

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, April 22, the 112th day of 2021. There are 253 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On April 22, 2005, Zacarias Moussaoui pleaded guilty in a federal courtroom outside Washington, D.C. to conspiring with the Sept. 11 hijackers to kill Americans. (Moussaoui is serving a life prison sentence.)

ON THIS DATE:

In 1864, Congress authorized the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins.

In 1889, the Oklahoma Land Rush began at noon as thousands of homesteaders staked claims.

In 1898, with the United States and Spain on the verge of war, the U.S. Navy began blockading Cuban ports. Congress authorized creation of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, also known as the "Rough Riders."

In 1915, the first full-scale use of deadly chemicals in warfare took place as German forces unleashed chlorine gas against Allied troops at the start of the Second Battle of Ypres (EE'-preh) in Belgium during World War I; thousands of soldiers are believed to have died.

In 1937, thousands of college students in New York City staged a "peace strike" opposing American entry into another possible world conflict.

In 1952, an atomic test in Nevada became the first nuclear explosion shown on live network television as a 31-kiloton bomb was dropped from a B-50 Superfortress.

In 1954, the publicly televised sessions of the Senate Army-McCarthy hearings began.

In 1970, millions of Americans concerned about the environment observed the first "Earth Day."

In 1994, Richard M. Nixon, the

'Normal' returns to Wallowa Lake State Park

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — Things are getting back a bit more to normal this year, now that state parks are beginning to reopen — including Wallowa Lake State Park, which began taking reservations earlier this month for the group campsites that open May 1.

According to a press release from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, some state parks started taking reservations April 15. A complete list of which are opening is available at the OPRD website at www.oregon.gov/oprd/Pages/index.aspx.

Mac Freeborn, manager at Wallowa Lake State Park, said a few campers already were at the park. But they were the ones who could do without park-provided water, which won't be turned on until May 1.

"My park has been taking reservations for a while now," he said. "The ones opening May 1 are group campsites."

The park's website bills it as being "ideally positioned as a base camp for both wilderness treks and water sports fun."

He said those there now are ones who take advantage of the park's opening throughout the offseason. "We had a recent request



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Campers are already moving into Wallowa Lake State Park on Wednesday, April 14, 2021. The park was set to begin taking reservations the next day for the season that opens May 1.

for more reservations ... and we're accepting walk-ins," he said.

Last year, the park was forced to be closed until June 5 by the closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The group facilities are reopening after being closed for more than a year due to revenue shortfalls and reduced staffing the pandemic caused.

"Summer is quickly approaching, and we want to give visitors plenty of time to plan their group events," said Jason Resch, communications manager

for the OPRD. "Although we can't open all group areas in all parks and the lower group limits isn't what we are used to, we ask for your patience as we move forward."

But now it's returning to closer to normal.

"As normal as it can be," he said. "We're back on track for bringing back seasonals in hiring. ... Normal is a subjective term, but we're going to be back for full operation this summer."

He said the docks won't go back into the water until around May 1.

"We start really ramping up things in early May," Freeborn said.

But campsite reservations are already nearly fully booked.

"If people are not finding anything online, it's because we're already booked. It's been fast and furious with reservations," Freeborn said.

He said that's probably a combination of people missing last year's camping season and an eagerness to recreate outdoors where they're not cooped up in a hotel or the like.

He said that if recreationists find they can't rent day-use areas, they can look into getting a special-use permit. Day-use areas consist of two reservable picnic sites and one reservable covered shelter named Ice Creek. Boat reservations and information are available at www.wallowalake-marina.com.

He said the park — and all Oregon parks — are still closely adhering to COVID-19 guidelines set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Oregon Health Authority. Those, he said, can be subject to change.

Wallowa Lake State Park offers:

- 121 hookup sites (including two ADA sites)
- 88 nonhookup sites
- Two hard-sided rustic yurts
- Three group tent areas
- A hiker-biker area

Site-specific alerts and information can be found by clicking on the site name then scrolling to the bottom of the Reserve America website page.

Freeborn said those interested in trying for a reservation can still try to get one at 541-432-4185, ext. 26. Reservations must be made one day ahead of arrival and can be made up to six months in advance.

"We booked out pretty fast," he said.

Blaze destroys home of Wallowa man

By **ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP**
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — A fire that likely started in an attached woodshed severely damaged the home of Merel Hawkins on Bear Creek Road southwest of Wallowa on Tuesday afternoon, April 13.

Firefighters from Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise and Joseph responded along with Oregon Department of Forestry fire crews.

The house was a total loss, said Merel Hawkins' daughter Mary Hawkins on Saturday.

"The fire looked like it started in the woodshed," she said. "It spread really fast."

Merel Hawkins, 84, was shaken, but unharmed and consoled by family, friends and neighbors at the scene. His caregiver, Michaela Shane, had taken the wheelchair-bound family patriarch and former packer out the front door to safety promptly at the first sign of smoke before the fire spread.

The property includes the Hawkins Sisters Chicken Ranch, where sev-



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Firefighters douse the last embers of the fire that severely damaged the home of Merel Hawkins on Bear Creek Road southwest of Wallowa on Tuesday, April 13, 2021. The structure was ruled a total loss, according to his daughter Mary Hawkins.

eral sparks landed.

"Thanks to the Lostine Fire Department's careful work, nothing caught fire, including a trailer I had that was full of hay," Mary Hawkins said.

ODF fire crews extinguished a grass fire that spread about 200 feet from the house.

She also praised the quick arrival of the Wallowa Fire Department.

"They were here fighting the fire only 11 minutes after we called," she said.

Lending Heart Com-

munity Resources offered assistance. The Wallowa nonprofit provided replacement equipment to meet her father's medical needs so he could comfortably take up residence at the Mingo Motel after the fire, she said.

Although the house and a significant amount of memorabilia were lost, Merel Hawkins remains upbeat.

"Dad's said it's a chance for a new start," Mary Hawkins said. "I just hope I can have that kind of attitude when I'm 84."

Rollover on Interstate 84 injures one



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A La Grande Fire Department crew and Oregon State Police trooper respond Tuesday morning, April 20, 2021, to a single-vehicle rollover near milepost 274 on the eastbound side of Interstate 84. Oregon State Police reported the crash was a result of distracted driving. The male driver was not wearing a seat belt at the time of the crash, according to police, and was ejected and injured. The ambulance took him to Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, for treatment. State police also reported the female passenger was uninjured.

NEWS BRIEFS

Traffic stop leads to drug, weapons charges

BAKER CITY — Three people, including two from La Grande, were arrested on a variety of drug and weapons charges early Sunday, April 18, in Baker City after an Oregon State Police trooper stopped their car because the front passenger was not wearing a seat belt.

According to a report from trooper Dakotah Keys, he stopped the vehicle about 1:16 a.m. in Baker City.

The front passenger, Jefferson Eli Cole Sharp, 26, of La Grande, had two arrest warrants, for second-degree theft in Baker County Justice Court, and for probation violation from Union County Circuit Court.

Keys wrote in his report that Sharp also "verbally provided false information."

While searching Sharp, Keys found two unlawfully concealed handguns, more than two grams of methamphetamine, in excess of the amount that constitutes a violation rather than a crime under a new state law, and "suspected fentanyl," a painkiller.

Keys reported the rear passenger, Taylor Gordon Morris, 29, of La Grande, consented to a search, which yielded a weapon that Morris, a convicted felon, is not allowed to have, and a criminal amount of methamphetamine.

Keys searched the vehicle and found a semi-automatic rifle, a Taser, a criminal amount of heroin and "additional items of drug paraphernalia."

The driver, Francisco Garcia Torres, 38, of Boardman, who also is a felon, was arrested on charges of illegal possession of a firearm and another weapon, and possession of 1 gram or more of heroin.

Morris was cited and released. Torres and Sharp were both taken to the Baker County Jail.

Community leaders host virtual meeting on food system

LA GRANDE — Local community leaders on Saturday, April 24, will host Union County FEAST 2021 in collaboration with Oregon Food Bank, and the public can participate.

FEAST is a community conversation about "Food, Education and Agriculture in the community and building Solutions Together" for a more equitable and resilient local food system, according to the press release from Oregon Rural Action, which is helping with the event.

"Although FEAST is traditionally held in person, we are happy to have the opportunity to come together virtually this year," according to Kagan Koehn, community organizer for Oregon

Rural Action. "Conversations about food in our community are too important to be postponed until we can all gather together again in person."

This year's event will be online 2-5 p.m. on Saturday and offers the opportunity to hear from local leaders about how the pandemic has affected the people in Union County with discussions on volunteer food distribution events, new capacity for promoting food security through the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank and Double Up Food Bucks at the La Grande Farmers Market.

Panelists include Audrey Smith, the coordinator of the regional food bank through Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, Cami Miller of Housing Matters Union County and Ramon Fukuichi of Eastern Oregon Compact of Free Association Alliance National Network.

The idea of the event is to "inspire all to start or continue to work to improve our local food system in Union County," according to the press release.

After the event there will be an opportunity for community members or groups to apply for a mini grant to support their work that is relevant to food and our community.

To register for the event, visit oregonrural.org or search Facebook for "Union County FEAST."

— EO Media Group

Looking back

Joan Mondale spoke in La Grande in 1992

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Former Vice President Walter Mondale, who died Monday, April 19, at age 93, never made an appearance in La Grande, but his wife, Joan, did.

The former Second Lady spoke at Eastern Oregon University on Oct. 10, 1992, at a Oregon Art Education Conference.

Mondale told an audience in Loso Hall she believed art should be intertwined with education and the idea that it is a "frill" rather than "essential stuff" was dangerous, according to an article in the Oct 11, 1992, edition of The Observer.

"If a nation believes that art is unimportant it becomes a nation that produces unimportant art," Mondale said.

Such nations rarely achieve greatness, she added.

"Art teaches us about excellence and creativity," Mondale said. "It teaches us to get the best from ourselves."

Mondale, who was a potter, said art gives people



Amy Sancetta/Associated Press, File

Former Vice President Walter Mondale smiles with his wife, Joan, during the Democratic National Convention July 26, 2004, at the FleetCenter in Boston. Mondale, a liberal icon who lost the presidential election in 1984, died Monday, April 19, 2021. He was 93. Joan Mondale spoke at Eastern Oregon University in 1992.

a unique sense of their own identity and individuality that can never be lost. She quoted a drama teacher who said, "You own your own imagination. No one else has one exactly like yours."

La Grande was one of many places where Mondale, who was born in Eugene and grew up in Pennsylvania, spoke on behalf of art.

Mondale worked so hard to generate public and private support of the arts that she became affec-

tionately known as "Joan of Art" according to an obituary published in the Feb. 5, 2014, Minneapolis StarTribune.

Joan Mondale, who died in 2021 at age 83, spoke in La Grande a little more than a decade after her husband finished serving as vice president under President Jimmy Carter from 1977-81. Walter Mondale was the Democratic nominee for president in 1984 but lost in the general election to incumbent President Ronald Reagan.