

Longtime Valley resident recovers from blaze

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IVN Contributing Writer

During a summer vacation to Italy Aug. 17, popular community organizer and longtime resident of the Illinois Valley Maureen “Mo” Connolly lost her home near the 7600 block of Caves Highway to a house fire.

“So when the fire happened I was in Sicily,” Connolly calmly said, who received the news via phone call from the person who’d been staying at her house while she was away. Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) Chief Dennis Hoke had also notified her via text message.

Early on a Thursday morning, IVFD personnel along with Rural Metro Fire Department and Oregon

Department of Forestry responded to the structure fire. According to Connolly, the house-sitters were able to get themselves and the animals to safety before the fire completely took over.

The cause of the fire remains undetermined; however, the fire investigator from Foremost Insurance believes it to be electrical.

Friends and family from all over the Valley have since offered to help in any way they can in an effort to repay the kindness and generosity Connolly has consistently shown in the community.

“When I was in Italy, I was totally overwhelmed by the community response which was more than I could have ever imagined,” Connolly said. “People were reaching out to help. Even though I lost

my house, I feel like I’ve been more blessed than cursed by loss.”

Connolly has been tied to Italy through lifelong friends for years, traveling from Castellammare del Golfo, or “Sea Fortress on the Gulf” down in Sicily all the way up to Alba in Italy’s northern Piedmont region. An Italian newspaper, *Gazzetta D’Alba*, even did a feature about Connolly’s loss, describing her as a “great friend of Alba and of the Albes.”

Upon her return to the United States, Connolly first reunited with her daughters, Cathy Scott and Susan Connolly at Scott’s Yreka home before traveling home to Cave Junction on Labor Day weekend to survey the damages.

“We looked around the property because the real estate lady

hadn’t gotten there yet,” said Connolly, who remarkably, is in good spirits. “And then we went to the beer garden.”

Fortunately for the family, Connolly’s grandson Elliott Scott – a firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service and member of a Helitack Crew – caught wind of the news and rushed to the scene on his day off. Knowing his great-grandmother’s hope chest containing generations of family photos was still among the wreckage, he put on his gear and went inside to retrieve it.

“The outside looked like a toasted marshmallow,” said Connolly, “but miraculously the photos remained intact.”

Connolly is a retired professional nurse who spends her free time facilitating growth and im-

provement here in the Valley. She’s played pivotal roles in organizing and fundraising for the I.V. Senior Thrift Store, Little League, the Pregnancy Center and the skate park located at Jubilee Park.

Connolly is currently staying at the Country Hills Resort, not far from the ashes of her old home. Regarding the next chapter in her life, she remarked: “How could I possibly go anywhere else with the response I got?”

Liz McCloud, a friend and neighbor to Connolly, set up a relief fund at <https://www.youcaring.com/> where donations are currently being accepted. Interested donors can simply search Maureen Connolly’s name on that site to make a contribution.

The Archive Zone: by Hillary Mohr from the Illinois Valley News archives

This week we flip the pages of time to May 1999. Seniors were preparing to graduate, while the rest of the children were just waiting for summer vacation. The JOINT task force was in full force with the fight against marijuana, and a local “runner” was making his first appearances in our Police Blotter. Grab something cold to drink, because it’s a hot one in this week’s Archive Zone.

Three arrested in Selma JOINT raid. Three people were arrested after JOINT officers and Josephine County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Sheriff Geiger executed a search warrant on Crooks Creek Road in Selma Monday, May 10, at approximately 8:15 a.m. Officers

seized approximately 3 ounces of packaged marijuana at the location, as well as evidence of a previous marijuana grow. Mark Tomlinson, 40, was charged with manufacture, delivering and possession of marijuana, and James F. McLelland, 43, was charged with manufacture and possession of marijuana grow. Both men live at the location. Melissa Pippen, 29, arrived at the location and was arrested under a felony warrant for criminal mischief in the first degree. All three were lodged at Josephine County Jail.

*Kaleb John Barte, 29, was taken on a peace officer mental hold at Laurel Road and Caves Hwy. after several reports of a man

throwing up and jumping in front of moving vehicles near Laurel Road and Hwy. 199. He was transported to Three Rivers Dimmick Hospital.

*A disorderly hitchhiker was reported.

*Approximately 15 people were reported fighting in the area of Speedy Mart. A stick may have been involved.

JOINT takes pot plants at GP house. A man and a woman were contacted at 304 N.E “E” Street in Grants Pass by JOINT officers in regard to marijuana being grown indoors at that location. The couple gave officers consent to enter their residence and remove the marijuana being cultivated. Eighteen green growing

marijuana plants ranging in size from 4 inches to 3 feet were seized. Both subjects were living at the residence, and charges will be referred to the Josephine County District Attorney’s Office.

*Public Assist was requested at an adult foster home in the 17000 block of Hwy. 199 after an 83-year-old woman threatened to leave the residence.

*A man was reported running in and out of traffic in front of Selma Select Market.


*A woman reported that a car wash in Cave Junction was too noisy, and requested the owners close the doors.

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