

## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, March 30, the 89th day of 2021. There are 276 days left in the year.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously injured outside a Washington, D.C., hotel by John W. Hinckley Jr.; also wounded were White House press secretary James Brady, Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and a District of Columbia police officer, Thomas Delahanty.

### ON THIS DATE:

In 1822, Florida became a United States territory.

In 1842, Dr. Crawford W. Long of Jefferson, Georgia, first used ether as an anesthetic during an operation to remove a patient's neck tumor.

In 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase the territory of Alaska for \$7.2 million, a deal ridiculed by critics as "Seward's Folly."

In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited denying citizens the right to vote and hold office on the basis of race, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

In 1987, at the 59th Academy Awards, "Platoon" was named best picture; Marlee Matlin received best actress for "Children of a Lesser God" and Paul Newman was honored as best actor for "The Color of Money."

In 1999, Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic insisted that NATO attacks stop before he moved toward peace, declaring his forces ready to fight "to the very end." NATO answered with new resolve to wreck his military with a relentless air assault.

In 2004, in a reversal, President George W. Bush agreed to let National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice testify publicly and under oath before an independent panel investigating the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In 2006, American reporter Jill Carroll, a freelancer for The Christian Science Monitor, was released after 82 days as a hostage in Iraq.

In 2009, President Barack Obama asserted unprecedented government control over the auto industry, rejecting plans from General Motors and Chrysler and raising the prospect of controlled bankruptcy for either ailing auto giant.

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a single measure sealing his health care overhaul and making the government the primary lender to students by cutting banks out of the process.

In 2015, German officials confirmed that Germanwings co-pilot Andreas Lubitz was once diagnosed with suicidal tendencies and received lengthy psychotherapy before receiving his pilot's license; they believed Lubitz deliberately smashed his Airbus A320 into the French Alps, killing 150 people.

## Blaze erupts at ODOT sign building



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Firefighters with the La Grande Fire Department respond to a blaze the morning of Monday, March 29, 2021, at the Oregon Department of Transportation sign shop in Island City. Crews still were on the scene in the afternoon. There were no reports of injuries. The Observer will have a fuller report online and in Thursday's edition of the paper.

## Cove Cherry Fair to return in August

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

COVE — The Cove Cherry Fair is being revived again, this time after a break of just one year, not 83.

The annual Cove Cherry Fair, which was essentially canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic, is set to be celebrated this year on Aug. 21 because of declining COVID-19 infection rates in Union County.

The fair again will be conducted at the Ascension School Camp and Conference Center. Planning for the event began after it received the green light from leaders of the Cove facility, said Cindy Edwards, the director of the Cove Cherry Fair.

Events scheduled at the fair include its annual parade, which will start at 10 a.m. and kicks off the 2021 event. The parade will follow Highway 237 from Ash Street to Church Street. The parade will be



The Observer, File

Children compete in a cherry pie eating contest at Cove's Cherry Fair in August 2016. The pandemic led to the fair's cancellation in 2020, but the event returns this year due to the improving situation with the coronavirus.

open to anyone but political floats will not be allowed. The Cove Cherry Fair Parade also was conducted in 2020 but all other fair events were canceled.

"It was the only fun thing that happened in Union County last year," said Edwards, noting she believes all other Union County parades were canceled in 2020.

This year's parade again will end at the Ascension School Camp and Conference Center, where families and residents will be able to play games, go on rides and eat fair food.

The Cherry Fair is welcoming all types of vendors — artists/artisans, crafters, entrepreneurs and community groups. Information on signing up for the festival is available on

the website of the Cove Cherry Fair, [www.covecherryfair.com](http://www.covecherryfair.com).

The fair's history, like a cherry cracked by heavy rain, is split. The fair started in 1911 and ran each summer through 1917. It was then discontinued for 83 years before being revived in 2000.

The fair's first run was an experience for organizers. So popular was the event it sometimes drew a reported 3,000 people, according to a 2000 story in The Observer. The event was so big that another local newspaper reported Union was virtually vacant one weekend because so many had ventured to Cove for the cherry festival.

Edwards has been the director of the fair since 2013 but will step down after this year's fair.

"It has been very fulfilling," said Edwards, who said she will continue to participate in the fair after this year as a volunteer.

## LG Police: intoxicated driver hit pole, tree

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Police Department reported a man faces charges after he crashed through a light pole near downtown La Grande and into a tree.

Officers from the La Grande Police Department responded to a single vehicle crash Friday, March 26, at 11:43 p.m. on Adams Avenue near Third Street. At the scene of the crash officers found a 1999 Ford Escort crashed into a tree in front of the Grande Ronde Hospital Pavilion.

The preliminary investigation indicated the vehicle was traveling west on Adams Avenue, jumped the curb on the north side of the road near the Cook Memorial Library, stuck a light pole, shearing it off at the base, traveled 165 feet on the sidewalk and grass and finally crashed into a tree and stopped.

La Grande police reported the driver, Taft Rengchol Kazuyuki, 40, of La Grande, fled the scene before officers arrived. They found him soon after a short distance from the crash. He had minor injuries and received medical treatment at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande.

Police cited Kazuyuki for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and hit-and-run to property.

Oregon State Police, the Union County Sheriff's Office and the Union County District Attorney's Office assisted with the investigation, La Grande police reported. The investigation is ongoing and Kazuyuki could face additional charges.

## Man gets prison for thefts from church

By **CHRIS COLLINS**

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A Baker City man will spend the next two years and four months in prison for taking liturgical objects valued at nearly \$11,000 from the Catholic Church and for stealing miscellaneous items during car prowls in the Kirkway Drive area in Baker City last month.

Judge Matt Shirtcliff sentenced Joshua Milton Thomas, 31, on March 9 in Baker County Circuit Court.

Thomas was charged with one count of aggravated first-degree theft, a Class B felony; six counts of unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle, a Class A misdemeanor; and 13 counts of attempted unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle, a Class B misdemeanor. He also was cited on a charge of unlawful possession of heroin when he was taken into custody the night of Feb. 18.

At the March sentencing hearing, Thomas pleaded guilty to the first-degree aggravated theft charge involving the Catholic Church at 2235 First St., and to two counts of entering motor vehicles on Kirkway Drive and taking items from the vehicles as well.

Thomas will serve the 28-month prison term for taking two chalices, three gold plates and a silver and gold crucifix from the church.

The estimated value of all the items is \$10,615.

Thomas will be eligible to be placed in an alternative incarceration program only after serving 16 months of his sentence, court document state.

## Yellowhawk to hold more vaccine clinics

East Oregonian

MISSION — Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center will be holding another set of mass vaccination clinics at Wildhorse Resort & Casino at the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, this time with more groups eligible, according to the health center's website.

Those eligible for the vaccine include CTUIR tribal members, people living on the reservation, Yellowhawk eligible patients, employees of any CTUIR entity and their families, students over the age of 16 and teachers and employees from Pendleton, Athena, Pilot Rock, Helix and Nixyaawii schools, and staff at Blue Mountain Community College.

Workers from all Pendleton area restaurants, food trucks, fast food chains and grocery stores are also eli-

gible to get a shot.

First doses will be administered at the Wildhorse clinic on April 12 and April 13 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Second doses will be administered on May 3 and May 4 at the same times.

People interested in getting a vaccine can call 541-240-8733 to schedule an appointment or use the registration link <https://airtable.com/shrb74wCv1R6fnNJR>.

Yellowhawk officials ask that, on the day of the appointment, patients bring their current class schedules or student identification, employee paystub or employee identification and plan to spend 15 to 20 minutes onsite after the vaccination to be monitored for any potential side effects.

People who want to get a vaccine can learn more at [Yellowhawk.org](http://Yellowhawk.org).

## Future of John Day police in question

By **RUDY DIAZ**

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The future of the John Day Police Department remains uncertain as questions on funding persist.

The John Day City Council discussed on Wednesday, March 23, two possible routes the city could pursue for policing in John Day: entering a law enforcement services agreement with the Grant County Sheriff's Office or seeking a local levy to fund the department.

City Manager Nick Green said if the city wants to recruit a new chief after Chief Mike Durr retires this year, the city would need to request a five-year local option levy — between 10 and 15 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value — to fund the department. Durr was not present at the city council

meeting for comments.

Green said the levy is necessary because the city lacks the money to sustain the department unless it comes up with another revenue source or makes cuts to personnel.

Police department expenditures have grown in the past 20 years, far outpacing the sources of revenue funding the department, according to graphs presented by Green.

Green said future costs — an incoming collective bargaining agreement, aging vehicles in need of replacement over the next five years, hiring a new police chief and legislation in Oregon — all present cost increases in the next fiscal year, which concerns him.

"What we have seen over the past two decades (in expenditures) is pretty consistent price escalation that significantly outpaces our revenue," he said.

"The gap that we're trying to close from 20 years ago, which was just a little over \$100,000, today has grown to a little over \$400,000. All the while, we lost 300 residents."

It would be up to voters in John Day to approve a local tax.

Green said he spoke with Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley to see what a law enforcement services agreement would look like. The city would be required to cover the costs of the staff members that would be repositioned, two full-time officers and a full-time sergeant, for the first year, he said, and the county would expect the city to pay for four full-time positions.

The council made no decision but said it would be important to continue talking with members of the community to see how they feel about both options.

## Illegally dumped radioactive fracking waste to stay in the ground

By **BRADLEY W. PARKS**

Oregon Public Broadcasting

ARLINGTON — A state agency has opted to leave millions of pounds of illegally dumped, radioactive fracking waste right where it is: in an Eastern Oregon landfill.

The Oregon Department of Energy's decision on Wednesday, March 24, comes a little over a year after it issued a notice of violation to Chemical Waste Management, or CWM, which operates Oregon's only hazardous waste landfill, named the

Columbia River town of Arlington. An investigation found CWM had dumped 1,284 tons of radioactive waste — about 2.5 million pounds — in the landfill over the course of three years.

Oregon law prohibits the establishment of a radioactive waste disposal facility in the state.

After the violation, CWM had to come up with a plan for what to do with the waste. The company offered to either dig it up and ship it to another state where it's legal, or to just

leave it in the ground and monitor the effects. The company preferred to leave it in place.

"This is exactly where you want potentially dangerous materials and dangerous materials," CWM spokesperson Jackie Lang said.

The state Department of Energy agreed to that plan, with amendments. The agency said in a fact sheet explaining its decision that removing the waste "would pose a greater risk to landfill workers than leaving the waste in place."

"It is a hazardous waste landfill, of which there are not that many in the nation," said Jeff Burright, a nuclear waste remediation specialist with the Department of Energy. "And they do have specific design features that are meant to contain waste for long periods of time, despite the fact that radioactive waste is not permitted in the facility."

CWM will be subject to more stringent water quality monitoring under the agreement. The Department of Energy has also

directed CWM to install a portal to scan shipments of waste for radioactivity before that waste goes in the ground.

Lang said the landfill has been conducting additional monitoring outlined by the Department of Energy for several months and that the company will install the portal in April.

The agency will require CWM to review current and recent waste streams as well to ensure the company hasn't accepted any other radioactive material in the past.