

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

July 3, 2021

WEEKEND EDITION

\$1.50

## 'Everyone would know Eddie'

Eddie Cascio, '70s Las Vegas personality and La Grande resident, dies at 80

By CARLOS FUENTES  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Vegas in the 1970s: booze-filled casinos, dark and grimy bars open late into the night, and a strip lined with celebrity showrooms hosting stars like Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. Most nights, tourists could be found eating at restaurants with high-priced steaks and countless rounds of drinks.

But Elvis Presley? He could be found eating at one of his favorite restaurants in Las Vegas — Pizza Roma, owned by Eddie Cascio, a Las Vegas legend in the 1970s.

"We would walk into casinos, and everyone would know Eddie," Colleen Cascio, Eddie's wife, said. "He used to cook for Elvis and other celebrities, and those were fun days. We never had to pay for anything."

After a decade of attending celebrity parties and spending most weekends gambling, Eddie and Colleen Cascio moved to Elgin in search of a quieter life, which is exactly what they found.

Eddie Cascio, who spent his last years operating several restaurants and businesses in La Grande, died on June 17, at 80 years old.

### 'He loved making food'

Cascio was no stranger to moving when he arrived in Eastern Oregon. Born on Dec. 2, 1940, in Lucca Sicula, Sicily, Italy, Cascio was the oldest of four children. For the first 13 years of his life the family lived in Italy, where he spent his free time fishing in the ocean and unloading boats for local markets.

See, Cascio/Page A5

## BACK IN BUSINESS



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Frank Tucori, owner of The Barber Shop in Pat's Alley in La Grande, cuts Eric Valentine's hair on Friday, July 2, 2021. Businesses around the state have been cleared for full reopening, following nearly a year and a half of restrictions put in place by Gov. Kate Brown to curb the spread of COVID-19.

## 'It's nice seeing smiles again'

La Grande business owners gladly say goodbye to COVID-19 restrictions

By CARLOS FUENTES  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — June 30 marked the final day for state-mandated COVID-19 restrictions in Oregon, meaning no statewide mask requirements, limited indoor capacities, restrictions on social gatherings nor physical distancing.

To some business owners in La Grande, the lifting of restrictions is a welcome change — despite the 35% vaccination rate in Union County.

"I think the restrictions were a little over the top, but safety wise, you gotta do what you gotta do," Frank Tucori, owner of The Barber Shop in Pat's Alley, said. "I have to say, it's nice seeing smiles again."

Tucori's shop was forced to

close for two months last year after COVID-19 first started spreading in the United States. According to Tucori, less restrictions should help customers feel more comfortable coming in for a haircut.

"It was hard to keep up business after being closed for those months, because people were afraid to come in," Tucori said.

Although 53% of all Oregonians are fully vaccinated, Union County's rate is 35% — ranked 31st out of 36 counties. Wallowa County is ranked 15th with a vaccination rate of 43%.

With only a third of Union County residents vaccinated, some businesses are cautious about lifting all restrictions.

"We still have our 'mask

See, Business/Page A5



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Carla Sorweide, owner of Hought's 24 Flavors, serves burgers to a couple on Thursday, July 1, 2021, in La Grande. Statewide restrictions regarding COVID-19 shutdowns were lifted entirely June 30, including mask mandates and social distancing requirements.

## Wild weather hits Union County hard

High temperatures, winds and lightning storms strike Northeastern Oregon

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Adam Young does not know why he did not step completely out onto the covered front porch of his parents' home at 7:40 p.m. on Wednesday, June 30.

All Young knows is that he is thankful he did not.

Very thankful.

Moments after he walked partially out of his parents house at 1005 Y Ave., a large spruce tree fell in front of it. The falling tree destroyed the home's awning and part of the roof. The falling tree narrowly missed Young.

"If I had stepped out six inches further things would be totally different," he said the morning of July 1 after strong winds from a thunderstorm wreaked havoc on a portion of north La Grande the night before.

Young speaks in spiritual terms when discussing what prevented him from stepping six inches too far.

"It was an act of God," said Young, who lives in Portland and is the son of Bev and Tom Carman.

The damage to the front of the Carmans' home was so extensive that Tom

See, Weather/Page A5



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Lightning strikes over the town of Imbler on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. A thunderstorm rolled through the Grande Ronde Valley, bringing gusts of winds and extreme weather that knocked out power to nearly 2,700 households between La Grande, Elgin and Imbler.

### INDEX

Classified.....B2    Outdoors & Rec...B1    Opinion.....A4  
Comics.....B5    Horoscope.....B4    Records.....A3  
Crossword.....B3    Lottery.....A2    Sports.....A6  
Dear Abby.....B6    Obituaries.....A3    Sudoku.....B5

### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 60 Low Clear  
Sunday 94/57  
Sunshine and hot

### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
Issue 77  
2 sections, 12 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



8 51153 00100 6

TUESDAY WILD & SCENIC RIVERS PROPOSAL DRAWS OPPOSITION

Online at lagrandeobserver.com