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A birthday party to remember

Two women over 100 celebrate birthdays at same party

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Two generous women who have slowed the sands of time to a trickle were embraced by their families and friends on Tuesday, Dec. 28, at Wildflower Lodge.

The event was a tale of two centenarians, a party celebrating the 105th birthday of Mildred McMurphy and the 104th birthday of Lodema Asper, both residents of Wildflower Lodge in La Grande.

"I've never seen anything like this and I may never again," a man at Wildflower said of seeing two centenarians celebrating a birthday together.

It is doubtful that many people anywhere will outsmart Father Time as gracefully as McMurphy and Asper have, for they have the vitality of people many years their junior.

McMurphy and Asper were both in good humor Dec. 28. McMurphy put her wit on display after she received a card with \$105 in cash saluting her age.

"Now they probably will raise my rent," she said, expressing mock disappointment in the gifts.

Asper also displayed quick wit, announcing amid the deluge of attention that "I charge for autographs."

Asper, whose actual birthday was Monday, Dec. 27, grew up in Union before moving east after graduating from Union High School, according to her niece, Wanda Ballard, of Baker City. She worked as a secretary throughout her career.

"She always told me, 'If you can type you can find a job anywhere,'" Ballard said.

Asper returned permanently to Union County about 50 years ago.

Ballard said her aunt is the type of person who always is concerned about others, recalling Asper recently asking her niece to check on her 71-year-old son in Georgia because she was worried about his condition now that he is getting older.

Asper worries about the health of others but doesn't discuss her ailments.

"A lot of people talk about their aches and pains, but she has

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Cross the 'Divide'

Divide Camp morphs into new organization as new owners take over

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The new year brings more than a change of the calendar to Divide Camp, as it undergoes a transition into Cross the Divide, a reincorporation of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit into a clearly faith-based organization.

Retired Navy Chaplain Emile "Mo" Moured will take the reins as executive director Friday, Dec. 31, taking over from longtime director Julie Wheeler, on whose family land the camp was founded and has operated since 2011.

Moured, who lives with wife, Rhonda, and their 14-year-old daughter in Poulsbo, Washington, said that he hopes to continue and expand on the work Wheeler's done.

"I'm excited for lot of different reasons," he said. "Thinking back to what's gone before me, Julie's done a tremendous job as executive director. Her godly prayers and hard work. It's a tremendous honor. It's something that's been nurtured in my heart for about 40 years."

Time for a change

The 40-acre site on family land east of Joseph started as Divide Camp when Wheeler got what she believes was a message from the Lord.

"When I got here, even though it was all rat-infested and falling apart, I sat on that front porch and I just felt the Lord speak to me that this is a perfect place for healing vets," she said. "The initial vision for this camp in 2011 was healing through nature."

It was her vision to reach out to post-9/11 veterans. She knows some locals consider the camp discriminatory against pre-9/11 veterans but, as she explained it, veterans from earlier wars have had time to come to grips with their war-induced trauma and develop support systems. It's newer to the post-9/11 vets.

"That was just the vision God gave me for the camp," Wheeler said. "That was not Mo's vision. 'Cross the Divide' will be serving all veterans."

But for Wheeler, it's time to step down.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Divide Camp, in the mountains outside Joseph, in 2022 will become Cross the Divide. The reincorporated nonprofit will continue to offer battle-weary veterans a place to reboot by connecting with nature.



Emile "Mo" Moured/Contributed Photo

Navy Chaplain Emile "Mo" Moured retired as a captain earlier this year. On Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, he takes over as executive director of Cross the Divide, formerly known as Divide Camp.

"I need to retire," she said. "This was my 10th year in a project that I really thought would change hands about five years ago. I've been in much prayer. It's an emotional transition because Divide Camp has been my life for 10 years. I don't know what God is going to have me do with the rest of my life."

In her decade at the helm of Divide Camp, she's seen much community support and feels she's accomplished most of her goals.

"God has been so good to the Divide Camp organization," she said. "Our sup-

CROSS THE DIVIDE

Where: Wallowa County
Who: Emile "Mo" Moured, executive director
Phone: 978-835-3939
Email: emile.moured@gmail.com or after Jan. 1 mo@crossthedivide.us
To donate: Cross the Divide, P.O. Box 98, Wallowa 97885

port system in volunteerism and donors has been incredible."

Cross the Divide

Moured, too, had what may have been a vision from God.

"I'll never forget the moment many of our lives changed forever. My wife, Rhonda, and I were driving from where I was stationed as a Navy chaplain just a couple hours east of New York, heading out on an anniversary vacation," he said. "I said something to her I never said before and have never said since, 'I just have the weirdest feeling that we're going to get all the way up to our cabin and something really bad is going to happen back here.' Call it intuition, call it the Holy Spirit or call it bad pizza, but I remember that moment clearly from Sept 10, 2001.

"That next morning forced all our lives in various transitions. But minutes after the first planes hit the Twin Towers, I had an overwhelming sense that God was inviting me to follow Him into the wake of the tragedy. Immediately after

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A little fairer world

Umatilla Tribal Judge William Johnson earned President's Special Award of Appreciation

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

MISSION — Twenty-five years ago, Umatilla Tribal Judge William Johnson was troubled that judgments made in tribal courts weren't always upheld off reservation.

If a tribal judge in one of the nine federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon granted a restraining order, required child support or suspended someone's driver's license, the defendant could escape the order by simply moving off the reservation into another jurisdiction. To be protected, domestic violence victims needed to stay on the reservation or get another restraining order in a state circuit court.

Johnson, now in his fourth

10-year term as chief justice for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, spent a quarter century trying to change this. His efforts came to fruition this year when Oregon legislators passed Senate Bill 183, which extends full faith and credit to judgments, decrees and orders to all federally recognized Indian tribes.

Johnson, appearing remotely from his office, testified to the Senate's judiciary committee in March. The judge, who said "Good morning," in Cayuse and introduced himself as Grey Wolf, explained the situation.

"The reality is that tribal geographic jurisdiction is often very small and it is easy for a person to simply move and never return in order to avoid enforcement of a tribal court order," Johnson told the senators. "The lack of full faith and credit of tribal court orders undermines tribal sovereignty by stripping tribes of the real-world ability to enforce many court orders. This needs to be remedied."



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Judge David Gallaher, left, swears in Judge William Johnson during a ceremony on Dec. 4, 2019, at the Nixyaawii Governance Center in Mission.

All senators present voted "aye" and House judiciary committee members later followed suit. In June, Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill that becomes law on Jan. 1.

The moment was a sweet one for Johnson. The world had just gotten a little more fair.

The law's passage attracted the notice of Oregon State Bar President David Wade, who unexpectedly telephoned Johnson one afternoon. Johnson picked up the phone with trepidation.

"I thought I was in trouble with the Oregon State Bar," Johnson recalled.

Wade quickly allayed his fears. He told Johnson that he had decided to bestow on him "The President's Special Award of Appreciation," a discretionary award not presented every year.

"I said I'd be glad to accept, but it wasn't just me," said Johnson.

During the online award

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WEATHER



Tonight
19 LOW
Snow, 2-4"; cold



Friday
27/-3
Cold

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