

TODAY

On Sept. 25, 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor was sworn in as the first female justice on the Supreme Court.

In 1513, Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and sighted the Pacific Ocean.

In 1789, the first United States Congress adopted 12 amendments to the Constitution and sent them to the states for ratification. (Ten of the amendments became the Bill of Rights.)

In 1890, President Benjamin Harrison signed a measure establishing Sequoia National Park.

In 1911, ground was broken for Boston's Fenway Park.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson collapsed after a speech in Pueblo, Colo., during a national speaking tour in support of the Treaty of Versailles.

In 1956, the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable officially went into service with a three-way ceremonial call between New York, Ottawa and London.

In 1957, nine Black students who'd been forced to withdraw from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, because of unruly white crowds were escorted to class by members of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division.

In 1978, 144 people were killed when a Pacific Southwest Airlines Boeing 727 and a private plane collided over San Diego.

In 1992, NASA's Mars Observer blasted off on a \$980 million mission to the red planet (the probe disappeared just before entering Martian orbit in August 1993).

In 1991, Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie died in Lyon, France, at age 77.

In 2015, House Speaker John Boehner abruptly announced his resignation.

In 2018, Bill Cosby was sentenced to three to 10 years in state prison for drugging and molesting a woman at his suburban Philadelphia home. (After nearly three years in prison, Cosby went free in June 2021 after the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned his conviction.)

Today's Birthdays: Former broadcast journalist Barbara Walters is 92. Folk singer Ian Tyson is 88. Polka bandleader Jimmy Sturr is 80. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates is 78. Actor Josh Taylor is 78. Actor Robert Walden is 78. Actor-producer Michael Douglas is 77. Model Cheryl Tiegs is 74. Actor Mimi Kennedy is 73. Movie director Pedro Almodovar is 72. Actor-director Anson Williams is 72. Actor Mark Hamill is 70. Basketball Hall of Famer Bob McAdoo is 70. Actor Colin Friels is 69. Actor Michael Madsen is 63. Actor Heather Locklear is 60. Actor Aida Turturro is 59. Actor Tate Donovan is 58. TV personality Keely Shaye Smith is 58. Actor Maria Doyle Kennedy is 57. Basketball Hall of Famer Scottie Pippen is 56. Actor Jason Flemyng is 55. Actor Will Smith is 53. Actor Hal Sparks is 52. Actor Catherine Zeta-Jones is 52. Rock musician Mike Luce (Drowning Pool) is 50. Actor Bridgette Wilson-Sampras is 48. Actor Clea DuVall is 44. Actor Robbie Jones is 44. Actor Joel David Moore is 44. Actor Chris Owen is 41. Rapper T. I. is 41. Actor Van Hansis is 40. Actor Lee Norris is 40. Actor/rapper Donald Glover (AKA Childish Gambino) is 38. Actor Zach Woods is 37. Actor Jordan Gavaris is 32. Olympic silver medal figure skater Mao Asada is 31. Actor Emmy Clarke is 30.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021
Megabucks
6-16-20-25-28-46
Jackpot: \$3.5 million
Lucky Lines
4-6-12-16-17-21-25-31
Estimated jackpot: \$28,000
Powerball
20-40-47-55-63
Powerball: 5
Power Play: 3
Jackpot: \$523 million
Win for Life
16-53-63-73
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 5-8-6-1
4 p.m.: 2-3-9-6
7 p.m.: 6-2-9-1
10 p.m.: 3-4-6-7
Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021
Lucky Lines
4-6-11-13-18-21-28-30
Jackpot: \$29,000
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 5-3-2-9
4 p.m.: 0-9-7-9
7 p.m.: 7-3-2-5
10 p.m.: 6-1-5-9

New tools for the trade

Federal grant to give four fire departments a boost of upgraded equipment

By DICK MASON
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Firefighters with four departments in Union and Wallowa counties will soon have extra breath and be lighter on their feet. The Imbler Rural, Elgin Rural, La Grande Rural and Joseph fire departments have been awarded a \$344,000 federal grant for the purchase of approximately 50 new air packs and 100 new air tanks, known as self-contained breathing apparatuses. “This is very, very exciting,” said Ken Patterson, a member of the Imbler Rural Department. The air packs and tanks will replace older models that are becoming outdated. The tanks will be made of lighter material and able to hold significantly more oxygen, allowing firefighters to combat blazes for nearly twice as long as they do now. “Firefighters will be able to stay in smoky situations longer,” said Craig Kretschmer, chief of the La Grande Rural Fire Department. Presently, local firefighters with older tanks generally have 25 minutes



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Firefighters with the La Grande and Union fire departments check for hot spots at a residential fire in Union on Tuesday, Aug. 24, 2021. The air packs and air tanks used by the La Grande and Union fire departments are new versions that the departments in Imbler, Elgin, La Grande and Joseph will be upgrading to after receiving a federal grant.

of oxygen when fighting fires. The upgraded tanks will provide fighters with about 45 minutes of oxygen, Patterson said. Patterson led the effort to get a grant called “Assistance to Firefighters.” The grant is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. “Ken did an incredible job. He deserves a lot of credit,” said Mike Barry, chief of the Imbler Rural Fire Department. The Elgin Rural, Imbler Rural, La Grande Rural and Joseph fire departments are now beginning the process of determining which company to buy the equipment from. The air packs and tanks purchased will be compatible with

the more modern ones most other fire departments in Union and Wallowa counties already have. “They will be more interchangeable, which will make switching out much easier,” said Kevin Silvernail, chief of the Elgin Rural Fire Department. Kretschmer agrees that this will be a big plus. “It will help put us all on the same page,” he said. Silvernail noted that when the Elgin Rural Fire Department is combating a blaze with a department like La Grande, which has the most current air packs and tanks, its firefighters cannot borrow full air tanks from La Grande

firefighters. Silvernail said because his firefighters have less borrowing options, they often must go to an air trailer provided by the La Grande Rural Fire Department to get their tanks filled. This takes more time than borrowing tanks that are already filled. It will be at least two months before the local fire departments have their new equipment. Kretschmer is delighted that the firefighters of these departments, made up mostly of volunteers, will soon have improved tools. “Anytime you can upgrade technology and get volunteers new equipment, it is a neat deal,” he said.

Clashes lead to mayor’s resignation

Mike Wisdom steps down after serving almost three years in North Powder

By DICK MASON
The Observer

NORTH POWDER — The North Powder City Council will soon be selecting a new mayor. The city council is seeking a successor to Mike Wisdom who resigned as mayor of North Powder on Monday, Sept. 13. Wisdom, who served as mayor for two years and

8-1/2 months, stepped down because he did not believe he was on the same page as members of the council in terms of what direction the city should be taking. Mike Morse, North Powder’s mayor pro tem, is now taking on added responsibilities as the city’s acting mayor. Morse is the city council’s president and has served as a city councilor for at least a dozen years. He has lived in North Powder for 20 years and is a retired chef. He said he earlier was the chef at the Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker City, and headed Eastern

Oregon University’s food service program. Morse credits Wisdom with connecting with the public while serving as mayor. “He did a good job of communicating with the community,” Morse said. Wisdom was involved in a number of successful projects while mayor, Wendt said. The city recorder noted that Wisdom helped the city get \$67,000 worth of new playground equipment for its park, which will soon be installed; facilitated street repair work; and provided support for the city’s effort to get funding for major

upgrades for its wastewater system. Wendt said the city council will likely decide on how it will select a new mayor when it meets next, on Oct. 4. She said the council has two options — elect a council member to serve as mayor or invite North Powder residents to apply for the position. Should the latter option be pursued, the city council would appoint an applicant to serve as mayor after interviewing all of the candidates. The individual selected as mayor will complete the remainder of Wisdom’s term, which expires in early January 2023.

New forest supervisor starts work next month

Baker City Herald

PORTLAND — The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will soon have a new leader. Shaun McKinney will become the supervisor for the 2.4-million-acre Wallowa-Whitman, which is based in Baker City. Glenn Casamassa, Pacific Northwest Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service, announced Monday, Sept.



McKinney

20, that McKinney will start his new job in late October. McKinney will replace Thomas Montoya, who retired June 1, 2021. McKinney joins the Forest Service from the West National Technology Support Center, where he leads a team providing direct assistance, training and innovative natural resources technological solutions to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service staff throughout the western United States. “Shaun has worked in both public and private land conservation,

drawing on his background as a fisheries biologist to inform his strategic direction and oversight of a large team tasked with developing and implementing innovative technical solutions for field science staff working on a variety of complex natural resource issues,” Casamassa said in a press release. “His considerable experience in organizational leadership, science-based decision-making, and innovative problem-solving will serve him well as he serves the residents and communities of Eastern Oregon

as Forest Supervisor on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.” McKinney has a master’s degree in fisheries science and statistics from Oregon State University and a bachelor of science from Michigan State University. “I’m looking forward to returning to the Blue Mountains, where I began my career, to work together with the staff, communities and partners on healthy ecosystems and economies. It will be an exciting next chapter filled with challenges and opportunities,” McKinney said.

Grange donates to museum, young scholars

Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The Hurricane Creek Grange of Joseph was busy this summer handing out donations to benefit local institutions and individuals, according to a press release. On July 20, the grange presented a check for \$1,000 to the Wallowa County Museum in Joseph. The donation will go toward the purchase of three televisions and three chairs, the release stated. The TVs are to be used to inform the public about



Hurricane Creek Grange/Contributed Photo

The Hurricane Creek Grange of Joseph donated \$1,000 to the Wallowa County Museum this summer. Presenting the check July 20, 2021, were, from left, Grange President David McBride, Claudia Boswell, Jude Graham, Bernice Bernatot and Darrell Witty.

the Nez Perce Tribe, World War II and local farms and ranches. Also, the grange pre-

sented three local youths with college scholarships of \$500 each to: • Aubrina Melville, who

graduated from Enterprise High School. She is attending South Dakota State University to study animal science and agriculture business. • Brianna Micka, who graduated from Joseph High School. She is going to Eastern Oregon University to study agriculture education and elementary education. • Casidee Harrod, who graduated from Enterprise High School. She is going to the Oregon Institute of Technology to study dental hygiene.

NEWS BRIEFS

Union County adds 13 new COVID-19 cases, OHA reports

SALEM — In the Oregon Health Authority report from Sept. 24, Union County added 32 more COVID-19 cases. In Wallowa County, eight new COVID-19 cases and one new death were reported. The COVID-19 related death was a 62-year-old woman from Wallowa who died at her residence on Sept. 20. Since the start of the pandemic, Union County has recorded 2,809 positive COVID-19 cases and 38 deaths. Wallowa County has totaled 540 cases and 12 deaths. The Sept. 24 report brings Oregon’s case total to 320,990, while the death toll is now at 3,682.

Across the state, OHA recorded 2,113 new confirmed and presumptive cases and 21 new deaths in the report on Sept. 24. OHA previously detailed 13 new COVID-19 cases in Union County and 11 new cases in Wallowa County in its report on Thursday, Sept. 23. Across Oregon, 1,836 new confirmed and presumptive cases were reported and 12 new deaths occurred. The OHA report showed that 9,167 new doses of COVID-19 vaccinations were added to the state’s immunization registry on Sept. 23, and 7,964 on Sept. 22. The current seven-day average is 7,502 doses per day. The current number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Oregon is 855, which is a decrease of 30 patients from the Sept. 23 report. There are 60 open adult ICU beds out of 645 in the state and 373 available adult non-ICU beds out of 4,198.

Idaho man killed in early morning crash

BAKER CITY — An Idaho man died early Thursday, Sept. 23, when the commercial truck he was driving crashed on Interstate 84 near Milepost 318, about 14 miles east of Baker City. William Frakes, 49, of Nampa, died in the crash, according to Oregon State Police. OSP troopers and emergency personnel responded to the crash about 2:14 a.m. The investigation showed that Frakes, who was driving westbound and hauling a set of double trailers, went off the freeway. The truck overturned.

City to host virtual town hall on vaccines, COVID-19

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande is holding a virtual town hall meeting to address the current state of COVID-19 in Union County. Hosted by Mayor Steve Clements, the town hall will include local health care providers and take input from the public. The town hall will take place Monday, Sept. 27, beginning at 6 p.m. The meeting will be streamed live on the city’s Facebook page as well as on EO Alive TV. The panel of local health care officials includes Dr. Bryan Conklin, nurse practitioner Jared Hulme, registered nurse Shaye Perry and Dr. Bryan Tolle. The hospital previously held a virtual town hall meeting on Aug. 18, which focused on capacity issues and featured officials from the county, city and local school boards. This town hall meeting will center around the state of the pandemic, as well as information on COVID-19 vaccines. Viewers can submit questions to questions@cityoflagrande.org by 5 p.m. on Sept. 27, or ask questions during the meeting. — The Observer