

TODAY

Today is Saturday, Aug. 7, the 219th day of 2021. There are 146 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY

On August 7, 1998, terrorist bombs at U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killed 224 people, including 12 Americans.

ON THIS DATE

In 1782, Gen. George Washington created the Order of the Purple Heart, a decoration to recognize merit in enlisted men and noncommissioned officers.

In 1942, U.S. and other allied forces landed at Guadalcanal, marking the start of the first major allied offensive in the Pacific during World War II. (Japanese forces abandoned the island the following February.)

In 1964, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, giving President Lyndon B. Johnson broad powers in dealing with reported North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. forces.

In 1971, the Apollo 15 moon mission ended successfully as its command module splashed down in the Pacific Ocean.

In 1989, a plane carrying U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, and 14 others disappeared over Ethiopia. (The wreckage of the plane was found six days later; there were no survivors.)

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush ordered U.S. troops and warplanes to Saudi Arabia to guard the oil-rich desert kingdom against a possible invasion by Iraq.

In 2000, Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore selected Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate; Lieberman became the first Jewish candidate on a major party's presidential ticket.

In 2008, a U.S. military jury at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base gave Osama bin Laden's driver a surprisingly light 5-1/2-year sentence for aiding terrorism, making him eligible for parole in just five months. (The U.S. later transferred Salim Hamdan to his home country of Yemen, which released him in January 2009.)

In 2010, Elena Kagan was sworn in as the 112th justice and fourth woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2012, Jared Lee Loughner agreed to spend the rest of his life in prison, accepting that he went on a deadly shooting rampage at an Arizona political gathering in 2011 and sparing the victims a lengthy, possibly traumatic death-penalty trial.

In 2015, Colorado theater shooter James Holmes was spared the death penalty in favor of life in prison after a jury in Centennial failed to agree on whether he should be executed for his attack on a movie premiere that left 12 people dead.

Ten years ago: The Treasury Department announced that Secretary Timothy Geithner had told President Barack Obama he would remain on the job, ending speculation he would leave the administration. Former Oregon Governor and U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield, 89, died in Portland.

Five years ago: An accident on a 17-story waterslide at Schlitterbahn Waterpark in Kansas City, Kansas, claimed the life of a 10-year-old boy. Jim Furyk became the first golfer to shoot a 58 in PGA Tour history during the Travelers Championship in Connecticut with a 12-under 58 in the final round. At the Rio Games, U.S. swimmer Katie Ledecky crushed her own world record in the 400 free-style with a time of 3:56.46.

One year ago: Thousands of bikers poured into the small South Dakota town of Sturgis for the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally despite fears that it could lead to a massive coronavirus outbreak. Federal health officials later said the rally led to dozens of coronavirus cases in Minnesota; the Associated Press found that at least 290 people in 12 states tested positive for the coronavirus after attending the rally.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021

Megabucks

1-9-15-19-31-43

Jackpot: \$1.4 million

Lucky Lines

1-8-9-13-17-21-27-32

Estimated jackpot: \$48,000

Powerball

5-21-32-36-58

Powerball: 14

Power Play: 2

Jackpot: \$226 million

Win for Life

18-51-57-72

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 3-8-6-8

4 p.m.: 1-6-4-9

7 p.m.: 1-1-5-5

10 p.m.: 0-1-0-7

Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021

Lucky Lines

2-8-9-14-18-23-25-30

Jackpot: \$49,000

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 2-1-6-1

4 p.m.: 8-6-7-2

7 p.m.: 3-7-1-2

10 p.m.: 8-5-3-2

Building gets new lease on life

Former JCPenney hosts community exhibits in window

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — An iconic La Grande building is coming back to life.

The old JCPenney building, 1309 Adams Ave., which has been closed since 2017, is now a community exhibit site. The La Grande Masonic Lodge is giving nonprofit community organizations the chance to put on exhibits in the display windows of the old building for no charge.

“We want to give people a chance to see things which are a part of our community which they might not otherwise see,” said Lou Gerber, master of the La Grande Masonic Lodge which built and owns the old JCPenney building.

The large structure, now named the Masonic Annex, housed La Grande's JCPenney store from 1930 through 2017 when the store was closed as part of a national downsizing by JCPenney's corporation.

The old store's display window site presently has multiple exhibits including:

- A display by the Shriners for the upcoming 69th annual East-West Shrine All Star football game in Baker City which will be played Saturday, Aug. 7.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Lou Gerber adjusts some of the military memorabilia on display at the front window of the old JCPenney building in La Grande on Wednesday, July 28, 2021.

PLACING A DISPLAY

Anyone interested in having their organization put up displays should call or text Lou Gerber, 541-910-4394 or email lougerber2@gmail.com. Businesses can also put up displays but a fee will be charged.

The game is a benefit for the Shriners Hospital for Children in Portland.

- A local military exhibit which includes historic items from La Grande's National Guard unit, the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry. The collection includes old photos of past local National Guard leaders.

“If those photos were not here, they would still be at the National Guard Armory where many people would not see

them,” Gerber said.

- A display honoring Leonard Morse, who at age 98 is the oldest member of the La Grande Masonic Lodge.

The old JCPenney building remains closed to the public, but later this year community members may again have an opportunity to step inside. Gerber said the venue might host an open mic event where people can share stories about their encounters with Bigfoot or other tales they have heard. Gerber said the stories will be recorded.

Guided tours of building may be conducted before and after the Big-foot event. The tours would give people a chance to see the structure's many historic features including its

old coal room. Coal has not been stored in the building for decades but the room's walls are still black from housing the sedimentary rock.

Gerber would be one of the people leading the building tours.

“I love showing it off. It is part of La Grande's history on main street,” he said.

La Grande's JCPenney was originally based at 108 Depot St. where it operated from 1914 to 1930.

The La Grande Masonic Lodge has had the building up for sale or lease after JCPenney moved out.

Gerber said there is a possibility that the building could be rented to multiple businesses in the future.

“We are open to all options,” he said.

Second Street reopens after construction project

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Second Street in La Grande is now open after being blocked off for nearly four months. The span of Second Street from Spring Street to Adams Avenue was completely repaved with added sidewalks, in addition to a replaced water main as part of the project.

The renovations extend just over 1,000 feet and include brand-new sidewalks, crosswalks and repaved street surfaces. The project began in early April and stretched into August after minor challenges with material shortages pushed back the finish date.

“We had hoped to pave weeks earlier,” said La Grande Public Works



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Brian Chamberlain with La Grande Public Works levels gravel poured by a backhoe along Second Street on June 3, 2021. The city finished construction work and opened the street for general use in early August.

Director Kyle Carpenter. “It took longer than expected just because those materials had to come in.”

According to Carpenter, the water main project finished on time and with no setbacks. The previous water main on

Second Street was installed over 60 years ago, so the repaving allowed the city a well-timed opportunity to dig out the old system and replace it.

“That went really well and finished right on schedule,” he said.

Unlike the materials for the road work, the city was able to procure most of the parts for the water main before the project began. Material shortages have affected most construction efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult to predict timeframes for projects.

“That was the biggest challenge,” Carpenter said. “That and we wanted to get all the concrete done before we paved the road.”

Carpenter noted that the extreme temperatures in June and July raised some concerns with heavy machinery driving on freshly paved roads. This led the construction crews to focusing on the sidewalks first and laying the new pavement for the road at the end of the project.

NEWS BRIEFS

Thunderstorms bring heavy rainfall to region

LA GRANDE — Thunderstorms caused heavy rains to hit portions of Union and Baker counties on Thursday, Aug. 5.

Areas receiving a deluge of rainfall in Union County included Fly Creek along the Grande Ronde River in south Union County which picked up half an inch of precipitation, according to the National Weather Service in Pendleton.

Further south, Baker County's Elkhorn Ridge area, which is west of Baker City, received an even higher amount at 1.1 inches.

La Grande was hit by a heavy thunderstorm around 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. which brought intense rain. The amount of rain La Grande received is not officially known though since the National Weather Service receives its precipitation readings for La Grande at the La Grande/Union County Airport which received no significant rainfall.

The thunderstorms which struck Northeast Oregon on Aug. 5 were caused in part by a lack of the smoke and haze from wildfires that had been present for much of the past month. The absence of smoke and haze from the valley allowed the sun to shine through, sparking the thunderstorms, according to Matt Callihan, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton.

He said instability in the atmo-



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Lightning strikes the Blue Mountains as a crop harvester collects grass seed near Alicel on Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021.

sphere and moisture made the region ripe for thunderstorms.

“It needed a trigger and sunlight was that trigger,” he said.

Lightning causes several fires in Northeast Oregon

WALLOWA — Lightning caused at least three fires in Wallowa County Thursday, Aug. 5, and the Oregon Department of Forestry said “numerous smoke reports” have been fielded across the county.

The biggest fire currently burning is the Wise Fire, which has burned about 75 acres and is near Smith Mountain Road. It was reported at about 1:50 p.m. Aug. 5. According to

the ODF, helicopters, single-engine air tankers and heavy air tankers, are being used to fight the fire.

Additionally, the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office has issued a Level 2 “Get Set” evacuation notice for Smith Mountain Road.

Another small fire, the Saw Dust Pile Fire, burned 4 acres about 8 miles northwest of Wallowa, but that fire has been contained by crews. A 5-acre fire in the Maxville area has also been reported, though fire crews and a bulldozer on the scene have stopped the spread of that fire.

Other small fires have been reported and responded to, the ODF said.

— EO Media Group

County reopens MERA access

Commissioners vote to open improved roads, motocross track

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — All-terrain vehicles are again rolling at the Mount Emily Recreation Area.

ATVs are reappearing at MERA after the Union County Board of Commissioners voted on Wednesday, Aug. 4, to open its improved roads and its motocross track immediately to motor vehicles. MERA had been closed since July 21 because of high fire danger due to drought and hot weather.

The roads opened are Road 201, known as Mainline; Road 202-Mount Emily Road; Road 203-Highline Road and Road 208-Easy Out Road. These are all rough dirt and gravel roads with no flammable vegetation. Everyone taking a vehicle on these roads must have an ATV permit. Only people with four-wheel drive vehicles with high road clearance should use these roads because they are so rough,

said Sean Chambers, Union County's parks coordinator. Anyone driving on these roads must carry water and a shovel because of Oregon Department of Forestry fire rules.

The motocross trail now open again is near Fox Hill Road and is for motorcycles. All motorcycles using this trail also must carry a shovel and have water close by, Chambers said.

The Aug. 4 action by the commissioners was the second move toward fully reopening MERA after the July vote that completely closed it. MERA was reopened for nonmotorized activities on July 28.

Significant fire restrictions are still in place at MERA where no camping or smoking is allowed. The continuing reopening of MERA reflects the increasing moisture the Grande Ronde Valley has received in recent weeks and cooler temperatures. It also reflects a recent increase in available wildfire fighting equipment, according to Donna Beverage, a Union County commissioner.

Beverage said that a number of firefighting vehicles belonging to Union County fire departments had been out of the county fighting fires but have since returned.

Commissioners oppose Rivers Democracy Act

The Union County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution Aug. 4 opposing the Rivers Democracy Act, which Congress is considering.

The legislation would apply Wild and Scenic River designations to nearly 4,700 miles of Oregon rivers, streams, creeks, gulches and unnamed tributaries. The total would include more than 135 miles in Union County along 26 stretches of rivers, streams and creeks.

The legislation would apply half-mile buffer restrictions to waterways designated as Wild and Scenic. This would impact, according to the county's resolution, economic development, public access, water resource management, forest and vegetation management, ranching and grazing, mining and activities in Oregon on an estimated 3 million acres of public land in Oregon, including 86,400 acres in Union County.