

Umatilla man flees from justice in manslaughter case

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A Umatilla man facing manslaughter and more for a 2013 deadly crash may be out of the country.

Casimiro Armenta Mendoza, 23, was to appear March 25 in Umatilla County Circuit Court, Hermiston to change his plea in causing the death of Edgardo “Edgar” Carlos Cornejo. He never showed.



Mendoza

Drive outside Hermiston. Umatilla County sheriff’s deputy Mike Smith arrived at the scene, the documents state, where he found Mendoza wearing only black socks and “lying on his stomach approximately 25 feet from the west-bound shoulder.” The crash ejected Mendoza onto the ground.

Smith checked the overturned 2006 Toyota Scion and saw Cornejo, still in his seatbelt, where he died. Smith concluded the Honda crossed into the oncoming lane and smashed into the car Cornejo drove.

Mendoza recovered from his injuries and pleaded not guilty in late January 2014 to first- and second-degree manslaughter, five counts of assault with extreme indifference, and two counts of driving under the influence of intoxicants. Mendoza, who lived at 47 Elderberry Court, Umatilla, has been free on \$30,000 bail since then.

The case took a turn March 20, records show, when the defense asked for a hearing in five days so Mendoza could change his plea. When Mendoza skipped out, Circuit Judge Eva Temple issued a bench warrant for Mendoza’s arrest.

Until Mendoza is back in custody, that’s where the case remains.

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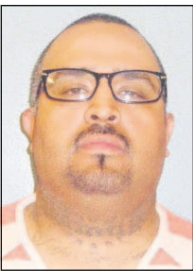
MILTON-FREEWATER

Man who threatened ex with bat is free on bail

East Oregonian

A Milton-Freewater man facing criminal charges after crashing his pickup into a former girlfriend’s car is out on bail.

Gerardo Rubio, 31, pleaded not guilty Monday, June 8, to coercion and first-degree criminal mischief, both felonies, and initiating a false police report, menacing, hit and run, and three counts of reckless endangerment, all misdemeanors, and violation of a restraining order. Umatilla County Circuit Court records also show Circuit Judge Christopher Brauer set Rubio’s jail bond at \$30,000. Rubio posted \$3,000 as bail Thursday to leave the county jail in Pendleton.



Rubio

that Rubio backed a black Chevrolet pickup into her gray Volkswagen Jetta while she was in the car, then followed her when she tried to get away. Rubio caught up with her in the area of Northeast Sixth Avenue and Robbins Street, according to her statements to police, then Rubio drove his truck nose to nose with her car, threatened her with a baseball bat and made her get into the pickup.

Court records identify the woman as Nicole Metcalfe, and in early May she obtained a restraining order against Rubio. According to Boedigheimer, two minor children also were in the pickup with Rubio at the time of the incident.

Milton-Freewater police that day also received a report at 9:02 p.m. the Jetta had been stolen. But Rubio, police reported, made that false report.

Rubio remains free on bail but under certain restrictions, court records show, including staying in Oregon except to go to Washington for medical purposes. His next court appearance is July 7 at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

HERMISTON

Donkey basketball a slam dunk

Firefighters compete in charity game for Desert Shrine Club

By SEAN HART
EO Media Group

Just before tipoff of a charity basketball game in Hermiston, the players mounted their donkeys, and the action began.

Hermiston and Umatilla firefighters faced off for the second year Saturday in a donkey basketball game benefiting the Desert Shrine Club at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo grounds.

Umatilla charged to an early lead, up 8 to 4 at the end of the first quarter, before Hermiston pulled ahead by a nose with a 10-8 lead at the half. In the second half, Umatilla was running away for the win until Hermiston made a final push in the home stretch. Hermiston could not get their asses in gear, however, and Umatilla claimed a 29-26 victory.



Sean Hart photo

Firefighters from Hermiston and Umatilla battled in a game of donkey basketball to raise funds for the Desert Shrine Club Saturday at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo grounds in Hermiston. The club supports the Shriners Hospital in Portland, which provides free care for children.

The firefighters said they enjoyed the game, but the real winner was the Desert Shrine Club.

Vice President Jim Leitch said the event in

Hermiston last year raised about \$2,400, and he expected a similar amount this year. He said the club supports the Shriners Hospital in Portland, which

provided free care to about 200 children from the area in each of the last two years.

“We work hard to get the money to keep that hospital operating,” he said.

PENDLETON

City to consider new contract with drone range management

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

After spending the past two months talking extensively about marijuana, the Pendleton City Council is turning to another frequent topic of discussion at its Tuesday meeting — the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range.

The drone test range located at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport will re-enter the conversation as the council considers a three-year contract with Peak 3 Technical Systems, the Anchorage-based company that manages the range for the city.

According a report from City Attorney Nancy Kerns, Peak 3’s management services will be paid through contracts with range customers and will in turn pay the city to lease the test range’s launch pads and remote launch sites.

The contract does not explicitly state how much each side will pay each other.

Either side can terminate the contract “if it doesn’t work out as we hope,” wrote Kerns.

The city originally hired Peak 3 in February 2014 to manage the development of the range for \$160,000. Another contract and several extensions followed in subsequent months.

With a new contract in hand, Peak 3 will be tasked with hiring a new range

manager after John Stevens left to become the chief operations officer of SOAR Oregon, a statewide not-for-profit focused on developing the UAS industry.

The range is currently being remotely managed by a Peak 3 employee from Palmer, Alaska.

Steve Chrisman, economic development director and airport manager, has said a few companies interested in testing their drones at the range have already received authorization from the Federal Aviation Administration.

While that would mean the UAS range could start accepting business, a fee structure between the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the three Oregon test ranges is still being negotiated. The university acts as an administrator to all test ranges in Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii.

Councilors will also consider a local improvement district with the people behind the Pendleton Heights housing development.

As a way to jump-start the Tutuilla Road housing development, the city fronted the costs of street and utility improvements.

Now that Pendleton Heights is complete, Pendleton Affordable Housing LLC, a company owned by developer Saj Jivanjee, will have to repay the city \$793,323 under the city’s proposal.

BRIEFLY

Wildfire breaks out in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

ENTERPRISE — It’s only the middle of June, but northeastern Oregon is already witnessing its first wildfire of significant size.

The Little Basin fire is burning off the Dug Bar road in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The fire was first reported at 10:30 a.m. Monday morning. On Monday afternoon it was 100 acres and burning in grass, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest stated in a news release.

The fire is being staffed by the Forest Service and the Oregon Department of Forestry. The fire is burning in steep terrain and there is a wind from the north pushing the fire in a southerly direction with some short northbound fire runs.

There were five fire engines, two helicopters, a hand crew and a single engine air tanker on the fire Monday. Both the Union and La Grande hot shot crews were en route as well as additional air resources. Resources are limited across the region as fire season is getting underway and not all firefighting resources are in active duty status.

BMCC to host apprenticeship council summit on Thursday

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College will welcome the Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council back to Pendleton for the first time in 15 years on Thursday at 10 a.m.

Brad Avakian, Oregon’s commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries, serves as the council’s chairperson. The council’s eight governor-appointed members have the authority to oversee apprenticeship committees, programs and policies around the state.

According to a press release from BMCC, an apprenticeship can be the first step to finding well-paying work in their chosen industry. Apprentices usually start off with half the salary of so-called journey workers. Journey workers have a higher chance of securing a position in the industry, becoming a supervisor or even going into business for themselves.

Apprenticeship committees facilitate apprenticeship programs, which are designed to give workers supervised on-the-job experience and classroom instruction in a particular field.

The meeting in Room 200 of the Science and Technology Building is open to the public. For more information, and to view an agenda, visit www.oregon.gov/boli/ATD.

Umatilla County Historical Society Presents:

A Tour of Farms & Historic Barns in the Butter Creek Area

Saturday, June 20th
9:30 AM – 4:00 PM

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Call Heritage Station Museum for registration information and details.
541-276-0012

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