

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, May 1, the 121st day of 2021. There are 244 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden during a U.S. commando operation (because of the time difference, it was early May 2 in Pakistan, where the al-Qaida leader met his end).

ON THIS DATE:

In 1707, the Kingdom of Great Britain was created as a treaty merging England and Scotland took effect.

In 1915, the RMS Lusitania set sail from New York, headed for Liverpool, England (it was torpedoed and sunk by Germany off the coast of Ireland six days later).

In 1941, the Orson Welles motion picture "Citizen Kane" premiered in New York.

In 1945, a day after Adolf Hitler took his own life, Admiral Karl Doenitz effectively became sole leader of the Third Reich with the suicide of Hitler's propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels.

In 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane over Sverdlovsk and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers.

In 1963, James W. Whittaker became the first American to conquer Mount Everest as he and Sherpa guide Nawang Gombu reached the summit.

In 1971, the intercity passenger rail service Amtrak went into operation.

In 1975, Hank Aaron of the Milwaukee Brewers broke baseball's all-time RBI record previously held by Babe Ruth during a game against the Detroit Tigers (Milwaukee won, 17-3).

In 1992, on the third day of the Los Angeles riots, a visibly shaken Rodney King appeared in public to appeal for calm, pleading, "Can we all get along?"

In 1998, Eldridge Cleaver, the fiery Black Panther leader who later renounced his past and became a Republican, died in Pomona, California, at age 62.

In 2009, Supreme Court Justice David Souter announced his retirement effective at the end of the court's term in late June. (President Barack Obama chose federal judge Sonia Sotomayor to succeed him.)

In 2015, Baltimore's top prosecutor charged six police officers with felonies ranging from assault to murder in the death of Freddie Gray, who'd suffered a spinal injury while riding in a police van.

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, moving his predecessor a step closer to sainthood.

Five years ago: A wildfire broke out near Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada; in the days that followed, the blaze destroyed 2,400 homes and other buildings and forced more than 80,000 people to evacuate. After a half-century of waiting, Cuban-born passengers set sail from Miami on a historic cruise to Havana, the first such trip from the U.S. since recent policy changes. Elephants performed for the last time at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Providence, Rhode Island.

COVID-19 outbreak closes Wallowa High School

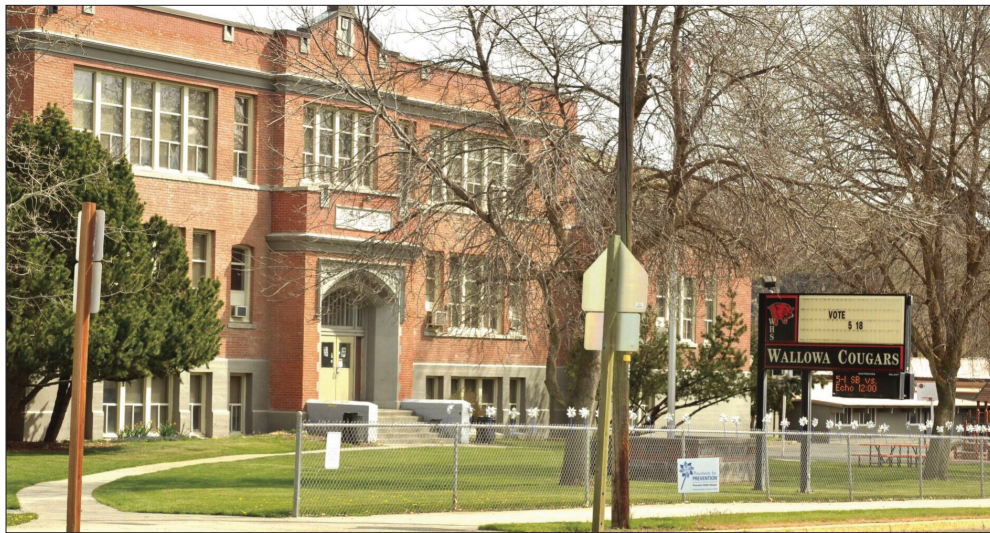
Wallowa County cases increase to 172, Union County stands at 1,432

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa High School closed for the next two weeks, effective Thursday, April 29, after several COVID-19 cases were confirmed at the school, Superintendent Tammy Jones said in a post to the district's Facebook page.

According to the post, six individuals have tested positive for COVID-19 — two Wednesday night, and four other positive tests earlier in the week. In a post Tuesday evening that first outlined the details of the outbreak, the district said it did not plan to close. That plan changed Thursday morning.

"We are working closely with our local and state health authority to respond



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa High School closed Thursday, April 29, 2021, because of an outbreak of COVID-19. School officials said they expect the closure to last two weeks.

to this news and protect the health of our community," Jones wrote in the Thursday morning post. "We are rapidly putting the contact tracing logs together and providing them to local health officials for contact tracing. Given the timing and the numbers of contacts that local health officials will need to contact, we

are immediately closing our high school."

Students in grades six through 12 were moved to distance learning starting Thursday and will remain there through May 11. A local health official will contact parents who have a student who is required to quarantine, Jones said in the post.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade will remain on campus, Jones said.

The Facebook post Tuesday evening linked the outbreak to a community prom, which the post said was not a school sponsored activity.

"Many Wallowa County students attended this

event, along with community chaperones," the post stated. "(Tuesday) afternoon we learned that a number of individuals attending the prom have tested positive for COVID-19."

Jones on Thursday confirmed to the Wallowa County Chieftain that the six reported cases are students.

She added that any athletes will be able to compete during the move to distance learning as long as they are not in quarantine.

Oregon Health Authority has reported 12 new COVID-19 cases in Wallowa County the last two days, including four in its Friday, which brings the county total to 172.

Union County from Sunday through Wednesday added three new cases, according to the OHA, then added five on Thursday but none on Friday. The county's total number of cases as of Friday morning was 1,432, including 23 fatalities.

Increasing the ease of voting

Union County adds three ballot drop boxes at city halls

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Participating in elections now is easier in three Union County cities.

The Union County Clerk's Office has installed new ballot drop boxes outside city hall buildings in Elgin, Island City and North Powder. The drop boxes, which cost a total of \$5,000, are replacing old ones that were inside the three city halls. Now voters in those cities can drop off their ballots round the clock during any election, including the current one, which concludes May 18 at 8 p.m.

The county installed the outdoor drop boxes to make it more convenient for people to vote, Union County Clerk Robin Church said.

Voters in Elgin, Island City and North Powder previously could only drop their ballots off while their city hall was open, she said. In most cases this is only on weekday mornings and afternoons.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A Union County election box stands outside Elgin City Hall on Thursday, April 29, 2021. The new election boxes came in time for the May 18 election.

"People who wanted to drop their ballots off after work or on the weekend could not," Church said.

Voters, of course, have the option of mailing their ballots to the Union County Clerk's Office. But voters should mail in ballots at least five days before an election day so the ballot

arrives on time for the election. Anything less and voters should place their ballots in a drop box.

The addition of the new drop boxes means Summer-ville is the only incorporated city in Union County without a drop box.

All of Union County's drop boxes are at city halls except in La Grande, where there is a drop box at the Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St., and two at the Union County Clerk's Office, 1001 Fourth St., where there is an outdoor and indoor box.

La Grande City Hall had an indoor drop box until last year, when the coronavirus pandemic led to the closure of the building. To make up for this, an outdoor drop box site was established at Cook Memorial Library, where it remains in place, Church said.

The \$5,000 for the new drop boxes in Elgin, Island City and North Powder came from federal COVID-19 relief funding for election security. Union County has spent \$25,000 of the \$30,000 it was allotted for election security. The other funding paid for items such as better lighting at drop box sites.

Reflecting on a memorable evening

EOU grad attends Academy Awards

By DICK MASON

The Observer

The 93rd annual Academy Awards ceremony on Sunday, April 25, was one of the smallest in its history in terms of audience size because of social distancing limitations in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, the importance and magnitude of the event in Hollywood, California, will forever loom large in the mind of Skye Fitzgerald, a 1993 Eastern Oregon University graduate.

Fitzgerald attended the ceremony as the director of the film "Hunger Ward," which received an Oscar nomination in the best short documentary category. The ceremony, which about 300 people attended, was a stark contrast to the 2018 Academy Awards that Fitzgerald also attended when his film "Lifeboat," which focuses on search and rescue operations off the coast of Libya, also received an Oscar nomination for best short documentary.

Fitzgerald said the April 25 Academy Awards was "a smaller, more intimate affair" with less dialogue.

"Hunger Ward" chronicles doctors struggling to save the lives of starving children in war-torn Yemen. The film did not win an Oscar, but Fitzgerald emerged from the

Academy Awards grateful to have been part of the event.

"Whether or not you walk off with an Oscar, anyone who gets in that room is part of the highest celebration of an art form. It was a special celebration regardless of scale," Fitzgerald said. "Even though it was diminished, it elevated cinema."

ABC TV's broadcast of the event showed Fitzgerald sitting at a table when the five nominees for best documentary short were announced. Fitzgerald said he was not aware he was on camera at the time.

Audience members, all of whom had been tested multiple times for COVID-19, did not wear masks, but those outside the venue did.

Fitzgerald was present when actress Glenn Close did a surprising dance to a 1990s song by Experience Unlimited after answering a trivia question about it. The dance was one of the most talked about events at the Academy Awards.

"It was hilarious. It felt spontaneous," said Fitzgerald, who was EOU's 2019 graduation speaker and now lives in the Portland area.

Fitzgerald said "Hunger Ward" has received much more distribution and attention since the nomination in March. He said he desperately hopes this can lead to resolution of the conflict in Yemen and the end of the blockade triggering the starvation of its people.

High-speed chase ends with arrest of Utah man

Baker City Herald

BAKER COUNTY — Baker City Police Department officers deployed a spike strip Wednesday evening, April 28, to stop a car that led Oregon State Police troopers on a high-speed chase along Interstate 84.

Clayton Ted Snell, 36, of Sandy, Utah, was arrested

on multiple charges, including driving under the influence of intoxicants, fleeing in a vehicle and on foot and reckless driving.

Around 7:07 p.m. on Wednesday, OSP notified the Baker County Dispatch Center about a pursuit in the west-bound lanes of I-84. Due

to excessive speeds, OSP troopers stopped the chase, according to a press release from the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Shortly after the call, Baker City police found the vehicle leaving the freeway and heading east on Highway 86 toward Richland. As officers followed

the car, it made a U-turn. Police set up the spike strip, which flattened the car's tires.

Snell then tried to flee on foot, according to police, but after a brief chase, Baker County sheriff's deputies caught and arrested him. Snell was taken to the Baker County Jail.

Wallowa Lake Lodge prepares for new season

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — Leadership at the Wallowa Lake Lodge is hoping to have a new, improved and expanded deck completed by next month — just in time for the start of the new season.

It's the latest improvement at the lodge, and one that became a clear need last year after the COVID-19 pandemic forced business outside.

"It became really apparent last year when we had to move outside as much as possible because of coronavirus to stay open," said Madeline Lau, general manager of the lodge. "We had to limit our capacity in the dining room by half, so we could only get 42 people. Also with the views and the ambiance and the beauty of our location, people want to be outside anyway. It became apparent our deck had some structural issues last year."

Lau isn't quite sure when the deck was assembled for the 98-year-old lodge, but said she thinks it was possibly built during a renovation to the building in 1988.

Lau said the old deck was ripped out during the winter, and the rebuild started April 5.

The new deck will have a bowtie design and, at roughly 2,000 square feet, will be about 30% larger than the one it's replacing. The new deck will be built of cedar, and will include posts made of locally sourced juniper with a stainless-steel tension cable for the railing. The deck is being built by local community members.

The hope is to have the deck completed by May 21, in time for the lodge's opening May 28.

"It's our goal to make the most beautiful deck in Eastern Oregon and a place where everyone is welcome," she said.

It's a season where Lau

hopes to see the lodge being used by both locals and tourists. The local community has sustained the historic place and saved it five years ago.

"We are announcing that I want the community to use the lodge in a much bigger way," she said.

Lau said in the past, the lodge has been more of a destination for tourists, and the locals have wondered about the accessibility to them.

"It is my goal to make the lodge as accessible as possible to the widest variety of guests and customers, but also to see the community use the lodge more than they have before," she said. "I want this to be a gathering place, I want the community to feel very welcome here. For a long time the lodge was set apart and felt almost inaccessible. We want to be a place that the community uses."

Among the adjustments this season, which will run

through Oct. 31, are restaurant hours being changed, and now being from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. It will have a happy hour from 3-5 p.m. on Tuesday through Sunday, and a brunch from 8-11 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The restaurant will have a "Scandinavian-inspired menu," Lau said.

There also is a plan to have live musicians on the deck from 5-7 p.m. Friday nights, and pianist Gail Swart will play Sundays from 6-9 p.m. in the dining room.

With the deck coming in at about double the expected price due to a spike in lumber prices, the lodge has launched a gofundme.com page to help with expenses. The page has a goal of \$15,000.

"Initially, the cost of the deck was half of what it now is, so we can use community support to get us there. Any little bit helps," Lau said.

Pendleton Grain Growers HQ on the auction block

By ANTONIO SIERRA

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — One of Pendleton's most prominent buildings is on the market, and all anyone needs to buy it is as little as \$2 million.

On behalf of Pendleton Grain Growers, Realty Marketing/Northwest is auctioning off PGG's mostly vacant Pendleton facility for the reserve price of \$1.995 million, a slight reduction from the company's \$2.1 million asking price.

The 3-acre, 1000 S.W. Dorion Ave. property includes a 42,000-square-foot building that once housed the grain co-op's headquarters, retail showroom, automotive service center and warehouse. PGG once was a thriving organization with agricultural and retail operations

across Eastern Oregon, but the Pendleton facility has sat mostly vacant for about half a decade after it decided to shutter retail operations in 2014 and voted to completely dissolve the co-op in 2016.

Many of PGG's other properties have been sold to various businesses and organizations, and the former PGG Energy building near the main Pendleton facility was recently sold to Hines Meat Co., which turned it into a butchery and restaurant. But PGG hasn't yet sold its flagship property.

That's what Realty Marketing/Northwest and President John Rosenthal are trying to change.

Rosenthal said he's already heard interest from several prospective bidders both locally and from the Portland area.