

Sue Naumes: A lifelong love of fruit

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

MEDFORD, Ore. — Inside a southern Oregon farmhouse, there are pears everywhere: a giant, pear-shaped ceiling light, pear-print wallpaper and a den dedicated to vintage pear labels.

This Medford home belongs to Sue Naumes, 72, a retired grower who helped manage one of the West's largest pear companies, Naumes Inc., for decades. The company was co-founded by her father, Joe Naumes, in 1946.

"Sue's been hugely involved in the ag community. She really only got out of the business because she had four hip replacements, and walking over dirt clods in orchards got too tough," said Mike Naumes, Sue's brother.

Sue Naumes represents something true of many



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press
Sue Naumes flips through one of her binders of original fruit labels. Naumes has bookshelves filled with dozens of binders.

farmers: Even when retirement begins, the love of agriculture doesn't end.

Naumes has served on numerous boards and committees including the Medford Irrigation District Board, Rogue Basin Water Users Council Board, Carpenter Foundation, Walker Advisory Committee and

Rotary Foundation.

Naumes' lifelong love of farming is also evident in her hobby: collecting vintage fruit labels, some worth thousands of dollars.

Naumes recalls "grubbing around trees" starting at five years old, but she didn't always plan to be a farmer.

She studied political sci-



One of Naumes' most treasured labels

ence at Santa Clara University, completed law school at Willamette University and passed the bar. But the law didn't have her heart.

"So I came back to the family business. It was something I always loved," she said.

In her mid-20s, she jumped into management at Naumes Inc. The next few decades, Naumes managed crews of 400 to 500 people at a time in orchards, packinghouses and juice concentrate plants.

Her brother, Mike, said she was the first woman in many of those positions — including first female president of the Oregon State Horticultural Society.

"I loved it all," she said. She said she enjoyed problem-solving, working outside, the variety and the people.

Then her hip problems caught up with her, forcing her to retire in her late 50s.

But that didn't squelch Naumes' passion for farming. Her den, filled with original fruit labels, is evidence of this.

Naumes recalls that when she was little, her dad took her to a packinghouse where machines painted labels directly onto fruit boxes. Decades later, she met a packinghouse manager who collected apple labels, further piquing her interest.

"I got bit by the bug," she said.

Naumes has now col-

lected some 6,000 pear and apple labels. Her favorites, she says, are early 20th-century first edition designs. Many are stone lithographs.

Naumes trades labels with the 30-some other collectors in the West; she once traded around 100 labels in exchange for one.

"When I got some of those rare labels I'd been wanting a long time, I felt like: 'I've arrived. I can say I'm a real collector,'" she said, smiling.

Naumes said she loves "the hunt" — driving thousands of miles, stopping at orchards, knocking on farmers' doors and asking if she can roo around in their barns for old labels. She said she has made friends with many growers.

Naumes recently donated her apple label collection to Santa Clara University, but she keeps her pear collection and uses the labels to educate the community about the history of farming.

More work set on Owyhee Reservoir 'glory hole'

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Concrete work on the Owyhee Reservoir's spillway-regulating ring gate, or "glory hole," is expected to enter its second phase in late 2021.

A concrete structure near southeastern Oregon's Owyhee Dam houses a steel ring 60 feet in diameter and weighing more than a ton. Differential valves are used to float or sink the ring. Sinking it increases outflows through three release points in the dam.

The system's seals were refurbished about a decade ago.

"We learned some things we probably can improve on next time," Owyhee Irrigation District Project Manager Jay Chamberlin said.

The nearly 89-year-old district supplies irrigation water to more than 167,000 acres near Adrian, Nyssa and Ontario, Ore. Phased improvements to the ring gate housing's exterior concrete will increase durability and better protect the internal structure.

Crews from mid-October to mid-December built access infrastructure, restored and added reinforcement bars, and dismantled and replaced a roughly 40-foot section of concrete crest around the ring gate. Chamberlin said the district expects



Bureau of Reclamation
The "glory hole" at the Owyhee Reservoir funnels excess water into the spillway and into the river below the dam.

costs, still being tallied, to be between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

He said the project took about three times longer than expected due to challenging prep work, weather delays and coronavirus-related worker shortages. Most of the concrete was placed and finished by hand because access was difficult.

"The first (phase) was very difficult," Chamberlin said. "It went longer than anticipated because of the

unknowns. But the finished product, we were very pleased with."

He said work on the second phase is expected to start around Nov. 1, depending on weather and reservoir levels. Five phases are planned.

Chamberlin said the district plans to buy a concrete pump, concrete saw and other equipment to increase efficiency and, ideally, improve a longer segment in 2021. A total cost of less than \$50,000 is anticipated.

New York judge blocks Trump pesticide rule

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A federal judge in New York City has resurrected an Obama administration rule requiring farmers to enforce a 100-foot halo around pesticide applications, even if the halo extends outside the farm.

U.S. District Judge Lewis Liman ruled Dec. 29 that the Trump administration didn't satisfactorily explain why it discarded the Obama rule in favor of restricted areas that end at a farm's boundary.

Liman issued a temporary restraining order barring the Trump rule from taking effect until at least Jan. 12. The rule could expose farmworkers to drifting pesticides, he said in a written opinion.

"The harm is neither remote nor speculative. Its imminence is detailed in the studies currently before the court," wrote Liman, who was appointed to the bench for the Southern District of New

York by Trump.

The Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing the order, an agency spokeswoman said Wednesday.

The federal Worker Protection Standard prohibits pesticides from drifting and contacting people. The Obama EPA in 2015 created "pesticide exclusion zones," finding the "no-contact" rule wasn't enough.

The Trump EPA said the exclusion zones were unworkable because farmers can't control property they don't own. The new exclusion zones, confined to a farmer's land, were due to take effect Dec. 29.

A coalition of farmworker advocates and five states, including California, have filed separate suits in New York, claiming the EPA's reasons for reversing its policy were too flimsy.

In issuing the temporary restraining order, Liman said the farmworker groups are likely to win the suit.

The Obama EPA had cited pesticide-exposure studies to support its

position that exclusion zones were needed to buttress the no-contact rule.

Liman said White House administrations can change policies, but that the Trump EPA failed to provide a reasonable explanation for why the studies cited by the Obama EPA no longer applied.

Liman set a hearing for Jan. 8 on whether to grant a preliminary injunction against the Trump rule.

Liman issued his ruling in the suit filed by nine farmworker organizations, including Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, commonly known as PCUN and based in Woodburn, Ore.

New York, Minnesota, Illinois and Maryland joined California in the states' suit.

Farm groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, supported the Trump exclusion zone rule.

The EPA rule sets minimal federal standards. States can adopt stricter standards.



EO Media Group File
Combines harvest soft white wheat in a field north of Helix, Ore. Wheat prices have increased in recent weeks.

Higher wheat prices likely have 'staying power,' market experts say

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Wheat prices have hit new highs for the past 12 months, and market analysts say they don't see a decline any time soon.

Soft white wheat is about \$6.65 per bushel, according to Northwest Grain Growers in Walla Walla, Wash. USDA shows wheat at \$6.40 per bushel on the Portland market.

"It's the highest we've been all year," said Byron Behne, Northwest Grain Growers senior grain merchant.

Futures prices are matching highs from the previous price rally, Behne said.

"To be perfectly honest, I'm as surprised as anybody," said Darin Newsom, market analyst in Omaha, Neb. "I have no idea why. Demand isn't great. Stocks-to-use is down from previous years but not dramatically tight."

Newsom originally thought it could be a brief spike due to higher trade volumes, but he now says it has "staying power" and is building.

"There's something going on fundamentally, particularly in the old crop market right now, that's pushing this market higher," he said.

It's difficult to determine any one reason for the higher

prices, Behne said. It could just be the end of the year, concerns about the condition of the Russian wheat crop or expected purchases by China later in the spring, he said.

"I certainly wasn't expecting this after we had the huge crop of white wheat in the Northwest this year," Behne said.

Drought in Russia and China buying more U.S. wheat after drastically reducing its purchases of wheat from Australia "flipped the landscape," he said.

Newsom attributes part of the rise to the weakening of the U.S. dollar, which is at its lowest level since April 2019.

The U.S. dollar is currently equal to 103.26 Japanese yen. Over the past year, it has ranged from 101.19 to 112.23 yen.

The dollar is equal to .81 euros. In the last year, it was as high as 0.94 euros.

It is equal to .73 British pounds. In the last year, it was as high as 0.88 pounds.

During harvest, wheat prices were about \$4.50 per bushel, said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission. Generally, farmers consider roughly \$6 per bushel to be profitable, he said.

The \$2 increase was a "welcome sign," Squires said.

Animal health officials watch for bird flu

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Bird flu outbreaks this winter in Asia and Europe resemble the global spread of avian influenza just before the disease appeared in Washington state six years ago, the harbinger of a disaster that killed 50 million chickens and turkeys in the U.S.

Washington State Assistant Veterinarian Amber Itle said that poultry owners should protect their flocks from wild birds and report sick birds so they can be tested.

"We're seeing (worldwide) cases that very much match what we saw" in 2014, she said. "We want to be more vigilant this year."

Waterfowl have the potential to spread avian influenza to Asia,

Europe and the Americas as they migrate south. The virus is deadly to poultry and can in rare cases be transmitted to humans.

Bird flu outbreaks were reported in 15 European countries between mid-November and early December, according to the World Organization for Animal Health. Europe had no new or ongoing bird flu cases at this time last year.

The pace of European outbreaks has picked up in the past two weeks, with new cases reported in the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Russia and the Ukraine.

Iran, Japan, South Korea and Laos also have reported recent outbreaks. New cases last December were confined to Africa and Taiwan.

World health officials trace the current European wave of bird flu to an outbreak in Russia in August. In response to the virus spreading in Europe, the USDA has tested 1,850 wild birds in 16 Atlantic flyway



Don Jenkins/Capital Press
Migratory waterfowl can spread avian influenza. Experts say the number and scope of outbreaks in Europe and Asia resemble conditions that preceded the virus sweeping through the U.S. in 2014-15.

states since October, but has found no case of highly pathogenic avian influenza, a USDA spokesman said Wednesday. Over the previous year, USDA sampled 3,670 wild birds in 13 Atlantic states, plus Idaho, Alaska and North Dakota, but found no bird

flu, the spokesman said.

In 2014, numerous outbreaks in Europe and Asia preceded bird flu infecting commercial chicken barns in British Columbia. Two weeks later, the virus appeared in wild birds in Whatcom County in northwest

Washington.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is watching for avian influenza in wild birds, a department spokeswoman said Wednesday.

Wild birds from a lake in Whatcom County were recently tested, but none were infected with the virus, she said.

The USDA in 2015 boasted that the U.S. had the best biosecurity measures in the world, but the bird flu outbreak revealed flaws. Avian influenza swept through commercial barns, especially in the Midwest. The USDA paid out about \$850 million to disinfect farms and indemnify producers for euthanized poultry.

The USDA now requires large poultry farms to adopt a government-approved biosecurity plan to qualify for compensation. States check off on the plans. Itle said every poultry producer in Washington has one.