



Have a safe Memorial Day  
 Monday, May 30

# Record-Courier

*Intensely local news*

Photo by M.J. Guyer

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Positively Baker County

Est. Haines 1901 ~ Haines, Baker County, Oregon

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## TORRENT SWEEPS AWAY BAKER COUNTY TOWN

By Gary Dielman



Submitted graphic

Ninety-nine years ago, the residents of Rock Creek heard water thundering down on the town but thankfully had time to flee to the hills, when the Killamaque Dam/Reservoir in the Elkhorns burst sweeping away much of the little town of Rock Creek, population 100. Flood waters flowed as far as Haines.

(The title and much of the information in this article is from the June 29, 1917, issue of the *Oregonian* newspaper, supplemented by the June 30, 1917, issue of the *Baker City Herald*.)

In the path of the torrent was the Eastern Oregon Power Company's hydro-electric facility on Rock Creek, a plant that still exists today, although no longer generating electricity. The plant itself suffered little damage, but the flume and transmission lines were demolished. Electricity to Haines and Baker was interrupted, including knocking out telegraph and telephone service. Baker's power was cut off from 8:30 a.m. until noon, when an auxiliary steam plant was put into service.

Initial reports estimated the wall of water at thirty feet high containing about 12,000,000 gallons that came roaring down Rock Creek Canyon carrying huge trees and boulders out onto the valley floor. No lives were lost, but for a while a fisherman was feared drowned but later accounted for. Fence lines, livestock, See **KILLAMAQUE** on page 8

## Local Citizens Launch Effort to Make Baker County Commissioners Nonpartisan Positions

Citing voter disgust over political rhetoric and wanting every voice to count in Baker County primary elections, three local citizens have successfully filed a ballot initiative with the State of Oregon to change the three Baker County Commissioners from Partisan to Nonpartisan positions. The Initiative, 2016-1, must now secure 427 registered Baker County voters' signatures no later than August 10th to be placed on the ballot in November.

Kate Rohner (Republican), Michelle Kaseberg (Republican) and Mike Rudi (Nonaffiliated) have teamed up to organize the effort. "Kick Politics Out of Baker County's Business" serves as the official campaign name for the group's effort.

Rohner, who worked on a similar ballot measure in 2015 says she thinks Baker County voters are really ready for the change this time. "So many people have approached me saying they wanted to see it back on the ballot. They want every voice to be heard in Commission elections - not just those of one party."

Under Baker County's current system, voters can only vote in the primary election for the candidates in their registered political party. The Initiative seeks to let voters cast a vote for any County Commission candidate on the ballot without regard to their political affiliation.

"Voters are sick and tired of jumping to the next just to have a voice in Baker County Commission races," said Kaseberg. "It is just ridiculous. They are tired of the games."

Mike Rudi, the group's nonaffiliated member knows this all too well. "It is insane that every campaign season so many Baker County voters have to switch their registration just to take part in our local government. We should be focusing on running the business of Baker County - not political agendas."

Today, 27 Oregon Counties elect their Commissioners on a nonpartisan ballot. Grant, Wallowa and Union Counties are included in that list.

Contacts: Kate Rohner (541) 523-3785, Michelle Kaseberg, (541) 523-7790, Mike Rudi, (541) 523-4471

## A Dear Friend of My Mother's

Helen Belle Wirth, 88, of Baker City, passed away at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City on May 18, 2016. The funeral service was held Tuesday, May 24, 2016 at the First Lutheran Church and was officiated by Pastor Ian Wolfe.



Helen was born in Baker on February 15, 1928 to Marjorie Roxanne (McConnell) Sipp and William Charles Sipp. She graduated from Baker High School in 1947. She received training through Pacific Northwest Bell and worked for 20 years as a telephone operator. She also worked as a home health secretary for St. Elizabeth Hospital.

On March 4, 1950, Helen married Joseph Harold Wirth, Jr. in Klamath Falls. They were married 42 years before his passing on December 11, 1992.

Reading, music, camping, working on crossword puzzles, visiting with friends, and loving animals are a few of the things Helen enjoyed.

She was a member of the First Lutheran Church, Lydia Circle, and the VFW Auxiliary. During high school, she was involved in a variety of organizations.

She had many accomplishments through her life, but her proudest were raising her three children, spending time with her two grandchildren, and rescuing and adopting numerous animals.

Helen is survived by her daughter Linda Wirth Haynes of Baker City, daughter Christie Wirth Zerling of Garibaldi, Ore., and son Karl Wirth of Baker City; grandson Adam Wirth of Baker City and granddaughter Victoria Wirth Tarter of St. George, Utah. She is also survived by numerous and dearly loved in-laws.

Helen is preceded in death by her husband Joseph Harold Jr. and her siblings.

Memorial contributions may be made to Best Friends of Baker through Gray's West & Company, 1500 Dewey Ave., in Baker City, OR 97814.

To light a candle in memory of Helen, please visit: www.graywestco.com.

**Editor's Note:** Following is a letter written by Victoria (Tori) Wirth Tarter about her grandma, Helen Wirth.

I was once told that there was no relationship in the world that could compare with that of a grandparent and their grandchild. Well then, I can't help but think that I am only one of the two luckiest people in the world.

Grandma was always there. When we hurt, when we were sick, when we were graduating (even from kindergarten), when we had embarrassing school plays and concerts, when we lost a pet or when we lost a game, she was there.

She always served us tomato soup and crackers and showed me how to plant flowers.

Grandma gave the best hugs, and she always had Kleenex and Mentos in her pockets. She made the most amazing sweet potatoes you will ever have in your life, she always looked nice, and above all, she loved us truly and unconditionally.

She was one of the kindest people, and the most wonderful friend--to everyone. She loved to visit with you. Just one-on-one to spend time. She didn't ask how we were to pass the time, but out of sincere interest and care. She never judged, and you could be absolutely sure that anything you shared with grandma would never be repeated.

There was one particular conversation that I had with Grandma when I was about 17 years old, that I will never forget. It's a memory I often turn to on particularly bad days.

I had been busy with extra-curricular activities in school, and my days of being baby-sat by grandma were long over, so grandma and I decided that we would make time to spend together by having lunch periodically. So, during my lunch period, I would pick up some sandwiches or coffee or ice cream (or all of the above), and I would take it to her house on Clarke Street.

See WIRTH on page 4

MAY 26 2016

Events

### Memorial Day Concert

The Baker Community Orchestra will be presenting a Memorial Day Concert, Monday, May 30, 3 p.m. at the the Powder River Pavilion in Geiser-Pollman Park in Baker City. The Orchestra will be saluting those who have served our country.

### Meet the Pioneers!

Saturday and Sunday May 28 and 29, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day, interpreters will demonstrate skills such as quilting, black powder shooting, wheelwright, and dutch oven cooking at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City

### Baker High School Honors and Awards Night

will be held Wednesday, June 1, at 7 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Graduation will be Sunday, June 5, at 2 p.m. Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

## Baker City Native Dan Brooks Leads Duke Blue Devil Girls Golf Program to Championship Heights

Baker City native, Dan Brooks, son of Howard and Colleen Brooks, is in Eugene this week trying to capture a record-setting 7th NCAA Championship with his Duke Blue Devil's women's golf team. Along with this impressive number of national titles, Brooks has guided his Blue Devil teams to 18 ACC Championships and 122 team victories, the most of any women's golf coach in Division I history. His accomplishments as a golf coach are nothing short of remarkable. Dan, a Baker High School and Oregon State graduate, is slated to be inducted into the Duke Athletics Hall of Fame later this year.

On Monday, Duke Freshman Virginia Elena Carta secured the women's NCAA Championship with a record setting performance. At the time of press, the Blue Devils women's team had advanced to the semi-final round by defeating the USC Trojans. They will face the Stanford Cardinals.

See **GOLF** on page 12

## Senior Meal Menu sponsored by OTEC



**May 26**  
 Stuffed Bell Peppers,  
 Rice Pilaf, Mixed  
 Vegetables, Green  
 Salad Roll,  
 Cinnamon Roll  
*Entrée Sponsor*  
 Terrie Evarts

**May 27**  
 Baked Ham,  
 Yams, Broccoli,  
 Blend Veg. Three-  
 bean Salad, Roll,  
 Bread Pudding  
*Entrée Sponsor*  
 Lew Bros. Tires

**May 30**  
**CLOSED**  
 In observance  
 of Memorial Day

**May 31**  
 Chicken Fried  
 Chicken  
 Potatoes w/Gravy  
 Baby Carrots Beet  
 & Onion Salad Roll,  
 Pudding  
*Entrée Sponsor*  
 Settler's Park

**Senior & Volunteer  
 Suggested  
 Donation \$4.00**  
**Non-Senior  
 Charge \$ 6.25**  
**Under 12  
 Charge \$3.50**

