

ELITE DUCKS

OREGON BEATS DUKE 82-68

MARCH MADNESS/1B



EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2016

140th Year, No. 115

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

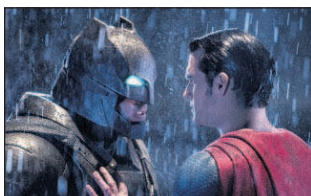
Your Weekend



- Stations of the Cross Friday in Hermiston
- Easter egg hunts around the area

For times and places see Coming Events, 5A

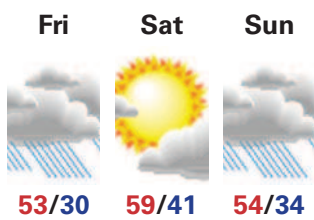
Catch a movie



An orphaned billionaire butts heads with an orphaned alien in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice."

For showtime, Page 5A

Weekend Weather



\$4M will be spent to repair refuge

BURNS (AP) — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will spend roughly \$4 million to clean, repair and upgrade the Oregon wildlife refuge that was the site of a 41-day armed occupation by ranchers earlier this year.

Fish and Wildlife Director Dan Ashe said he wants the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns to become a symbol to the rest of the country that collaboration, not confrontation, endures, *The Oregonian* reported. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell made similar statements during her visit to the refuge earlier this week.

Photos of the refuge shared by federal officials show that the ranchers left a mess inside the building.

The compound is undergoing a giant spring
See REFUGE/10A

90-year-old recalls days as switchboard operator



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Ninety-year-old June Kononen used her voice to help people stay connected as a telephone operator and to entertain on the stage as an actor.

The voice on the line

By KATHY ANEY ♦ East Oregonian

June Kononen thinks fondly of the days when phones had cords and telephone operators connected calls by plugging jacks into a switchboard.

Kononen worked as a telephone operator off and on for 25 years — but she almost didn't get the job. The 90-year-old remembers interviewing in 1948 to become one of 100 operators based in Pendleton. The interviewer gazed at the tiny Kononen and then up to the large switchboard filled with holes that each represented a local phone number.

"I was too short, really," Kononen recalled. "If I stood on the rim of my chair, I could reach both ends. The woman hired me anyway."

Kononen settled in quickly. The job, she found, took energy and unflagging good cheer.

"Number, please," said Kononen, when each call came in.

She plugged each cord into the proper jack and pulled a key to ring the person. Many of the farm families around Pendleton shared party lines. Each family received a different ring pattern, such as

two rings, a pause and another ring or maybe one long ring. The operators memorized them all.

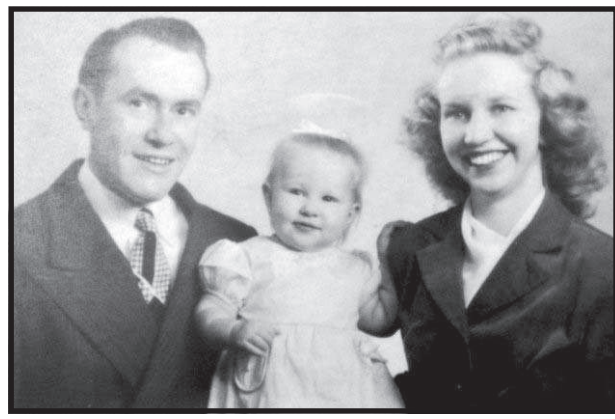
"So often, you'd hear a click," she said, explaining that someone else on the party line was listening in. "Nothing was sacred."

Operators weren't allowed to listen in on calls, but occasionally, well, they heard. One operator heard part of a conversation involving one of the ladies at a Pendleton brothel called the Cozy Rooms. The young woman

See KONONEN/10A

"It's all done with computers and mechanical voices now. Something is missed by not having operators."

— June Kononen



Contributed photo

June Kononen poses with her husband Ellis and their daughter Elaine in younger days.

Hermiston-Pendleton area growing slowly this decade

East Oregonian

Midway through the decade, the Hermiston-Pendleton area is growing, albeit slowly.

The U.S. Census Bureau released its population estimate for counties, metro and micro areas to the public Thursday. It estimated 87,721 people reside in the Hermiston-Pendleton micropolitan area.

While the bureau didn't release data for individual cities, it did provide estimates for Umatilla County, Morrow County and the Hermiston-Pendleton micropolitan area, which encompasses the population of both counties.

The bureau calculates its estimates by looking at births, deaths, administrative records and survey data.

The projection shows the Hermiston-Pendleton area has grown by 0.76 percent since the 2010 census.

Umatilla County experienced the lion's share of the population boost, growing by

642 people over the past five years. Morrow County grew by 17 people.

The bureau attributed the area's growth to a natural increase of 2,925, meaning that births far outpace deaths. But at the same time, more than 2,128 people moved out of the area than moved in.

The Hermiston-Pendleton area's 0.76 percent growth rate is good for third among the seven micropolitan areas in Oregon, beating out Brookings, La Grande, Coos Bay and Klamath Falls.

Despite beating out many other rural areas, the Hermiston-Pendleton area was significantly behind Hood River's 3.54 percent increase and Astoria's jump of 2.14 percent.

While many micropolitan areas are either growing at minuscule rates or shrinking, their urban counterparts all experienced significant growth.

Oregon's six metropolitan areas were led by the Bend-Redmond area, which grew by 11.12 percent.

Private liquor sales one step from ballot

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Supreme Court on Thursday certified the ballot title for a grocer-backed ballot initiative that would privatize liquor sales in Oregon.

The certification came after the court denied a request by sponsors of Initiative Petition 71 to revise the ballot title written by the Oregon Attorney General's Office. Sponsors Gerry Dory and Lynn Gust of Wilsonville objected to a statement in the title that said the measure would "eliminate liquor revenue."

The ballot certification clears the way for the sponsors to collect the 88,184 signatures needed to place the measure on the November ballot.

"We're pleased the court's review is concluded and eager to begin engaging directly with Oregonians about getting the state out of the business of promoting and selling liquor," Rudy Dory, co-founder of Bend's employee-owned Newport Avenue Market and co-sponsor of the initiative, said in a statement.

The measure would end state sale and distribution of liquor and allow beer and wine retailers, including grocery stores, to sell liquor.

Privatization would result in the loss of more than \$200 million in state revenue used to pay for state and local services, according to Oregonians Against The Takeover, a coalition of labor organizations, craft brewers, distillers and winemakers that opposes the ballot initiative.

Replacing that revenue might be challenging given that the Oregon Legislature needs a three-fifths majority to pass a new tax, said Paul Romain, a lobbyist for the Oregon Beer & Wine

See LIQUOR/10A

HERMISTON

Water right takes first step toward certification

Project could benefit local agriculture

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

The Port of Umatilla and city of Hermiston are making progress on certifying a key water right to deliver more irrigation water from the Columbia River.

It's another step forward in a long and complicated process that, if successful, could mean big-time growth for the region's agricultural economy.

Last year, the port agreed to lease an unused portion of its Columbia River water right — 100 cubic feet per second — to the Northeast

Oregon Water Association, an organization working to expand farming in Umatilla and Morrow counties. NOWA is currently working with policymakers and environmental groups to apply for new irrigation water from the Columbia as part of an ambitious, multi-phase project to grow more acres of high-value crops like onions and potatoes.

As part of the deal, NOWA intends to leave the port's water in stream as mitigation for native fish including salmon and steelhead. But before that can happen, the port's water right must be officially certified by the Oregon Water Resources

See WATER/10A



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