



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Jack Sanders has published numerous books on religion.

SANDERS: Battled budget cuts to the religious studies department

Continued from 1A

The University of Oregon will honor Sanders, a long-time professor there, by planting a flowering dogwood—Sanders' favorite tree—near the sculptures. The planting will follow a celebration of life attended by fellow academics, friends and family. In addition, the Religious Studies Department has unveiled a memorial award in Sanders' name, given annually to a religious studies student who demonstrates excellence in research and writing.

Sanders compiled a heady resume during his academic years of degrees, professorships, grants and scholarly books and articles. After moving to Pendleton, he wrote two historical books.

Sanders died Jan. 21. A broken right hip in November sent him to the hospital with a good prognosis, but a couple of days later, he fell from his hospital bed, breaking his left hip and injuring his head. Suddenly, this once-vibrant 80-year-old found himself on a downhill slide. He died far from home, having been airlifted to Kadlec in the Tri-Cities and later moved to several hospitals in northern Idaho.

Plass is still devastated. She remembers the first time she heard Sanders' voice coming from the other side of his university office door. Plass, then a graduate student, had signed up for the professor's seminar on Hellenistic Judaism and had decided to drop by and meet him in advance. She knocked and heard a deep voice inviting her to enter.

"I opened the door and walked into his life," she said. "We were instant soulmates."

They married two years later despite a 19-year age difference. Over the next decades, their lives intertwined. Plass loved his thoughtful, deliberate, witty ways and his jokes "that would sneak up on you." Sanders, a widower, brought his son, Collin, to the marriage.

Sanders continued down his career path, serving many years as the department head

and fighting for the department's very existence several times. Plass carved out her own place in academia. On Sanders' retirement in 2002, the couple moved to Pendleton, where Plass became director of grants at Blue Mountain Community College. Sanders became fascinated with local history. He wrote "Samuel Rothchild: A Jewish Pioneer in Eastern Oregon in the Days of the Old West" about a general store owner who raised money for the first Pendleton fire engine, served on city council, owned a silver mine and seemed an inexhaustible community leader.

At Sanders' memorial service in Pendleton, Harriet Isom quoted Sanders who said of Rothchild, "The American West owes its development not to the righteous lone gun-slingers of western fiction, but rather to settlers like Rothchild, who saw to it that a civil society developed in hundreds of small places."

Isom described Sanders' as "erudite, highly principled, a laser mind and a fount of knowledge" who gave an annual Groundhog Day party with Susan at their home.

"Jack might take a subject seriously, but he never took himself seriously," Isom said.

Sanders was a prolific letter-to-the-editor writer to the *East Oregonian*. One expressed his adoration of Pendleton, penned as he sat on his deck looking up at the sky.

"Great western sky," he wrote. "Where else could anyone see a sky like this? Not back east. Not in the Valley, where I spent most of my life. What a great place this is! How lucky to be able to see a sky like this."

Sanders' second book came out just before his death. He edited a collection of reminiscences on World War II by Umatilla County residents called "War on All Fronts."

Standing in Sanders' book-lined study with the scent of his pipe tobacco still lingering can undo Plass. In a bottom desk drawer, she found a letter with "To my dear Susan" in his familiar

script. On one shelf, a treasured photo shows Jack in shirt and tie, flashing a grin from his desk, pipe clenched between his teeth.

Plass grinned as she shared her nickname for Sanders.

"I called him 'wonderful man,'" she said.

Despite deep loss, Plass smiles at the tribute his UO colleagues created—the Jack T. Sanders Memorial Award. The first recipient will be announced at the celebration of life on Thursday. Recipients, one or two each year, will each receive \$500. She hopes faculty, friends and family will raise the additional \$9,000 necessary to endow the award for years to come.

Current Religious Studies Department Head Rick Colby remembers Sanders as an honest, hard-nosed, fair and funny chocolate lover who included a brownies recipe in each course syllabus. Colby credits the continued existence of the department to Sanders, who battled budget cuts in the '70s, late '80s and '90s.

"The provosts talked about getting rid of religious studies," he said. "Jack kept making the case that this is an important academic endeavor."

Sanders, Colby said, saw religious studies much like history.

"He wasn't trying to make people more religious or say that religion is hogwash, just realize that religion is part of the human experience," Colby said.

Plass said the memorial honors Sanders' bent for research and writing.

"I'm so pleased that after 14 years of Jack being gone from University of Oregon, the faculty honed in on those roles and remembered what he stood for," she said.

The celebration of life will begin at 10 a.m. in the Browsing Room of the Knight Library at University of Oregon. Those who wish to donate to the memorial award can go to the department web page to learn more.

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

Fort McMurray saved from worst of Alberta wildfire

FORT MCMURRAY, Alberta (AP) — At least two neighborhoods in this oil sands city were scenes of utter devastation with incinerated homes leveled to the ground from a wildfire that Fort McMurray's fire chief called a "beast ... a fire like I've never seen in my life."

But the wider picture was more optimistic as Fire Chief Darby Allen said 85 percent of Canada's main oil sands city remains intact, including the downtown district. Alberta's premier declared the city had been saved, adding that officials hope to provide a schedule within two weeks for thousands of evacuated residents to begin returning to their homes.

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley said about 2,400 homes and buildings were destroyed in the city, but firefighters managed to save 25,000 others, including the hospital, municipal buildings and every functioning school.

"This city was surrounded by an ocean of fire only a few days ago but Fort McMurray and the surrounding communities have been saved and they will be rebuilt," Notley said.

Notley got her first direct look at the devastation in Fort McMurray on Monday after cold temperatures and light rain had stabilized the massive wildfire to a point where officials could begin planning to get thousands of evacuated residents back.

The break in the weather left officials optimistic they've reached a turning point on getting a handle on the massive wildfire. The temperature dipped to 45 degrees Fahrenheit on Monday following a week where the region had unseasonably warm temperatures.

Notley flew in Monday morning to meet with local officials and took a ground tour of the town before holding a news conference at the emergency center.

"I was very much struck by the devastation of the fire. It was really quite overwhelming in some spots," Notley said. "But I will also



Ryan Remiorz/The Canadian Press via AP

A trailer park damaged by a wildfire is viewed in Fort McMurray, Alberta, during a media tour of the city on Monday. A break in the weather has officials optimistic they have reached a turning point on getting a handle on the massive blaze.

say that I was struck by the proximity of that devastation to neighborhoods that were untouched."

More than 40 journalists were allowed into Fort McMurray on a bus escorted by police. The forest surrounding the road into town was still smoldering and there were abandoned cars. Only the sign remained at a Super 8 Motel and Denny's restaurant on the edge of town.

The Beacon Hill neighborhood was a scene of utter devastation with homes burned down to their foundations.

Allen said at one point the fire jumped across a road in Beacon Hill that is 15 to 20 feet wide.

"It jumped that without thinking about it. This was a beast. It was an animal. It was a fire like I've never seen in my life," he said on the media bus.

In the early stages of the fire he feared that as much as half the city could burn down

"I just want to let the people know that we're in pretty good shape," he said. "Typical of the damaged areas you'll see structures that are completely gone and structures that are intact."

Allen said at one point the fire raced down a hill to the corner of a bank, but firefighters were able to halt the encroaching flames at the bank. Had they failed to stop it there, the fire would have

destroyed the downtown district, he said.

But other neighborhoods were not spared. In the Abasand district, townhouses were completely destroyed, and charred children's bikes could be seen in backyards. A parking facility was burned to the ground.

More than 88,000 people have left Fort McMurray since the fire broke out last Tuesday in the heart of Canada's oil sands region. The bulk of the city's evacuees moved south after Tuesday's mandatory evacuation order, but 25,000 evacuees moved north and were housed in camps normally used for oil sands workers until they also could be evacuated south.

Gas has been turned off, the power grid is damaged and water is undrinkable in Fort McMurray. More than 250 power company workers are trying to restore the grid and assess the gas infrastructure.

"We are now turning our minds more and more to the recovery effort," Federal Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said.

"This is going to be a long term endeavor because at the moment there is no power and gas, no palatable water supply. There's dangerous hazardous material all over the place. It's going to take a very careful, thoughtful effort to get that community back in a livable condition," Goodale said.

HERMISTON: City estimated it would cost \$30,000 to repaint entire water tower

Continued from 1A

City Manager Byron Smith said the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce will also consider the brand for adoption into their marketing efforts, and both entities plan to hold a launch party for the brand sometime in June.

"We'll have some items people can take home and enjoy with the new branch on it," Smith said.

The brand will then be rolled out over the next few months, starting with the city's online presence and then moving to letterheads, signs, city vehicles and — Smith assured the council when they asked — the water tower that started all the complaints about the "You Can GROW Here" brand when it was repainted in 2013.

The change was criticized because of the tagline's unveiling at the same time marijuana became legal in the state, and because the base paint around the logo didn't match the rest of the tower. The city previously estimated it would cost \$30,000 to repaint the entire tower, as opposed to the \$14,000 it cost to just paint the logo and a small area around it.

Mayor David Drotzmann thanked the citizens' committee and Focal Point Marketing for their time on the issue and said he felt that process, including a series of surveys, included much more community input than the city's last attempt at branding.

"I'm excited about the brand you came up with," he said.

On Monday the city

council also:

- Voted to approve plans for Hermiston's new senior center that includes a basement, at an extra cost of \$550,000 to the city.

- Approved a 7.8 percent increase for residential garbage service, as requested by Sanitary Disposal, Inc. The increase will add \$1.25 to the monthly fee for a 90-gallon cart, according to a city report.

- Accepted a \$29,750 grant from the Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority to look at ways to increase wastewater capacity in the Southern Industrial area. The city will pay \$5,250 for a study.

See tomorrow's *East Oregonian* for more details.

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

BUDGET: Tries to implement technology when possible to make county government more efficient

Continued from 1A

focusing on money the county will not get, the focus is on how to best use funds the county does receive.

General government services uses about \$25.5 million, the biggest chunk of the overall budget, with public safety second at \$21.7 million. The road department gets \$11.5 million, and health and human services receive

about \$8.4 million.

He also said the budget reflects the strategic plan the county adopted in 2014 that has two overall prongs. The first is to implement technology when possible to make county government more efficient, and the other is about empowering employees. To that end, the county board implemented Murdock's idea of professional development in the

workplace. Investing in the 318 full-time equivalent employees already working for the county to make them better yields benefits for the public, he said.

The budget goes into effect July 1, and the board of commissioners usually adopts the budget in June.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.



OPEN HOUSE

Please Join Us
Friday, May 13th
3:00-7:00pm
1705 E. Airport Rd, Hermiston

★ Tours ★ Hors d'oeuvres
★ Wine Tasting ★ Live Music

541-289-9800

Come Celebrate our New Event Center

Thank you Pendleton!

The Walla Walla Kennel Club would like to thank all those involved with making the Dog Show a success! We especially want to thank the staff of the Pendleton Convention Center, the Round up grounds, Happy Canyon, and the City of Pendleton for the use of their grounds and setting up the show sites, and patrolling the grounds! In addition, we thank Travel Pendleton for giving us a grant for advertising, Gordon Electric for putting up our banner, and the Chamber of commerce and Oxford Suites for putting together judge and exhibitor gift bags. D & B Supply for sponsoring Best In Show competition, Coca Cola for donating signage, and MaySon's General store for their donations. Outwest catering did a fantastic job catering the event and the cakes made by TastyCakes by Missy were amazing! We thank Zachary Knight of Blue Mountain Action Council and Randy Thomas, a Pendleton Round up Board member, for singing the national anthem each morning to start out shows. We thank Pendleton High School's girls' soccer team for partnering with us in handling parking and helping with other tasks as needed. We also thank the Eastern Oregonian for covering our event in the paper, and anyone who volunteered, participated, or came by to experience our event! Thanks again Pendleton for your hospitality! We look forward to coming back in 2017 for our next dog show!

Walla Walla Kennel Club

