremony that took place Feb. 12.

He also will be caretaker of the traveling Malt Cup Trophy for the next year as recipient of the best of show award.

Hutchison said he knew he won at least one award. Officials from the Guild told him in advance



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Tom Hutchison, who owns Gold Rush Malt in Baker City, checks the steel drum where barley is dried. He won three awards at the annual Craft Malt Conference the Craft Maltsters Guild held Feb. 10-12, 2021.

to ensure he would be watching the awards ceremony, which, like the rest of the annual conference, took place remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But when he heard his name called not once but three times, he was, he admits, "just stunned."

"It was way more than I expected," Hutchison said Tuesday, Feb. 16. "It's the first time I've entered."

He was the first malter to win two gold medals in a single competition, according to the Craft Maltsters Guild.

Hutchison competed against 27 other malters from seven countries, 17 states and one Canadian province. Each of the 46 samples of malted barley was evaluated in multiple ways.

Researchers at Montana State University's Barley, Malt & Brewing Quality Lab tested each sample. Then, judges at

17 sites around the U.S. and Canada compared the entries' aroma and flavor, including nibbling on the kernels. Finally, in the last round, additional judges reviewed the lab results and the other judges' findings to pick the winners.

In all, 83 judges participated, according to the Craft Maltsters Guild.

Hutchison said he was pleased not only with the recognition from his industry but because the awards validated his efforts to improve every batch of malted barley based on the feedback he gets from the brewers and distillers who buy his product.

"I'm always tweaking the process to make a better quality malt," he said.

Hutchison buys his barley from Cornerstone Farms, operated by the Melville family in Wallowa County between Enterprise and Joseph.

"It's a variety of barley that does really well in these high mountain valleys," Hutchison said. "That's the key."

He said he's a small-scale malter, processing 55 to 60 tons of barley per year. That equates to about 20 acres of the grain, Hutchison said.

He has about 10 regular customers, including Barley Brown's brewery in Baker City, which uses Hutchison's malted barley in its Pallet Jack India pale ale.

Hutchison usually produces two or three batches per month, each batch yielding about 2 1/2 tons of malted barley.

The bulk of his business are the two types for which he won gold medals — pilsner and pale malts.

He said those are a chief ingredient in many types of beers, both lagers and ales, the latter being more popular among the hundreds of

craft brewers that have proliferated in the U.S. over the past few decades.

(The nomenclature is potentially confusing, since pilsner, in addition to being a type of malt, also is a style of lager beer.)

Hutchison said the prevalence of India pale ales, such as Pallet Jack in the Northwest, has cast attention on the role hops plays in flavoring beer.

Most beer aficionados, he said, are at least somewhat familiar with hops. Malt, by contrast, is something of a forgotten ingredient, he said.

He chuckled as he noted that people, on learning what he does for a living, ask him, "How's the hop business?"

Hutchison has to explain, "That's not what I do."

Although the type of malt affects the color of beer — the shorter the drying period, the lighter-colored the kernels and the resulting brew — Hutchison said the malting process can also affect the flavor of the beer.

That's particularly so with beer styles such as pilsners, he said, which have relatively small amounts of hops, meaning the malt contributes much more to the beer's flavor palette.

Hutchison said he can't predict whether his awards will bring new customers for Gold Rush Malt. For now, the pandemic remains a major factor.

With restaurants and bars closed or severely restricted for much of the past year, demand for his malted barley has dropped by 60% to 70%.

"I can produce more if the demand is there," Hutchison said. "We'll wait and see, I guess."

Elgin School Board to consider outdoor education options

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

ELGIN — Fifth and sixth graders at Stella Mayfield School, Elgin, will not be making an overnight trip to the coast this spring.

However, the students still could get the opportunity to have an outdoor school experience.

Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif told the school board Monday, Feb. 22, that rules regarding

the use of Measure 99 funds for outdoor experience trips due to COVID-19 restrictions prohibit overnight journeys. The district has used Measure 99 funds in recent years to pay for annual overnight trips to the Oregon coast for fifth and sixth graders.

Measure 99, which

Oregon voters approved in 2016, dedicates funding from the Oregon Lottery each year to give fifth and sixth graders throughout the state the opportunity to receive a hands-on week of science-based outdoor education. The program is run through the Oregon State University Extension Service. Guidelines on the extension service's webpage on Oregon State University's website indicate overnight outdoor school is not permitted at this time.

Greif said there still is a possibility Measure 99 funds could provide an outdoor school experience for fifth and sixth graders this year.

"The board will be looking at its options," Greif said.

Also on Monday, the school board discussed the success of the open campus policy at Elgin High

School, which took effect in November. EHS's campus had been closed since the start of the 2020-21 school year up to that point due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant EHS students could not leave campus at any time, including lunch break.

The school board voted to open campus after seeing other high schools in Union County were doing this successfully. The board opened EHS's campus on the condition it would review the success of the step at its monthly meetings.

Greif told the board on Feb. 22 that giving EHS open campus status continues to look like a good move. She said the open campus policy is not sparking COVID-19 rule violations.

"It is working well," Greif said. "Students are respective of the process."

Effort aims to help feral cats in Richland

By **SAMANTHA O'CONNOR**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A group effort is underway to help a colony of feral cats in rural Baker County.

Best Friends of Baker Inc. is working with other organizations after a call from a Richland resident who lives next door to the property where an estimated 80 cats are living.

Phoenix Dawn wanted to help her neighbors, so she reached out to Best Friends and created a Go Fund Me account.

"There were about 30 cats inside and maybe 50 cats outside," said Farrell Riley-Hassmiller, the volunteer cat coordinator with Best Friends.

Groups working with Best Friends to help the cats and kittens are: New Hope for Eastern Oregon Animals, Blue Mountain Humane Society in La Grande, Pendleton Paws in Pendleton, Fuzzball Rescue

and Cat Utopia in Hermiston, Humane Society in Portland, and Cat Adoption Team in Sherwood.

"It's amazing,"

Riley-Hassmiller said.

In addition to providing medical care to the cats that need it, Best Friends is seeking to spay and neuter the animals as quickly as possible to prevent further breeding and an increase in the colony's population.

Baker County is at a disadvantage because there isn't a local shelter for cats.

"That's why most of these cats are going elsewhere," Riley-Hassmiller said. "We're very fortunate to have that network and to be able to help."

Riley-Hassmiller said Best Friends is using vouchers from the Mollie Atwater Spay and Neuter Fund to help Dawn.

New Hope had made a donation to an account in Dawn's name at the Animal Clinic of Baker.

Blue Mountain Humane

Society was willing to take on all indoor cats at its facility as a holding space before sending them to the other rescue homes. The organization will process the cats, check them for ringworm and pneumonia, and assess how social the cats are.

From there, a majority of the kittens were sent to Fuzzball Rescue, Hermiston. Several cats with ringworm were sent to the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter and Cat Utopia, also in Pendleton.

The Cat Adoption Team in Sherwood, south of Portland, agreed to take the cats and kittens who were positive for Feline Leukemia Virus and immunodeficiency, Riley-Hassmiller said.

The Oregon Humane Society agreed to take in the senior cats that are social, and the organization sent a truckload of donations, including food, kennels and supplies.

RODEO

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Jones said. "We are going to have a Chief Joseph Days rodeo. I've called all our contractors and they've all agreed to be here."

That includes the livestock contractor Tim Bidwell, who provides the bucking horses, bulls and calves that are essential to the rodeo. Other contractors and performers who've committed to this year's CJD Rodeo include long-time announcer Jody Carper, rodeo bullfighters Nathan Harp and Chuck Swisher and specialty act Magic in Motion Equine Productions with Madison MacDonald. Her trick riding and daring horseback leaps through flaming hoops thrilled CJD rodeo goers in 2018, and has appeared at the National Finals Rodeo nine years in a row.

"The board wants to let our supporters and fans to



Ellen Morris Bishop/Wallowa County Chieftain File

A saddle bronc rider shows good form on his bronc at the 2019 Chief Joseph Days Rodeo. After canceling the rodeo in 2020 due to COVID-19, the rodeo's board of directors has confirmed the rodeo is a go for 2021 and is leaving no room for doubt with the announcement, according to board President Terry Jones.

know that we are having the 75th CJD Rodeo, even though it is the 76th year," Jones said. "Some of our performers and contractors have been asking, 'What's Joseph going to do?' Other rodeos, including many in Texas, the Midwest and the Dakotas are planning to hold their events in 2021.

So I called our contractors and said that we're having the CJD Rodeo and we want you all here. And they're all going to come. We have signed with them all."

That's important because this is the time of year when advance ticket sales to the permanent seat holders

start. Assurances that their seats will have a rodeo to watch are considered critical.

"We try to have the permanent seats paid for in the middle of March before the court starts selling tickets at spring break time in late March," Jones said.

This year's CJD court remains the same as last year's: Destiny Weeks, Casidee Harrod and Brianna Micka. In 2020, each member of the court ranked equally with the others as an honor court. This year, Jones said, that designation will continue.

"We are going to keep the honor court designation. They'll sell tickets and receive commission as usual. But it will not be competitive," Jones said. "And we'll offer the court members some incentives, based on the number of tickets they sell as a group."

Jones and the board recognize that there might be some COVID-19-driven changes in an otherwise

normal rodeo. But they also anticipate being able to adapt.

If there are some regulations that, for example, forbade the Thunder Room's indoor dances and socializing, those kinds of activities could probably be moved outdoors. Jones also was upbeat about holding the Back Country Bash, a music event at the rodeo arena the week following CJD.

"Even if regulations are what they are now," he said, "we could hold it because it's outside."

The exception to holding all the "normal" events might be the Nez Perce friendship gathering and feast.

"The Nez Perce have been hit hard by the coronavirus," Jones said. "Many of the people who participate in that feast are elders. We don't want to create a situation that would be bad for them, or anyone who attends."

The CJD board will con-

sult with those who usually attend, including tribal elders from Lapwai, Idaho; the Umatilla Reservation; and Nespelem, Washington, before making a decision about that event.

Jones credited the generosity of the community for providing the financial foundation to move forward positively in planning this year's CJD Rodeo.

"We refunded a ton of ticket money," Jones said. "But there were a lot of generous people who donated their 2020 ticket purchase to the rodeo rather than taking refunds. That's appreciated more than anyone will know."

Many sponsors also donated their 2020 sponsorships to CJD at a time that was financially difficult for some of them. Their donations totaled more than \$15,000 and provided funding for scholarships, repairs to the arena and other facilities and helped the rodeo get set up for this year, Jones said.