

TODAY

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte escaped from exile on the Island of Elba and headed back to France in a bid to regain power.

In 1904, the United States and Panama proclaimed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to undertake efforts to build a ship canal across the Panama isthmus.

In 1942, "How Green Was My Valley" won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1941, beating out nine other films, including "The Maltese Falcon" and "Citizen Kane."

In 1945, authorities ordered a midnight curfew at nightclubs, bars and other places of entertainment across the nation.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Britain had developed its own atomic bomb.

In 1966, South Korean troops sent to fight in the Vietnam War massacred at least 380 civilians in Go Dai hamlet.

In 1987, the Tower Commission, which had probed the Iran-Contra affair, issued its report, which rebuked President Ronald Reagan for failing to control his national security staff.

In 1998, a jury in Amarillo, Texas, rejected an \$11 million lawsuit brought by Texas cattlemen who blamed Oprah Winfrey's talk show for a price fall after a segment on food safety that included a discussion about mad cow disease.

In 2005, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak ordered his country's constitution changed to allow presidential challenges in an upcoming fall election.

In 2014, Republican Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed a bill pushed by social conservatives that would have allowed people with sincerely held religious beliefs to refuse to serve gays.

In 2016, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie stunned the Republican establishment by endorsing Donald Trump for president.

In 2020, the World Health Organization reported that the number of new coronavirus cases outside China had exceeded the number of new infections in China for the first time.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Bill Duke is 79. Singer Mitch Ryder is 77. Actor Marta Kristen (TV: "Lost in Space") is 77. Rock musician Jonathan Cain (Journey) is 72. Singer Michael Bolton is 69. The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is 68. Actor Greg Germann is 64. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., is 64. Bandleader John McDaniel is 61. Actor-martial artist Mark Dacascos is 58. Actor Jennifer Grant is 56. Rock musician Tim Commerford (Audioslave) is 54. Singer Erykah Badu is 51. Actor Maz Jobrani (TV: "Superior Donuts") is 50. R&B singer Rico Wade (Society of Soul) is 50. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jenny Thompson is 49. R&B singer Kyle Norman (Jagged Edge) is 47. Actor Greg Kikaart is 45. Rock musician Chris Culos (O.A.R.) is 43. R&B singer Corinne Bailey Rae is 43. Pop singer Nate Ruess is 40. Former tennis player Li Na is 40. Latin singer Natalia Lafourcade is 38. Actor Teresa Palmer is 36.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022**Megabucks**

7-17-18-23-33-41

Jackpot: \$2.1 million

Lucky Lines

1-5-12-14-20-21-28-31

Estimated jackpot: \$12,000

Powerball

6-17-21-35-64

Powerball: 18

Power Play: 2

Jackpot: \$58 million

Win for Life

20-27-52-62

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 1-6-8-9

4 p.m.: 1-1-3-0

7 p.m.: 4-4-1-8

10 p.m.: 2-0-5-4

Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022**Lucky Lines**

4-8-11-16-20-23-27-30

Jackpot: \$13,000

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 7-8-9-5

4 p.m.: 5-9-0-8

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

10 p.m.: 2-1-9-8

'A different kind of experience'

Understanding the Civil Rights Movement through virtual reality

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University is giving students and faculty the opportunity to virtually step through time to 1968 and witness events of the Civil Rights Movement during Black History Month.

The EOU Library, in collaboration with history faculty and the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, is providing two educational virtual reality programs during the month of February — "I Am A Man" and "Driving While Black."

"The 'I Am A Man' virtual reality experience is an immersive documentary that focuses on archival primary sources. It has recordings from the time period, both video and audio. It has archival images from newspapers, photographs, pamphlets and materials that have been collected around the time," Sarah Ralston, associate professor of library, said.

Talks between the library and history department began in the fall with planning and set up beginning in January. The VR rigs were originally planned for set up in the library, but moved to the Multicultural Center to increase student accessibility and to prevent large queues.

"We talked about setting it up in the library, but we don't get quite the same amount of foot traffic



Eastern Oregon University/Contributed Photo

The Multicultural Center at Eastern Oregon University is hosting a pair of educational virtual reality programs during the month of February — "I Am A Man" and "Driving While Black." The experiences will run until the end of February. Two Oculus VR headsets are available, one for each program. A separate screen is available in the Multicultural Center to view the programs while they are being experienced by other students.

as Hoke gets, so it was a good idea to have it hosted over there by the Multicultural Center so people can just drop by and try it out," Ralston said.

"I Am A Man," created by Derek Ham, puts users on the ground during the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike and cycles through various computer-generated scenes and locations, culminating in the assassination of Martin Luther King. The experience lasts 10 minutes and uses a mix of animation and archived images with some interactivity.

"Basically, the experience takes you through a few scenes. In the opening scene, there's a garbage truck and garbage can and you're able to pick up the can and dump it into the truck," Ralston said. "It's meant to set the stage to where you're participating in events leading up to the sanitation workers' strike. There's a scene where there are actual strikers marching down the streets with signs and there are tanks going up and down

the street."

"Driving While Black," a virtual reality experience created by Felix & Paul Studios, includes more real-world imagery and functions similarly to an oral history, as the user is being told personal stories while sitting in a restaurant booth.

"It provided a completely different kind of experience. Have the set on and look to your left and you see an actual person rather than a computer-generated person. To me, 'Driving While Black' left more of an impression just because it felt like I was really sitting next to someone in a coffee shop," said Interim Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion Mika Morton.

Both experiences are part of a greater Black History Month project to provide students context to Civil Rights Movement events, along with the greater cultural, social and historical impact of the era.

"Part of advancing and promoting equity and inclusion and moving the

DEI needle is being able to experience and really listen and try to understand other perspectives. If you don't understand what others are experiencing, that could lead to dismissing somebody else's experience as less than yours," Morton said.

The VR set-ups are meant to act as a jumping off point for greater student curiosity. Morton hopes that the greater ease of access and the unique in-person experiences will generate more student interest in the history of civil rights and racial inequality.

"I hope that students will take it as a learning opportunity and really consider what they hear and what they see in either one of the apps, and that it will be thought-provoking for them. Whether or not they are able to emphasize and put themselves in somebody else's shoes, it can't not make them think twice about looking at history in this particular way," Ralston said.

Council to tackle sidewalk improvement district

La Grande City Council meeting meet virtually on Wednesday, March 2

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande City Council is set to meet for its monthly meeting, discussing two items of new business.

The council will meet virtually at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2. The meeting can be viewed on the city's charter communications channel 180 and at Eastern Oregon Alive TV.

The first item of new business up for discussion is the approval of the City Wide Voluntary Sidewalk Local Improvement District's final study and report and the establishment of a public hearing date.

The district was created during May 2021, with the goal of providing property owners with a means of improving their property and preserving sidewalks throughout the city. The contract allowed for property owners to seek out sidewalk repair work by request.

The overall project costs during 2021 were \$16,258. The price breakdown was split into 12 different categories, with the highest costs coming from handicap access ramps (\$3,600), curb and gutter (\$2,320), six-inch driveway (\$2,100) and four-inch sidewalk (\$1,900).

The council will vote on

whether or not to establish a public hearing date for the City Wide Voluntary Sidewalk Local Improvement District, which is currently scheduled for the April regular session.

The second item of new business is the potential appointment of Rod Muilenburg to the La Grande Landmarks Commission. The term lasts three years and expires at the end of 2024.

Muilenburg is applying for reappointment to the commission. Muilenburg's current open position is one of two openings on the five-person commission.

The council's two main items on the consent agenda regard the approval of liquor licenses at two businesses in La Grande. Local Harvest and Smoke

City are both seeking approval for a Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission license.

Local Harvest is pursuing a change of ownership, limited on-premises sales license. Smoke City filed for an off-premises sales permit, allowing for the sale and delivery of malt beverages, wine and cider in factory-sealed containers to customers off the premises.

The council's third item on the consent agenda is the approval of minutes from the January session.

Written comments can be submitted to the city manager by 5 p.m. on March 1. Those looking to speak at the virtual meeting can contact the city manager by 5 p.m. on March 2.

Duo charged with mail theft set to appear in court

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — A pair of La Grande residents charged with mail theft earlier this month are set to appear in Union County Circuit Court on Monday, Feb. 28.

George Kelly, 26, and Gracee Shelley, 22, will appear at an arraignment hearing for an indictment issued by a grand jury. Kelly and Shelley have been charged with 79 counts of mail theft and two counts of identity theft. The majority of the alleged thefts occurred in La Grande. Some of the thefts were in other areas of Union County, according to Union County District

Attorney Kelsie McDaniel.

The duo were arrested by the La Grande Police Department on Sunday, Feb. 20. Bail for Kelly has been set at \$73,000, while Shelley's bail is set for \$50,000. Both remain lodged in the Union County Jail in La Grande.

Acting La Grande Police Department Sgt. Brandon Boucher said all of the stolen mail has been located and returned. Boucher said mail was taken from 54 addresses.

Kelly and Shelley were initially charged with 61 counts of mail theft, but the total was raised to 79 counts after police did additional investigative work, according to Union County Deputy District Attorney

Ryan Rodighiero.

One count of mail theft was charged for each victim who had at least one piece of mail stolen, he said.

Mail theft is a federal crime, Rodighiero said. This means the federal government could choose to prosecute the case.

The arrests of Kelly and Shelley were made at about 8 a.m. on Feb. 20 after La Grande police officers responded in the area of South 20th Street to a report of mail theft. The La Grande Police Department was assisted by the Union County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon State Police.

The Feb. 28 hearing is set for 1:30 p.m.

NEWS BRIEF

Local artist, EOU professor receives fellowship

LA GRANDE — A local artist recently earned a statewide recognition for her work.

Susan Murrell, who is an associate professor in the arts program at Eastern Oregon University, received a \$5,000 fellowship award from the Oregon Arts Commission.

The Oregon Arts Commission awarded the 2022 visual arts

fellowships to 10 artists across the state. The fellowship program is open to over 20,000 Oregon artists, 103 of which applied for this year's fellowships. The commission alternates yearly in awarding visual and performing artists.

Applicants are reviewed by a panel of Oregon arts professionals, which considers talent, demonstrated ability and commitment to creating new work.



Murrell

Murrell's work focuses on how the climate crisis impacts the conception of landscape art pieces. The local professor has previously been awarded residencies in Finland and Iceland, in addition to showing exhibits in Portland and Adrian, Michigan in 2021.

Murrell earned a master of fine arts degree from Savannah College of Art and Design.

— The Observer

Work to begin at Oregon Trail center

Baker City-based Oregon Trail Interpretive Center undergoing \$6.5 million makeover

By JAYSON JACOBY

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — The biggest project at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City since it opened almost 30 years ago will begin March 2.

The \$6.5 million makeover is designed to turn the center, which has attracted almost 2.4 million visitors, from an energy hog to a building with a more modest appetite for electricity.

Achieving that will entail much more than cosmetic work.

The Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that operates the Center on Flagstaff Hill about 5 miles east of Baker City, has hired Hess Contracting of Preston, Idaho, to replace most items attached to its frame.

That includes installing new cement board siding, insulation, roofing, windows and doors.

The contractor will also replace the heating and cooling system for the all-electric building.

The Interpretive Center, which has been closed since November 2020 due to the pandemic — work started in October 2021 to remove exhibits and other items in preparation for the project — will remain closed during the remodeling.

The work is slated to be finished in the spring of 2023, but the Center will stay closed for several more months while exhibits and fixtures are reinstalled.

That's a shorter duration than BLM originally expected, said Larisa Bogardus, public affairs officer for the BLM's Vale District.

Initially the agency expected the remodeling would take more than 2 years.

The impetus for the project was a nationwide survey comparing the energy efficiency of BLM buildings, Bogardus said in 2021.

That survey, which included an inspection of the Interpretive Center in May 2018, earned the Center the "dubious distinction" of being the agency's least efficient building, Bogardus said.

Among the findings is that the Center's "Energy Use Intensity" — a measure of its inefficiency — was 170 kilo-British Thermal Units per square foot. The average for BLM facilities is 84, according to the survey.

The Center when operating had a monthly power bill averaging about \$10,000.

The remodel is estimated to reduce the Center's energy use by 73%, according to a press release from the Vale District.

"We want to be good stewards of our natural resources," said Vale District Manager Wayne Monger, whose office oversees the center. "This design utilizes high thermal insulation value materials and high efficiency heating and cooling technology to counter summer and winter energy demands of the site."

Approximately 16% of the project is funded through the Great American Outdoors Act, which allocates up to \$1.9 billion annually for maintenance and improvements to critical facilities and infrastructure in national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and Tribal schools.

During the extended closure, a new exhibit at the Baker Heritage Museum in Baker City, scheduled to open in May 2022, will serve as an Oregon Trail Experience, with BLM park rangers on site to provide interpretive programs.

A series of living history demonstrations and other events will take place across Grove Street from the Heritage Museum at Geiser-Pollman Park.

"We recognize the important role the center plays in telling the history of Eastern Oregon and the settlement of the Pacific Northwest," Monger said.

Although the Center itself will remain closed, the access road will be open to allow visitors to get to the network of paved and unpaved trails on Flagstaff Hill, which lead to Oregon Trail ruts.

For more information and to learn more about the Oregon Trail, visit oregontrail.blm.gov or call 541-523-1843.