



Monarchs struggling

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THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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Good day to our valued subscriber Barbara Wales of La Grande

Education

LG School Board makes grad request

North Powder schools return to distance ed, as Union County records 24th death from COVID-19

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School Board is asking Gov. Kate Brown to make a decision that would have a dramatic effect on high school graduation ceremonies across the state.

The board in a letter on Wednesday, April 14, is asking Brown to give the La Grande School District and others in Oregon the ability to consider their own COVID-19 risks and safety protocols for graduations. La Grande School Board member Merle Comfort said having that greater level of freedom would allow school districts, such as La Grande, to have students attend graduation ceremonies with family members present.

The request comes the same week North Powder schools returned to distance education due to a COVID-19 exposure and Union County had another death from the virus.

Robin Maille, chair of the La Grande School Board, read the letter to the board at the April 14 meeting.

“We are fast approaching graduation for the class of 2021,” Maille read. “Unfortunately, the final experience these students will have in high school will be guided by our local county risk level. If risk levels remain moderate, high or extreme, the class of 2021 may never be together this final year of their public-school education. This is an incredibly sad situation.”

Therefore, the letter continues, the school board asked Brown to “consider making a special exemption of guidance for graduation events or move the guidance to advisory.”

Doing so, according to the letter, would allow school districts to consider their own COVID-19 risks and safety protocols for commencement ceremonies.

Maille said the class of 2021 deserves to be able to get together for graduation, especially after what it has been through due to

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Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Kim Hutchison, president of the local post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, presents new national and Marine Corps flags to World War II and Korean War veteran Lee Cutler on the front porch of Cutler's home in Joseph on his 96th birthday on Thursday, April 8, 2021. The U.S. flag is one that flew over the U.S. Capitol. The presentations were to honor his service and his birthday.

‘I was lucky’

World War II veteran missed the worst of the action

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — To honor his military service and his 96th birthday, one of Wallowa County's last World War II and Korean War veterans, Lee Cutler, was presented Thursday, April 8, with a U.S. flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol and with a new Marine Corps flag.

Cutler has flown one of each from a pole outside his Joseph home for years.

Glenn Smith, a community health care worker from Winding Waters, said Cutler “displays his flag proudly,” but they're getting worn so they were being replaced.

Kim Hutchison, president of the Eagle Cap Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, made the presentation of the flags April 8. The national flag was obtained by U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Oregon, to honor Cutler's service and his birthday.

A couple dozen or more people joined Hutchison during the presentation, including fellow veterans, Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts, Joseph Mayor Belinda Buswell and members of the Joseph Fire Department in a fire truck with lights flashing.

Hutchison said Smith prompted the honor. “The driving force behind this is one of

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Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

World War II and Korean War veteran Lee Cutler stands on his front porch in Joseph on his 96th birthday, Thursday, April 8, 2021, after receiving a U.S. flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol and a new Marine Corps flag honoring his service and his birthday.

Public pools will be open more this summer

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Swimmers in Union and Baker counties will have more opportunities to make a splash this summer than they did a year ago when the COVID-19 pandemic was near its height.

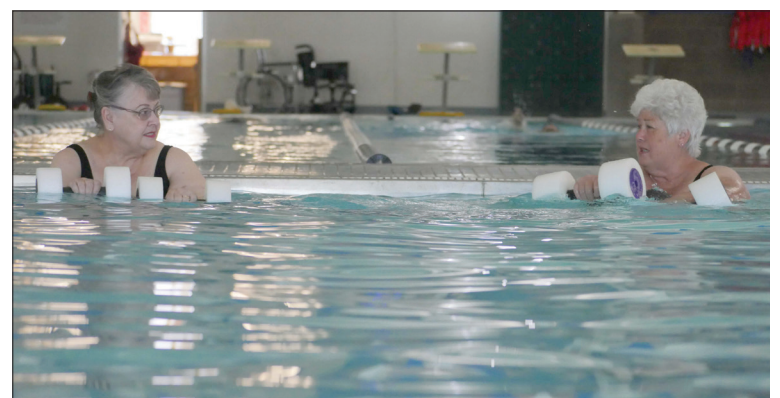
At least three pools in the two counties are set to be open from June through August. They are Veterans' Memorial Pool in La Grande, the Elgin Community Center's pool and Baker County's YMCA pool at its Sam-O-Swim Center in Baker City.

The Elgin pool is reopening after being closed all last summer. The Sam-O-Swim Center pool was closed last summer until August, and Veterans' Memorial Pool was open for significant portions of the summer.

The Elgin pool is set to reopen in early June, and the community is happy, said Bryan Jungling, the city of Elgin's parks and recreation director.

“Lots of people are excited. I just got off the phone with a

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The Observer, File

Judi Harsin, left, and Juanita Weissenfluh swim in the Veterans' Memorial Pool, La Grande, in this photo from 2016. The city closed the pool in 2020 due to the pandemic, but Veterans' Memorial and the pool at the Elgin Community Center are opening this summer with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	Tonight 37 LOW Clear		Sunday 74/38 Mostly sunny
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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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