

VIEWED:
‘Amphibious’
pitcher made a
big splash in June

Continued from 1A

to the city’s nuisance code. Walters planted his tongue in his cheek, applauded the city’s decision, and petitioned to add the smell of flatulence as well, complaining about a roommate who won’t give up “recreational farting.” The letter was published about six weeks before marijuana use became legal in Oregon and was a hot topic of conversation on national websites for about a week.

5 “Our View: Big
frogging mistake”
(June 9, editorial
board, 18,320 views)

— Fessing up to mistakes, whether intentional or not, is in a newspaper’s DNA. The *East Oregonian* prints a corrections box in each edition whether or not we have anything to correct. But when we referred to Oakland A’s pitcher Pat Venditte as “amphibious” instead of “ambidextrous” in a June 6 headline, the Internet had a good laugh. We wrote a editorial the following week explaining that, yeah, we goofed. Added attention from Oregon Public Broadcasting and Jim Romanesko made it our most read story in the month of June.

6 “Man commits
suicide in St.
Anthony parking
lot” (June 22, Phil
Wright, 15,300 views)

An elderly man fatally shot himself in the parking lot of the St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. It wasn’t an easy story to report, and the *East Oregonian* policy is generally to follow the wishes of the family in reporting names of suicide victims, but because of the public nature of the death it was read by many people.

7 “Hermiston
firefighter dies in
crash” (July 25,
Phil Wright, 14,500
views)

— Father, husband and volunteer Hermiston firefighter Jason Anteau died in an off-duty motorcycle crash in Pendleton, devastating the emergency response community. His fellow firefighters put together a spontaneous procession the night of his death to bring his body back to Hermiston, and hundreds attended his celebration of life ceremony the following week. It was one of three fatal motorcycle crashes in Umatilla and Morrow counties in July.

8 “Community comes
together to paint
neighbor’s house”
(July 18, Jonathan
Bach, 13,200 views)

— The feel-good story of the year captured the hearts and clicks of many, as many members of the Pendleton community came together to paint and do some minor repairs to Leonard and Dorothy Bull-ock’s home. The project itself benefited from the Internet, as a Facebook page started in the weeks prior drew support from people across the Northwest to volunteer to help.

9 “Father arrested
in death of
10-month-old
daughter” (May 30,
Phil Wright, 13,100 views)

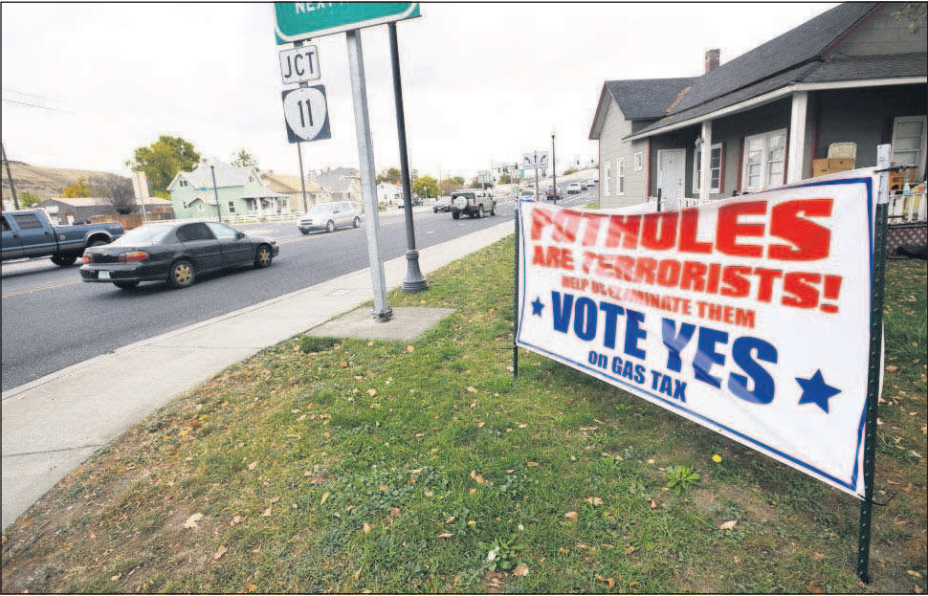
— An Irrigon infant girl died after suffering injuries at her home, and her father Travis Michael Martin is accused of a series of abuses that led to her death. Martin’s case was going to trial in February 2016 until his defense attorney, Robert Klahn of Pendleton, asked for more time during a Dec. 22 hearing. The court reset the trial for April 26-29.

10 “Millions of
Oregonians have
unclaimed money
waiting” (Sept. 4,
Jade McDowell, 13,000
views)

— At first glance the headline looks like a spam email or too-good-to-be-true TV offer, but reporter Jade McDowell turned a little known state agency into a helpful how-to guide. Oregon, like many other states, keeps a treasury of unclaimed utility deposits, inheritance payouts, stock dividends and other sources of cash. The state has about \$500 million in the account right now, and adds tens of millions every year. If you missed the article the first time around, check www.oregonup.com to see if untold riches await you.



3 Flames erupted from the roof of the old City Hall building in July in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



6 A banner claiming potholes are terrorists and promoting the gas tax on the November ballot sat in the yard of a home on Southeast Court Avenue and Ninth Street in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



8 BMCC President Cam Preus read the voting results for their bond measure off of the cell phone of BMCC Vice President of Public Relations Casey White-Zollman during an election-night party at BMCC in March. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



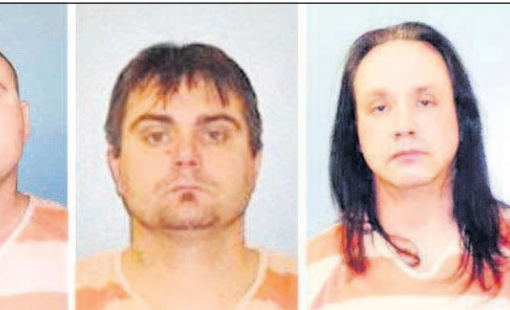
9 Chief Bryon Zumwalt (left) and Lt. Monty Toombs (right) are on leave pending the results of an Oregon Department of Justice investigation. Contributed photos



4 Construction of EOTEC began this summer south of Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



5 PGG closed its grain decision after reporting big losses in 2014. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



7 Jeremiah Jerome Mauer (left), Warren Browning (center) and Gregory Tinnell (right) are all serving time in prison for their criminal involvement in a white supremacist gang. Contributed photos



10 Oregon National Guard Chief Warrant Officer Mark Braeme talked about the RQ-7B Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle with Oregon Gov. Kate Brown at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton in March. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

2015: Increased competition, low wheat harvest hurt PGG

Continued from 1A

3 Old Pendleton
city hall burns

An explosion the morning of July 21 rocked downtown Pendleton and took the life of one man. Eduardo Quezada, 25, was on the second floor at the old Pendleton City Hall, 34 S.E. Dorion Ave., when the explosion happened. Others who tried to save him suffered minor injuries. Fire crews with Pendleton and surrounding agencies spent hours dumping water on the towers of flames that threatened to leap to adjacent roofs. Their work contained the blaze to the century-old building. An official statement on the cause came three days later: Quezada was creating flash powder for homemade — and illegal — fireworks. The *East Oregonian* in August paid for the full report on the fire from office of the state fire marshal, which has yet to be completed and delivered.

4 EOTEC begins
construction, fair
move delayed

Work on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center picked up during the first half of the year. Heather Cannell was hired on as business manager, a design for the event center was completed and G2 Construction was selected to construct the center. Good news came in July, when the Legislature approved an additional \$1.5 million for the project, and in September construction went vertical with the skeleton of the event center. A few days later the EOTEC board pulled together the project’s stakeholders, however, to tell them that there wasn’t the time or money to complete the facility the community envisioned in time for the 2016 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. The announcement kicked off a flurry of fundraising with an eye on a 2017 completion date. The city of Hermiston agreed to kick in \$600,000 and the county followed suit, tapping into both operation funds and county tourism dollars to meet the request. Local hoteliers agreed to double the per-room tourism promotion assessment to

raise an additional \$1 million. And in December a fundraising committee launched a four-month campaign with a goal of raising \$2 million in private donations by March 1, 2016.

5 PGG to sell grain division

The news just keeps getting worse for Pendleton Grain Growers. Coming off a 2014 year in which the co-op lost \$7.9 million and closed all six retail stores, PGG announced in October it will try to sell or lease its grain division to an outside company. Increased competition and a disappointing 2015 wheat harvest played a significant role in the decision, which could force PGG to dump its Columbia River terminal, Feedville piles and 19 grain elevators. And, while General Manager Rick Jacobson said total earnings in June were \$4 million better than last year, he is not certain whether grain handling will continue under a co-op model. PGG’s agronomy division has already sold to Crop Production Services, based in Colorado. Jacobson said the seed, energy and precision irrigation businesses are still in good shape.

6 Pendleton finances
street fixes

Following widespread public demand for road repair, the Pendleton City Council spent the first half of 2015 discussing ways to bolster the city’s anemically funded street system. The council elected to pursue a two-pronged approach — a 5-cent gas tax and a \$5 street utility fee. The gas tax was ultimately defeated by a well-heeled anti-gas tax campaign from a political action committee associated with the Oregon Fuels Association. Sixty four percent of voters rejected the gas tax in November, although the council was able to salvage some street funding by passing the street utility fee Dec. 15. The utility fee, however, didn’t need voter support.

7 Aryan gang
broken up

A white supremacist Pendleton gang, active in 2014, was busted in January by police. Four members

were given prison sentences. The United Aryan Empire purported to rid the community of methamphetamine dealers, according to Pendleton police, but was responsible for shootings, bloody fights and attempted killings. Police brought an end to the violence Jan. 10 with a raid and the arrest of Jeremiah Jerome Mauer, 31. Police tagged Mauer as the gang’s founder. Arrests of other core members followed. Umatilla County deputy prosecutor Jackie Jenkins charged gang members with conspiracy to murder, assault and more, and took the novel approach to charge racketeering, which threatened to add years onto prison sentences. Member after member pleaded out. Mauer is at the Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem, doing 13 years for conspiracy to murder and two counts of assault. Warren Browning, 36, pleaded guilty to racketeering, attempted assault and felon in possession of a firearm. He got almost eight years in prison. Steven Grangood, 23, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to murder and is serving five years, and Gregory Tinnell is serving six years for attempted assault.

8 BMCC passes
\$23 million bond

The second time was the charm for Blue Mountain Community College. Umatilla and Morrow County voters supported a \$23 million bond measure in May after soundly defeating another version in November 2013 by a margin of 57 percent to 43 percent. Proceeds from the 15-year capital improvement bond will launch a precision agriculture program in Hermiston, a Workforce Training Center in Boardman and the renovation of the Agricultural Center at the main campus in Pendleton. Four campuses and centers — Pendleton, Boardman, Hermiston and Milton-Freewater — will receive campus security and technology updates. All projects are expected to be constructed concurrently and be finished by fall 2017. The college benefited from good timing when the bond offering reaped an extra \$1.8 million after being sold at a premium. Vice President of Finance & Business Operations Celeste Insko attributed the success to an unstable international financial scene and a favorable S&P rating.

Frew Development Group, headquartered in Denver and heading up EOTEC construction, will serve as project manager.

9 Stanfield
police under
investigation

Stanfield Police Department wrapped up 2015 with only one on-duty police officer after the department’s chief and lieutenant were placed on paid administrative leave in November. Chief Bryon Zumwalt and Lt. Monty Toombs are still on leave pending the results of an Oregon Department of Justice investigation. The investigation came after Zumwalt fired officer Ryan McBride in October and McBride alleged the move was retaliation for complaining about Toombs to Zumwalt. In a letter to the city stating his intent to sue for wrongful termination, McBride alleged that Toombs had not properly logged marijuana plants seized during a traffic stop into evidence and had possibly taken them for personal use. He also alleged that Toombs had engaged in unprofessional behavior, including asking married couples in the area to engage in sexual acts with him and his wife. The Oregonian also reported it had documents alleging that Zumwalt had failed to log a revolver he seized at a traffic stop into evidence. The case remains under investigation.

10 UAS Range
gets a boost

Kate Brown’s first trip to Eastern Oregon as governor was centered around her announcement that the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range would receive a \$1.7 million financial package from the state to build hangars. While the city is technically on the hook to pay back the entire package, more than \$1 million is forgivable if the city meets certain job creation, promotional and timeline requirements. The governor’s visit was a high point for what has been a generally quiet year for the range, with the city still looking to sign its first contract with a drone company.

The top 10 stories were voted on by East Oregonian staff.