

DAILY
PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Thursday, March 4, the 63rd day of 2021. There are 302 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT
IN HISTORY:

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as America's 32nd president.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1789, the Constitution of the United States went into effect as the first Federal Congress met in New York. (The lawmakers then adjourned for lack of a quorum.)

In 1797, John Adams was inaugurated the second president of the United States.

In 1863, the Idaho Territory was created.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term of office; with the end of the Civil War in sight, Lincoln declared: "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

In 1964, Teamsters president James Hoffa and three co-defendants were found guilty by a federal court in Chattanooga, Tennessee, of jury tampering.

In 1974, the first issue of People magazine, then called People Weekly, was published by Time-Life Inc.; on the cover was actor Mia Farrow.

In 1981, a jury in Salt Lake City convicted Joseph Paul Franklin, an avowed racist and serial killer, of violating the civil rights of two Black men, Ted Fields and David Martin, who'd been shot to death. (Franklin received two life sentences for this crime; he was executed in 2013 for the 1977 murder of a Jewish man, Gerald Gordon.)

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation on the Iran-Contra affair, acknowledging that his overtures to Iran had "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

In 1994, in New York, four extremists were convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than a thousand. Actor-comedian John Candy died in Durango, Mexico, at age 43.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment at work can be illegal even when the offender and victim are of the same gender.

In 2015, the Justice Department cleared Darren Wilson, a white former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, but also issued a scathing report calling for sweeping changes in city law enforcement practices.

In 2018, former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a bench in the southwestern English city of Salisbury; both survived what British authorities said was a murder attempt using a nerve agent.

Ten years ago: Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's regime struck back at its opponents with a powerful attack on Zawiyah, the closest opposition-held city to Tripoli, and a barrage of tear gas and live ammunition to smother new protests in the capital. NASA launched its Glory satellite from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on what was supposed to have been a three-year mission to analyze how airborne particles affect Earth's climate; however, the rocket carrying Glory plummeted into the southern Pacific several minutes after liftoff.

Five years ago: The U.S. Supreme Court blocked enforcement of a Louisiana clinic regulation law placing new restrictions on abortion. Bud Collins, the tennis historian and American voice of the sport in print and on TV for decades, died in Brookline, Massachusetts, at age 86. Pat Conroy, author of "The Great Santini" and "The Prince of Tides," died in Beaufort, South Carolina, at age 70.

Bi-Mart manager retires after 43 years

Jeff Thomas created legacy of wit, warmth in local store

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Jeff Thomas knew the broken alarm system meant a sleepless night lay ahead of him.

Thomas, then the manager of La Grande's Bi-Mart, just arrived at his store on a Sunday afternoon in February about six years ago after being notified its alarm system was malfunctioning. The problems were too severe to repair that day.

So Thomas spent the night and much of the morning at the unoccupied store monitoring the alarm to make sure it did not cause any problems. To break up the tedium he even watched a DVD.

It was one of about half a dozen times Thomas had to stay at his store overnight for a range of reasons. He never slept any of those nights and doubted he could have if he tried.

"There is too much noise," he said. "There are a lot of sounds in a big building like that."

Thomas' overnight stays at Bi-Mart exhausted him but now look like mere speed bumps in a fulfilling career, which ended Saturday, Feb. 27, with his retirement. Thomas stepped down after a 43-year career with the Bi-Mart Corporation.

"It has been a great company to work for. There are so many wonderful people I have met," Thomas said.

Thomas had no idea he would someday be a manager when he took a position as a hardware clerk at Medford's Bi-Mart in 1978 when he was only 18. He worked there 18 years before starting his administrative career, taking a position as a second assistant at Gresham's store. A year later, the company transferred Thomas to the La Grande store, where he was promoted to first assistant. He became manager of the store here in 2002.

Thomas became a familiar face to customers, a manager who spent relatively little time in his upstairs office, preferring to be on the main floor with customers and employees. His friendly, upbeat nature and quick wit made it easy for him to connect. This was evident three days before his retirement when Thomas saw a man in the checkout line with



Dick Mason/The Observer

bags of rock salt in his car. "Are you going to use those as sandbags?" Thomas asked with a big grin, which the customer returned. Thomas always looked for openings, such as the rock salt provided, to connect. "They break the ice with people," he said. Thomas enjoyed meeting customers almost as much as helping his employees with everything from stocking products to taking inventory and cleaning.

"He liked working in the trenches with us," said Tim Mustoe of Umatilla County, who worked under Thomas at La Grande's Bi-Mart for about five years. Sporting goods clerk Mike Perry, who worked 17 years for Thomas, said it was a delight to work for him. "If you can't work with Jeff, you can't work for anyone. He is the best," said Perry, who also retired Feb. 27.

La Grande Bi-Mart employee Linda Stuplich said Thomas' store has an unusually supportive atmosphere, which he played a big role in perpetuating. "This is truly a family. If someone is down we pull together to help them," Stuplich said.

Mustoe said Thomas not only knows how to connect with people but also is an adept problem solver. "If a customer had an issue he

knew how to make things right," Mustoe said.

Thomas enjoyed his career but he admitted that much of the stress of managing a store made it hard to sleep at times. Speaking Tuesday, he said he is sleeping much better now without the worry of getting calls about store emergencies.

"I don't have to sleep with my cellphone next to my head anymore," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic added to Thomas' stress level during his final year but did not prevent La Grande's Bi-Mart from faring well. He said sales were strong at his store and the company's stores in general. People have spent more time at home during the pandemic, where they are focusing on activities such as renovation work and gardening, all of which Bi-Mart carries many supplies for. "We had a banner year," Thomas said.

Thomas owes not only his career but his family to Bi-Mart. He met his wife, Janine, at Medford's Bi-Mart where she was an employee. Today, the couple are the parents of four sons, three who live in La Grande, and have four grandchildren.

Jeff Thomas said he and Janine have no plans to leave La Grande because of their family ties and their many friends here. "We will stay here forever," he said.

State police nab two drivers in one day on I-84

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Oregon State Police reported its officers in separate traffic incidents Friday, Feb. 26, on Interstate 84 near La Grande hauled in more than 10 pounds of marijuana products and put one suspect in jail.

The first stop occurred at about 1:36 p.m. when OSP Sgt. Marcus McDowell stopped a black Chevrolet Trailblazer for traffic violations on the eastbound side of the freeway in Union County about 20 miles east of La Grande, state police reported. McDowell found the driver, Dusty Lance Crowell, 40, of Falls City, had a warrant for his arrest out of Polk County for failure to appear on a charge of driving under the influence of intoxicants.

State police reported Crowell consented to allow McDowell to search the Trailblazer. That search resulted in finding 10 pounds of marijuana, 1 pound of marijuana extract and a .45-caliber handgun.

State police took Crowell and his passenger, a 30-year-old man, to the La Grande Police Department for questioning. After the interview, police warned the passenger for importing/exporting marijuana, but Crowell ended up with a citation in lieu of arrest for having a concealed weapon, possession and distribution of marijuana and possession of the marijuana extract, and he received a date to appear in court via phone.

The second stop involved a Maryland man who attempted to get away from police.

The Oregon Department of Transportation was trying to get vehicles on Interstate 84 near milepost 261 moving eastbound again following a closure of the freeway, according to Oregon State Police. An ODOT worker at about 9:40 p.m. reported approaching a black passenger vehicle, according to OSP, and the occupant told the worker to stay back or die, then took off.

State trooper Charles Rohlf found the black Toyota S4 and pulled it over near milepost 261. But as he exited his police car, the Toyota fled again.

The vehicle made it to the bottom of the off ramp before an OSP sergeant used his vehicle to block the road, and Rohlf pulled up and blocked it from the back.

The pair of stateres drew their guns, according to OSP, and took the driver, Bradley Michael Burden, 26, of Middleton, Maryland, into custody and booked him into the Union County Correctional Facility, La Grande, for harassment and felony fleeing.

Union County school board posts lack candidates

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Activity on the Union County School Board election front is far from sizzling.

Five of the many Union County school board positions up for election have no candidates and to date there are no contested races. The filing deadline for the May 18 election is 5 p.m. Thursday, March 18.

Following is a breakdown of the positions up for election and candidates who have filed.

Cove School Board

Positions 1, 3 and 4 are up for election and a total of two candidates have filed to run.

Nobody has filed for Position 1, whose incumbent is Andy Lindsey.

Incumbent John Frisch, who works in the agriculture production field, has filed for Position 3, and incumbent Jamie Dickenson, a clinic manager, is running for reelection to Position 4.

Elgin School Board

Positions 3 and 5 are up for election and nobody has filed.

The incumbent for Position 3 is Charles Anderson. Position 3 is open to candidates living within the Elgin School District but outside the

Elgin city limits.

The incumbent for Position 5, an at-large berth, is Lara Moore.

Imbler School Board

Positions 3, 4 and 5 are up for election. Candidates have filed for all three.

Bud Whitcomb, the owner and operator of a custom body and paint shop, has filed for Position 3. Dan McDonald, the incumbent, has announced he will not run for reelection, according to Imbler School District Deputy Clerk Teressa Dewey.

Incumbent Pam Glenn is the lone candidate to file for Position 4.

Lavar Bowles, who works in the construction management field, has filed for Position 5. Wade Bingaman, the incumbent, has announced he will not run for reelection, Dewey said.

La Grande School Board

Positions 1, 2, 4 and 5 are all up for election and candidates have filed for each berth.

Position 1 incumbent Danelle Lindsey-Wilson, the owner of a hair salon, is running for reelection. Position 1 is open to candidates living in Zone 1, which encompasses all of the area within the La Grande School District north of Highway 30 and west of Highway 82 and outside the La

Grande city limits.

Jake Hanson, the owner and operator of an auto salvage company has filed for Position 2. The incumbent, Michelle Perry, has not filed for reelection. Position 2 is open to candidates living in Zone 2, which encompasses all of the area within the school district south of Highway 30 and south and southeast of Highway 82 and outside the La Grande city limits.

Incumbent Randy Shaw, an auto body technician, has filed to run for reelection to Position 4. The position is in Zone 3, which includes residents living within the La Grande city limits.

Incumbent Bruce Kevan, a retired educator, has filed for Position 5, which also is a Zone 3 berth.

North Powder School Board

Positions 1 and 2 are up for election and nobody has filed for them. Drew Martin is the Position 1 incumbent, and Danyell Nesser is the Position 2 incumbent.

Union School Board

Positions 1, 2 and 3 are open, and incumbents have filed for all three.

Mark Wing, who is retired, is running for Position 1; Jocelyn Jones, a retired educator, has filed for Position 2; and Deb Baker has filed for Position 3.

Vaccinations — 978 and counting — mark turning point for Umatilla tribes

By BRYCE DOLE and ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation vaccinated nearly 1,000 people at a two-day clinic last week at Wildhorse Resort & Casino near Pendleton.

Tuesday, Feb. 23 and Wednesday, Feb. 24, Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center teamed up with the Oregon National Guard to vaccinate 932 people. Another 46 people were vaccinated using leftover doses after the event to push the total to 978.

Once health care workers administer the second dose of the Pfizer

vaccine later this month, everyone who lives, works or is enrolled with the Umatilla Indian Reservation that wants the vaccine will have received it.

The event marked the first time the Tribes opened their vaccine supply to non-Indians who live on the reservation or work for a tribal entity. A breakdown showed that 85% of those vaccinated were non-American Indians.

One of the factors enabling the CTUIR to take this vaccine moonshot was ordering vaccines through the Indian Health Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Although the sovereignty of Oregon's nine



East Oregonian

Specialist Stephanie Gonzalez, right, of the Oregon National Guard, administers a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to Natasha Makin during a vaccination event at Wildhorse Resort & Casino in Mission on Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021.

federally recognized tribes means they can tailor their own vaccine programs, the

CTUIR was one of only two tribes that opted for the Indian Health Service

over the Oregon Health Authority.

When the CTUIR received a nearly 1,000-dose shipment, Yellowhawk CEO Lisa Guzman realized the Tribes would need to plan something larger than the weekly clinics they had been running. The Tribes sent out postcards to non-tribal residents throughout the reservation, continuing to network even as the Wildhorse event started to vacillate as many people with connections to the reservation as possible.

Chuck Sams, the interim executive director of the CTUIR, and other tribal officials said they believe the can fully reopen their

government and tribal enterprises by April, given the vaccination rates. Sams credited the plans they had in place that blunted the impact of the virus.

As of Monday, March 1, only one tribal member has died from COVID-19, and despite the virus modifying how they operated, Wildhorse and other tribal enterprises have turned a profit during the pandemic.

For the Oregon National Guard, this is the first time they assisted a tribal vaccination event and their first vaccination operation in Umatilla County, according to Maj. Heather Bashor, a public affairs officer with the Oregon National Guard.