

North Powder News

By Vickie Christensen



This week dice and card games are afoot in North Powder.

On June 15th, Chris Aldridge hosted the Bunco gathering in her home. June Bauck took first place, Bev Bigler placed second, and Susanne Watson was low. The hostess gifts were won by Suzie DeHaas and Lisa Watson. The most Buncos went to Cindy Weight. Subs were many, including Chris's husband, Jim.

Joyce Lawyer hosted the Pinochle party on Thursday, June 16th, at the Wolf Creek Grange. Judy Moe was first, June Bauck took second, Joyce Lawyer placed low. The Pinochle prizes were awarded to Sandy Wood and Eleanor Blankenship. Subs were Marie Johnson, Judy Moe, June Bauck and Susie Michaels.

The North Powder City Library held a planning workshop. Efforts are underway to create a more unified library district within the Union County library system. Discussions are moving forward on what works for each library. The library is also looking for grants to help build a new facility. Our library is working hard and wants to continue to be a great asset in our community.

Be safe out there. Even though our nights have been cool, things are going to heat up and will dry out. We can do a lot with common sense to avoid fires this summer.

It is a pleasure to bring you The North Powder Buzz.

Happy Trails.

WALDEN continued from page 4

"This makes four years in a row. It has the support of my Oregon colleagues, Representative Defazio and Schrader. It is time for the Senate to act."

The bill is designed to increase timber harvest and revenue for the local counties, and it directs BLM to revise their flawed Resource Management Plan. He also expressed an interest in making sure the federal government was held accountable when it came to replanting practices, and to require environmental groups to "put some financial skin in the game" when it came to their legally challenging federal rulings.

Walden echoed Wyden's concerns expressed several weeks ago regarding the Forest Service's practice of "borrowing" money from their prevention budgets to put fires

out. According to Walden, the measure allows the Forest Service to request FEMA disaster funds for fire suppression without continually having to rob their internal fire prevention accounts.

Congressman Walden briefly touched on the political scene in Washington, D.C., as it related to the Presidential campaign.

"All the national press wants to talk about is Donald Trump," stated Walden. "Last week the Republican Leadership rolled out a Six Point Plan for America—a plan that we hope will address many of the same issues we have been talking about here. The first six questions were: Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump and Trump."

The audience chuckled and Congressman Walden acknowledged it will be an interesting summer.

Oregon Department of Transportation Busy in Eastern Oregon: Be Aware

Highway construction season has begun and several projects are currently underway. Eastern Oregon travelers can expect to see orange traffic cones and construction workers at several dozen work sites throughout the year along Interstate 84 and secondary state highways. ODOT reminds motorists to slow down, pay extra attention and be prepared for flaggers and traffic pattern changes when they see orange cones and construction signs. Please pay attention to avoid paying a fine, or being involved in a crash.

Baker / Union Area

I-84 Old Oregon Trail Highway – Bridge deck repairs at Union interchange, Exit 265, MP 265.9. Lane closures, reduced speeds, minor delays. Work is ongoing. Completion: 8/2016

I-84 Old Oregon Trail Highway – Bridge rail upgrades on three structures near North Powder, MP 285.6–289.2 Eastbound and westbound lane closures, reduced speeds, minor delays. Work is ongoing. Completion: 9/2016

I-84 Old Oregon Trail Highway – Variable Speed Limit Sign installation between Baker City and La Grande, various sites adjacent to freeway shoulders, MP 277.1–307.1. Shoulder and lane closures, minor delays. Work is ongoing. Completion: 10/2016

U.S. 26 John Day Highway – Pavement chip seal between Austin Junction and Grant Co. line, MP 190.4–199.4. Lane closures, reduced speeds, day/nighttime flaggers, pilot cars, loose rock on the roadway, delays up to 20 minutes. Work expected to start July 25 and take about 3 days. Completion: 8/2016

U.S. 26 John Day Highway – Rock fall correction work near Camp Creek, MP 220–220.5. Possible minor delays/minimal impacts, work is now mostly complete. Completion: 7/2016

U.S. 30 La Grande - Baker Highway. Intersection improvements and signal installation at U.S. 30 and McAlister Road (RR xing) in La Grande area, MP 4.95. Lane closures, flaggers, delays up to 20 minutes. RR crossing at McAlister will be closed for RR work June 20-24. Work is ongoing. Completion: 10/2016

OR 237 La Grande - Baker Highway - Pavement overlay through Pyle's Canyon south of Union, MP 17.4-20.5. Flaggers, pilot cars, up to 20 minute delays. Work expected to start late June, early July and be completed by July 31. Complete 8/2016

Reasons Why Coins Are Left On Military Tombstones

Story courtesy Hells Canyon Journal



During the summer months and especially on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Veteran's Day, our local cemeteries have a lot of visitors from out of the area who come home to visit family. There are a lot of people who like to come back and retrace their ancestors footsteps and cemeteries are a good place to gather information. Sometimes without intent to cause harm, memorabilia and plants are taken. Knowing why there are tributes at gravesites might offer a little insight and cause one to pause before even touching what has been left by loved ones.

In any cemetery, there are many signs of tribute, honor and love. Flowers and flags, crosses and pictures. It's not a surprise to find any number of memoirs such as a small toy or a favorite team mascot. The memorabilia might make you wonder what the rest of the story is. When you see coins on a veteran's tombstone, you won't know who left the coin, but you can know without a doubt, what their connection was to that soldier.

The tradition of leaving coins on the tombstones of fallen soldiers can be traced back as far as the Roman Empire. Today, the meaning is specific and they are placed as an unwavering sign of respect and honor to those who lost their lives while serving their country. The coins

serve as a message to the families, of these soldiers that someone stopped to pay their respects, what their relationship to the soldier was and as a sign of caring.

A penny is left as a message to the family that someone has visited and a nickel means that the person who has visited was in boot camp with their loved one. A dime means that the two served together in some capacity and a quarter is a message to the family that the visitor was with their soldier, when he/she was killed.

Tradition is that the money left at gravesites in state and national cemeteries is eventually collected and put into a fund that helps to maintain the cemetery and also help fund burial costs for soldiers whose family needed assistance.

In the United States, the tradition of leaving coins was resurrected during the Vietnam War. Because of the dramatic divide in America regarding this war, leaving a coin was an easier way for a soldier to communicate with a deceased soldier's family that the grave had been visited and eliminated the risk of getting into a potentially uncomfortable argument over war politics. Some veterans would leave a handful of coins as a 'down payment' to buy their fallen comrade a beer or play a hand of cards, when they were reunited.

Retired Correctional Officer Wildland Firefighter Jim Hunter

Story / photo courtesy Hells Canyon Journal

Jim Hunter of New Bridge worked for the State of Oregon as a Correctional Officer for 27 years. He took pride in his work and the effects that his efforts had on those he worked for and also those he was held accountable for. Starting in 1996 and for the next 14 of those 27 years, Jim supervised wildland firefighting work crews out of the Powder River Correctional Facility in Baker City. Prior to that, Jim had worked at the penitentiary in Salem.

It was Hunter's job to keep his crews well trained, ready to go and instilled with good work ethics. "The prisoners have to go through the same training any wildland firefighter would do. At first they did not volunteer. If they were on an outside work crew and had outside clearance, they could be put on a fire crew. Later, prisoners were required to put in an application and we'd interview each individual and then start the training process. At the height of the program, we had eight hand crews that could go out and also a kitchen crew. We'd get a call that they needed firefighters on a certain fire and it was our job to be ready to go," said Jim. "The first crew I took out was to fires in Hells Canyon. We actually spent 38 days on that fire. That summer we were in the institution twice and that's because after 21 days we were required to take a mandatory time off and then of course, we were out again on fire."

Jim said that a lot of men on the crews learned what work was and how to work, while in prison. He noted that most incoming prisoners do not know how to work and have no

training in anything. "We had to teach a lot of them how to use a shovel."

Prison crews were put through a comprehensive training but Jim noted that the real training came when they were out on the job. "Nothing trains you as fast, as being hands on in your work. They also learned a level of confidence in themselves and in each other that they had never known before. They were proud of their work and they really liked giving back to the community. In that aspect you see a difference in the person and hopefully they have learned enough skills so that they do not come back. So many people who come into prison are broken. You hope that you can build

them up enough and teach them enough that they can take care of themselves when they leave and have confidence to do it. Fighting fire creates a bond with each other. If they got into trouble even once, they didn't get to go out again. A lot of times if someone on a work crew started to act up, another guy would grab him and tell him to knock it off and that took care of any potential problems. They would look after each other. If someone got knocked off the crew he had to work hard to get his way back on but if the rest of the guys could not work with him and they didn't want him

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