

"People shopping at the mall didn't realize people were dying every day, and that bothered Chris."

— **Scott McEwen**, Author of "American Sniper"

A sniper's story

Heppner native's true-life tale of America's deadliest sharpshooter coming to big screen next week

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

"American Sniper" co-author Scott McEwen might not be where he is today without his Heppner roots.

His current world is far removed from his simple Eastern Oregon childhood: he writes *New York Times* best-sellers, makes guest appearances on "Fox and Friends" and is on a first-name basis with Clint Eastwood.

But it was his small-town, hunting-and-fishing background that cemented his friendship with Chris Kyle, the Navy SEAL who is considered the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history.

"We grew up in the same world, with the same values," McEwen said. "Even though his was in Texas and mine was in Eastern Oregon."

The two friends bonded over their shared rural background and interests, and the more stories McEwen heard from his drinking buddy, the more he was convinced that Kyle's story needed to be told to the wider world. Eventually McEwen teamed up with Kyle and author Jim DeFelice to write "American Sniper," published in 2012. It was McEwen's first book and it stayed on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 37 weeks.

On Friday the movie version of Kyle's autobiography, directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Bradley Cooper, will hit theaters in the U.S.

Tragically McEwen, who served as a consultant on the film, is promoting the movie without his friend. Kyle was killed in 2013 by a fellow ex-Marine at a shooting range in Texas.

McEwen said he is striving to help Kyle's message



Scott McEwen

In this image released by Warner Bros. Pictures, Bradley Cooper appears in a scene from "American Sniper."

live on without him. "I got to know him really well personally, and I could see how much trouble on a personal level he was having," McEwen said, noting how heavily Kyle's deployments weighed on him. "I could really feel it. People shopping at the mall didn't realize people were dying every day, and that bothered Chris."

He said Eastwood's movie adaptation of the book captured that, as well as the sacrifices made by servicemen and the families they leave behind. Even the trailer for the movie, which alternates between a suspense-building battlefield moment and flashbacks of Kyle's family life, captures his story.

"If they gave Academy Awards for trailers, that one would get one," McEwen said.

Eastwood and his team had input from a number of

people who were close to Kyle before his death, including Kevin "Dauber" Lacz, a fellow Navy SEAL who plays himself in the movie. McEwen said he would like to say his own input was highly valuable to the movie, but he doubted that was the case.

"Clint Eastwood is such a consummate professional as far as movies are concerned, it would be quite arrogant to think I brought much to the table," McEwen said. "It was just an honor to work with him."

Since co-authoring "American Sniper," McEwen has written a number of fictional books in a series called "Sniper Elite." He said a deal is in the works to turn that series into a major studio film as well.

McEwen never served in the military himself, but said he grew up with a healthy respect for the armed forces

thanks to his father, a decorated World War II pilot. That respect increased even more when he met Chris Kyle.

"I really became a patriot," he said.

McEwen said he returns to Heppner from time to time, where he still has friends and family (McEwen High School in Athena was named for his grandparents). He is hoping to make it home this year to do a book signing at Heppner's big St. Patrick's Day celebration. After all, he still has fond feelings for the community that helped shape who he is today.

"Because it was such a country, ranch(ing), smaller community, everyone really had a lot of respect for your word being your bond," he said. "And I've never forgotten that."

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

PENDLETON Who is Putin?

Russia's president: wise leader or antihero?

East Oregonian

Russian history professor Brigit Farley will attempt to decode Russian leader Vladimir Putin during Tuesday's Eastern Oregon Forum at Blue Mountain Community College.

Farley teaches Russian and European history at University of Washington's Tri-Cities campus and is a long-time observer of the Kremlin. At the forum, she will present "Deconstructing A Dictator: Who is Vladimir Putin and What Does He Want?"

Farley's interest in all things Soviet began at Pendleton High School where she learned to speak Russian. She later spent a semester at Leningrad State University (1981) and served as a guide in Moscow, Kiev, Rostov-on-Don and Tbilisi (1987-1988) with the United States Information Agency's traveling exhibit "Information USA."

Farley returned to Russia annually in the late 1990s and 2000s to research a book she is writing about a historic cathedral on Red Square. Her experiences, which include a frightening encounter with militant Putin supporters in Red Square, has informed her opinion of Putin and his often-turbulent government.

"He is an antihero of our time, an angry reactionary operating with great skill and popular support in a cool, ultramodern, digital world," Farley said.

Admission to the forum is \$6 at the door or is free for students. The event will be at 7 p.m. in Room 200 of the college's Science and Technology Building at 2411 N.W. Carden Ave.

The Eastern Oregon Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders of BMCC, the InterMountain Education Service District, the *East Oregonian*, the American Association of University Women and former United States Ambassador Harriet Isom.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.



Farley

Comments sought on removal of crossing near old hospital

PENDLETON — The Oregon Department of Transportation plans to remove a pedestrian crossing and traffic light on Southeast Court Avenue between 16th and 17th streets, adjacent to the old St. Anthony Hospital building.

Spokesman Tom Strandberg said the crossing, which runs in the middle of the block, was installed primarily for hospital access and is no longer needed now that St. Anthony has relocated and the old building is being demolished.

Push buttons to activate the red traffic lights have been disconnected since Dec. 6, and the signal changed to a continuous flashing yellow light.

ODOT has not received any complaints since the signal was deactivated, Strandberg said.

Prior to removal, the agency will hold a two-week public comment period beginning Monday, Jan. 12 to consider any concerns from residents. Community members can submit their comments to Strandberg by calling 541-963-1330 or email thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us.

To prevent the device from becoming damaged due to demolition work, the signal and signal arms extending over the roadway may be removed next week. But ODOT will wait to remove the bases and controls until after the comment period closes, Strandberg said.

HERMISTON

New councilor, but no road vacation on agenda

East Oregonian

Hermiston will get a new city councilor on Monday night.

Doug Smith will be sworn in during the council's first meeting of the new year along with Clara Beas Fitzgerald, who will be sworn in for a second time as she takes her official elected seat after filling the seat for a partial term.

More notable is what Monday's agenda lacks — an ordinance vacating a portion of West Ridgeway Avenue along Highway 395. Instead, the agenda notes an executive session "to consult with counsel ... with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed."

The proposal to add the south 15 feet of the 60-foot road to the property to the

south has stirred up controversy, including a threat by northern property owner Rhonda Sallee to sue if the city moves forward. At its Dec. 22 meeting the council directed staff to draw up an ordinance that would vacate the section of road anyway.

The agenda does contain a few new items, including an ordinance authorizing the city to accept a \$2 million

Community Development Block Grant to construct a new senior center.

The council will also be asked to authorize the city manager to enter into an agreement with Simplot regarding changes to the regional water system, and authorizing him to sign an agreement with the Oregon Department of Corrections for use of inmate work crews.

BRIEFLY

Grange to hold fundraiser dinner

PENDLETON — White Eagle Grange is adding a monthly fundraiser dinner to its twice-monthly all-you-can-eat breakfasts. The first dinner will be Saturday from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the grange hall, located on South Highway 395 between Pendleton and Pilot Rock. Subsequent monthly offerings will be on the second Saturday of each month.

Featured this month is chili with sides, including baked potato, cornbread, dinner roll, dessert and beverage. Cost to attend is \$7 per person, \$4 for ages 5-7 and free for kids under 4.

All proceeds from the monthly breakfasts and dinners support White Eagle Grange's community projects.

For more information, contact Gail Wilson at 541-276-3778 or email g.wilson@q.com

Chorale rehearsal moved to Sunday

PENDLETON — The Oregon East Symphony Chorale rehearsal originally scheduled for Monday at 7 p.m. has been moved to Sunday at 4 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 201 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton.

For more information, contact the OES office at 541-276-0320 or visit www.oregoneastsymphony.org



Local residents invited to comment on deactivation of OR 11 pedestrian crossing near old hospital site

The Oregon Department of Transportation plans to remove the traffic signal controlled pedestrian crossing along OR 11 (SE Court Avenue), located adjacent to the old hospital site between 16th Street and 17th Street. The signalized crossing that was installed primarily for hospital access is no longer needed, now that the facility has relocated across town and the old building is being demolished. ODOT has been working with the City of Pendleton and the property owner who are in agreement with the crossing removal, as there are no current plans for development of the site. The push buttons to activate the red traffic lights have been disconnected and covered up since December 6. The signal was also changed on that date to constantly flash a yellow light.

Prior to complete removal of the signal controls and mid-block crosswalk, ODOT will hold a two-week public comment period beginning January 12. Local residents and community members are encouraged to contact ODOT Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg at 541-963-1330 or by email at Thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us with concerns or questions about the planned permanent removal of this signalized pedestrian crossing. Comments will be collected through January 26. ODOT will make a final determination on this pedestrian signal after that date.

To prevent the traffic control device from becoming damaged during building demolition work in the area, the signal and signal arms extending over the roadway may be removed next week. ODOT will postpone complete removal of the signal bases and controls until after the two week public comment period has ended.

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrians who need to cross the highway in this area are encouraged to cross at street intersections, but will need to wait for all traffic to clear the area or make sure that all vehicles have come to a complete stop before crossing at non-signal controlled locations. ODOT also recommends pedestrians and bicyclist wear highly visible clothing when traveling on or adjacent to the roadway.

The family of **DAVID RUSSELL** would like to thank the Pilot Rock ambulance crew, the Pendleton ambulance crew & the Life Flight crew that came to our house on December 27, 2014.

We really appreciate all your efforts.

The Russell Family



*CenturyLink Internet Basics Program - Residential customers only who qualify based on meeting income level or program participation eligibility requirements, and requires remaining eligible for the entire offer period. First bill will include charges for the first full month of service billed in advance, prorated charges for service from the date of installation to bill date, and one-time charges and fees described above. Qualifying customers may keep this program for a maximum of 60 months after service activation provided customer still qualifies during that time. Listed High-Speed Internet rate of \$9.95/mo. applies for first 12 months of service (after which the rate reverts to \$14.95/mo. for the next 48 months of service), and requires a 12-month term agreement. Customer must either lease a modem/router from CenturyLink for an additional monthly charge or independently purchase a modem/router, and a one-time High-Speed Internet activation fee applies. A one-time professional installation charge (if selected by customer) and a one-time shipping and handling fee applies to customer's modem/router. General - Services not available everywhere. Have not have subscribed to CenturyLink Internet service within the last 90 days and are not a current CenturyLink customer. CenturyLink may change or cancel services or substitute similar services at its sole discretion without notice. Offer, plans, and stated rates are subject to change and may vary by service area. Deposit may be required. Additional restrictions apply. Terms and Conditions - All products and services listed are governed by tariffs, terms of service, or terms and conditions posted at centurylink.com. Taxes, Fees, and Surcharges - Applicable taxes, fees, and surcharges include a carrier Universal Service charge, carrier cost recovery surcharges, state and local fees that vary by area and certain in-state surcharges. Cost recovery fees are not taxes or government-required charges for use. Taxes, fees, and surcharges apply based on standard monthly, not promotional, rates.