

VOICES

ANYONE CAN WRITE

Nearly 40 years in the business have taught me that readers are bombarded and overwhelmed with facts. What we long for, though, is meaning and a connection at a deeper and more universal level. And that's why the East Oregonian will be running, from time to time, stories from students who are in my writing class, which I've been teaching for the past 10 years in Portland. I take great satisfaction in helping so-called nonwriters find and write stories from their lives and experiences. They walk into my room believing they don't have what it takes to be a writer. I remind them if they follow their hearts, they will discover they are storytellers. As we all are at our core. Some of these stories have nothing to do with La Grande or Union County. They do, however, have everything to do with life. If you are interested in contacting me to tell me your story, I'd like to hear from you.

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Tom Hallman Jr. is a Pulitzer Prize-winning feature writer for the Oregonian newspaper. He's also a writing coach and has an affinity for Union County.

A short stint as mayor of Pendleton

By ROLAND HAERTL
Special to the East Oregonian

I have held a variety of positions, most of them interesting, but none as brief as the “mayor of Pendleton.”

In 1976, my company was awarded the contract to build McDonald's first French fry plant in Hermiston. In the spring of 1977, I was driving west to visit our project office.

As I passed the Pendleton airport, the right lane from the airport on-ramp to Interstate 84 was blocked by a state police car, flashing its lights. I wondered, then remembered: It was dedication day of the Union Pacific Railroad's new switchyard at Hinkle, just south of Hermiston. The government and corporate officials were arriving.

I had time. I decided to attend the dedication. I fell in line behind the limousines just ahead of the trailing police cars.

After a short drive the convoy swung into the parking lot at the new switchyard. I followed the last limousine into the lot.

I got out of my car and followed the hand motions of the parking lot attendants directing me to follow the limousine passengers. Everybody headed to the elevated seating platform reserved for the invited dignitaries. The platform was built straddling three of the switchyard tracks. At intervals an engine would come through.

I waved to a few acquaintances. Some waved in return. Some did not recognize me, and still waved in return. Familiar faces in unfamiliar settings present mental connection problems.

One person who did not recognize me was the

senior vice president of the Union Pacific. He was officiating the dedication function.

About 120 people were attending, seated on the elevated platform arranged in about 10 rows. I opted to sit, less conspicuously, in the second row, off-center.

Since I had not received an invitation, I did not know what to expect.

The Union Pacific VP started with the usual welcoming speech, presenting corporate data, project data, outlining the importance of this facility. To his credit, he was quick and compact. Then he switched to the introduction of the dignitaries and expressed gratitude for their attendance. From the top, the governor, Bob Straub; congressman from Burns, Bob Smith; Umatilla County commissioners, etc. He always called out the name, followed by the title and then pointed with an open hand toward the dignitary introduced, who would get up, turn to the crowd, smiling, or just wave.

He said: “I want to thank the mayor of Pendleton for attending this function and thank him for the hospitality arranged for our employees and project staff in the county and the towns around us. Mayor Joe McLaughlin.” With an outstretched arm and open hand, he pointed at me.

I got up, bowed to the speaker, turned approximately 90 degrees toward the seated invitees, waved and sat down.

Mayor McLaughlin never was introduced. I wondered how the Union Pacific VP would resolve this.

Or if he needed to. This story is longer than my position as mayor of Pendleton was.

Two hurt, one dead in fall

East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — A fall from a ledge in Umatilla County south of Pilot Rock left two men seriously injured and one dead.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office reported the rescue and recovery effort required the help of numerous agencies and emergency responders, including an Oregon Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter.

Kyler Carter, 23, called 911 on Friday, July 2, at 9 a.m. and reported he and two friends, Cody Watson, 21, and Braydon Postma, 23, all of Pilot Rock, were injured in a fall.

The trio had been at the Big Falls on West Birch Creek — a steep, rocky falls — south of Pilot Rock and had fallen approximately 50 feet off a ledge. Carter said the fall occurred around 9 p.m. the night before. He was unable to get cellphone service at the location of the fall and had to climb out and hike to a place so he could call 911.

Watson and Postma remained where they had fallen, according to the sheriff's office, and Carter reported his friends had critical injuries.

The sheriff's office acti-



Union County Search and Rescue/ Contributed Photo

An Oregon Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter crew assists with a rescue Friday, July 2, 2021, south of Pilot Rock where three men fell 50 feet from a ledge. Two suffered serious injuries. The third man died at the scene. All three are from Pilot Rock.

vated its search and rescue unit, and the Pendleton Fire Department responded along with LifeFlight.

Upon arrival, according to the sheriff's office, Watson was dead, and Carter and Postma had significant injuries. Multiple agencies coordinated a plan for the careful extraction of the survivors. Both needed immediate medical assistance. The sheriff's office said further information on the condition of Carter and Postma is unknown at this time.

Elgin Stampede returns after 2020 hiatus

By CARLOS FUENTES

The Observer

ELGIN — After a year-long hiatus due to COVID-19, the Elgin Stampede is set to run from Wednesday, July 7, to Sunday, July 11.

This will be the 74th Elgin Stampede, the second oldest rodeo in Union County, after the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show.

“We are so excited to have the stampede back this year. It was hard to go a year without it,” Lara Moore, secretary of the Elgin Stampede, said. “Before last year, we had gone 73 years straight, so we're really excited to go back to normal.”

Festivities at the Elgin Stampede Grounds will begin Wednesday, July 7, with a family night show. An all-kids rodeo, with contestants between 4 and 18 years old, will compete in events such as stick horse racing and steer riding. Community Bank is sponsoring the event, which is free to the public.

On Thursday, the PRCA Xtreme Bulls and Barrel Race will begin at 7 p.m., with bull riders from all over the country coming to compete. There will be 40 bull riders and 30 barrel racers, according to Moore.

On Friday, the action will continue with the PRCA Rodeo at 7 p.m. The Friday and Saturday rodeos will include steer roping, barrel racing, bareback riding and calf roping.

Saturday, July 10, will be the last day of festivities. At 10 a.m., the kids' parade will make its way through downtown Elgin, followed by the Grand Parade at 4 p.m.

The rodeo weekend will wrap up on Saturday with the second and final night of the rodeo beginning at 7 p.m. A total of 363 individuals will compete in the PRCA events over the weekend, according to Moore.

On Thursday night prior to the bull riding event,



The Observer, File

Jory Markiss rides July 6, 2017, during the Elgin Stampede. The coronavirus pandemic led to the cancellation of the annual rodeo in 2020, but the 74th Stampede returns July 7-11, 2021, in Elgin.

the 2021 Elgin Stampede Queen will be announced.

The two princesses competing are Sarah Baker, a recent Elgin High School graduate, and Bailey

Vernam, a rising senior at Enterprise High School.

Admission for each of the PRCA events will be \$11 for children and \$16 for adults if bought online

— \$2 cheaper than the in-person prices. Tickets can be bought at elginstampede.com or at the Elgin Stampede Grounds main gate during the rodeo.

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On the fence?

We're here for you when you need us.

If you're still deciding whether or not to get vaccinated for COVID-19, we encourage you to talk it over with your trusted health care provider.

It's your choice to make.

You and your provider know your health and your body best. Trust your provider to understand, listen to and respect your questions and concerns. Talk about it.

Then, make up your mind.

There is a lot of information, *and misinformation*, surrounding the COVID vaccines.

BEFORE YOU SAY NO, TALK TO YOUR PROVIDER.

GRANDE RONDE HOSPITAL AND CLINICS