

TRIBUTE

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had dug out and had hoped to pick up.

Arnott, 70, says KP led a healthy life. He ate little red meat, plenty of vegetables, never drank alcohol, smoked or used drugs and exercised often.

“He did everything right. His idea of a good time was to ride a motorcycle up to Pikes Peak,” Arnott said.

Such rides put the skills of motorcyclists to the test, for 14,115-foot Pikes Peak in Colorado is filled with hairpin curves and stretches of narrow road with no guardrails.

The good health that helped KP ascend Pikes Peak did not prevent COVID-19 from bringing him to his knees.

“He was as weak as a kitten. Going from his living room to the kitchen was an accomplishment,” Arnott said.

KP got COVID-19 just before vaccines for it became available to the public. He called Arnott not long after his diagnosis.

“The first thing he told me was ‘The vaccine came too late for me,’” Arnott said.

Unforgettable attitude

KP appeared to be recovering in late 2020 until he was found unconscious in his home. Doctors soon determined that there was a malignant tumor on his brain. KP was told that with brain cancer people often live about a year, news that he was buoyed by.

“I get a year! Some folks I’ve known have strokes or heart attacks and just keel over. I’m really lucky,” he told Arnott, in a quote that appears in the piece Arnott wrote for the OHA blog.

Arnott said that for KP to put a positive spin on news that would devastate others was not uncharacteristic.

“It was typical KP,” Arnott said.

Unfortunately, KP was denied the year he expected. He died in April of 2021 not long after his cancer diagnosis.

“I talked to him on the phone on a Tuesday evening and by Thursday he had

ONLINE

To read Jim Arnott’s contribution to the Oregon Health Authority blog post, go to <https://bit.ly/3AuljOW>.

died,” Arnott said.

Arnott believes COVID-19, not the brain tumor, robbed his friend of the remaining year he thought he had. Arnott noted that KP was on a ventilator at the end of his life, which he believes indicates that COVID was the cause of his death. Many who die of COVID-19 do so because of the pneumonia it often causes.

Later Arnott learned that two other good friends he had known for decades, individuals he identifies as John and Maz, also died of COVID-19. John died in March of 2020 and Maz in October of 2020. He described John and Maz, a couple who lived in Arizona, as touchstones of his life history.

Arnott, who previously was an aerospace engineer who worked on NASA, the Department of Defense and commercial defense projects, moved to Union 27 years ago with his wife and three children.

He hopes that sharing his story about the friends he has lost to COVID-19 will encourage more people, especially those in North-eastern Oregon, to get vaccinated.

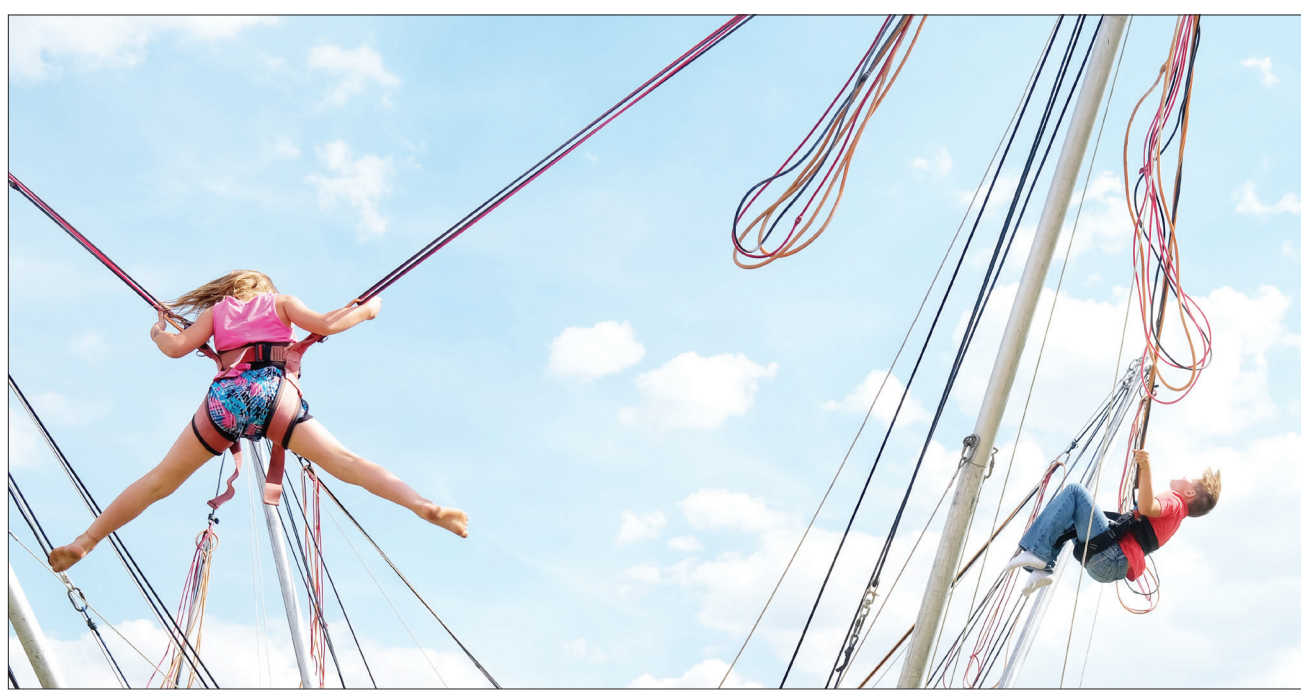
He believes people have a responsibility to get vaccinated, not just for themselves but those they care about.

“Do everything you can to make it so your friends and loved ones don’t have to write stuff like what I did here,” Arnott said in his piece for the blog.

Arnott is mystified why many are not getting immunized for COVID-19 when vaccinations for it are readily available and free. He added that the side effects of the vaccines are typically minimal.

Arnott, who received the two-shot Moderna vaccine, said with the first one he had a sore shoulder for several days and after the second a shoulder was again sore.

“I have had a lot worse reactions when I got my flu shot,” he said.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Children bounce on a bungee jumping ride at the Union County Fair on Friday, Aug. 6, 2021. The fair, which lacked a carnival this year due to Cascade Amusements closing down, drew in nearly 14,000 fairgoers this year.

FAIR

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for the past five years, Gover-Shaw said. The total is particularly noteworthy considering there was no carnival at the fair because Cascade Amusements, a longtime provider of rides and games at the Union County Fair, went out of business. Cascade Amusements had provided rides at the fair for at least a decade.

Gover-Shaw said she hopes to get another carnival company to come in next year but she said it will be difficult. She said the number of companies providing carnivals is declining and those now operating have few openings.

The fair manager said she plans to try to get the carnival rides back, though, since they are so popular with older children.

Gover-Shaw said the expanded inflatables play station the fair had to help make up for the loss of the carnival was very popular among younger children, and many parents and grandparents told her the attraction was a hit with children.

“They said they absolutely loved it,” she said.

The fair’s entertainment lineup also helped make up for the loss of carnival rides. It included many local groups and



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kids wait in line to get in Zorb balls at the Union County Fair on Friday, Aug. 6, 2021.

performers in addition to the Wasteland Kings and several from outside the region, including Too Slim and the Tail Draggers of Spokane, Washington. Gover-Shaw credits their presence to the work of Scott Arnson, the fair’s entertainment director.

Arnson, who is paid by the fair to work on its sound system, volunteers his time to work as the entertainment coordinator.

Many other features that helped bolster the fair included horse riding and a bungee jumping station, food vendors and FFA and 4-H competition.

Gover-Shaw said it was critical to have a fair this year after the 2020 fair was canceled, except for the FFA-4-H auction, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It was important for people to see that the Union County Fair is alive

again,” she said.

Gover-Shaw said the enormous amount of help provided by fair board members and community volunteers are the reason the fair was a success.

“We have an amazing team,” she said.

The success of this year’s fair, Gover-Shaw said, will help build momentum for 2022, which will mark the fair’s 150th year.

B2H

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While studies completed after the project’s approval provided new information about population counts and the effects of transmission lines, the judge said they’re “not significant or seriously different” enough to warrant a supplementary analysis.

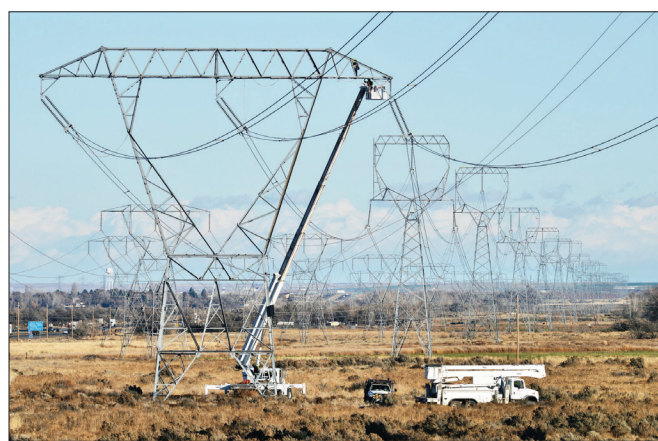
“The new information about the declining population of greater sage grouse is not significantly new or different circumstances from what is discussed in the FEIS,” Simon said.

Likewise, news articles about the financial feasibility of burying transmission lines do not trigger the need for a supplementary environmental analysis because they don’t “rise to the level of significant information,” as would scientific studies, he said.

The judge dismissed claims that BLM relied on improper data about sage grouse numbers and that it was impermissibly vague and confusing in examining the risk of “extirpation” to a local population of the species.

“Although not a model of clarity, the discussion is not indecipherable,” he said.

The agency wasn’t



EO Media Group, File

A crew works on a transmission line tower outside Boardman. A federal judge has rejected a lawsuit seeking to invalidate the government’s right-of-way for the Boardman-to-Hemingway transmission line across public land.

“arbitrary and capricious” in analyzing the indirect effects on “leks,” where sage grouse congregate during mating season, within 3 miles of the transmission line, rather than using a longer distance, Simon said.

The judge found that BLM’s steps for mitigating the adverse impacts to the species were sufficient because “there can be no construction without a detailed plan.”

“This is not a case in which the action will commence before it can be determined whether mitigation will be effective,” he said.

The judge said BLM

“worked closely” with the Idaho Power utility company on the project and relied on “sufficient evidence” to decide against burying the line near an interpretive center for the Oregon Trail.

The agency wasn’t required to update the FEIS regarding the environmental effects of alternative routes for the transmission line that it ultimately didn’t choose, he said.

While the BLM wrongly failed to “consider grazing in the cumulative effects analysis” of the project, that “error was harmless” because it wouldn’t have altered the agency’s conclusions, the judge said.

PARK

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from city workers and volunteers to the installation team at Northwest Sports Turf Solution.

Nationwide material shortages have impacted construction projects across the country during the pandemic, but the only major setback for this project has been a delay in delivering the turf. Seeing as the project primarily involves removing dirt and placing rock donated from local companies, Spence does not expect any major hurdles between now and the completion of the work.

“The shortages are making the turf come later. Normally it would be a much quicker timeline,” he said. “But, we’re really only waiting on the turf.”

Volunteer impact

While the project relies on funding from multiple sources, those involved adamantly credit the community’s volunteers for contributing to the renovations.

“It really is a La Grande community project,” La Grande High School baseball coach

Parker McKinley said. “We’re so fortunate to have a community that supports each other and makes it possible to do things like this.”

RD Mac is donating the rock for the prep work underneath the turf and contributing trucks and resources for the job, while Brian Bell is heading the excavation process. Rob Lane of Lane Farms donated the dirt to fill the outfield of Trice Community Field and Hampton Paving is leveling the rock and surfacing prior to the turf installation.

“It’s huge because we couldn’t do it without them,” Spence said. “We’re saving tens of thousands of dollars in equipment and labor costs.”

Future opportunities

The renovated fields will provide La Grande with one of the top baseball and softball complexes in the area and in Oregon.

“There are a lot of people around the Northwest that have a lot of respect for La Grande baseball,” McKinley said. “If we have a facility like this that can handle

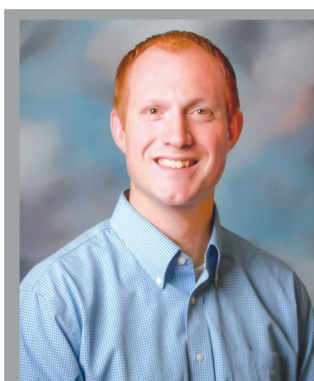
a lot of games, I think it’s going to bring people from all over.”

Spence also noted that the La Grande School District had a need for the project, having already improved the basketball and football facilities in recent years.

“There’s no other turf fields around here, so it will make us the premier location and I’m hoping to draw lots of tournaments and activities, along with using the facilities for the school kids,” he said.

Expected to finish in the fall, the Pioneer Park project will greatly elevate the level of local facilities in La Grande. With teams across multiple sports using the fields, Optimist Field and Trice Community Field will be centerpieces in the sports community for years to come. For those involved in coordinating the project, the contributions from La Grande residents have made the project possible.

“We’ve got tons of people that are coming in to help and donate their labor, time and equipment,” McKinley said. “It’s going to happen because of the community we live in, which is pretty awesome.”



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