

SUNDOWN: His personal guardian spirit was a horsefly

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United States Cavalry after an attack on their Indian encampment. Trapped in a burning teepee, the boy survived by huddling under a thick buffalo robe.

"Another time he escaped by clinging to the side of a horse, making it appear to the cavalry that the horse was riderless as he rode out of the encampment and escaped," Thomas said.

The teenager made it to Canada. With a price on his head, he stayed put until things calmed then returned to the United States, where he eventually bred, trained and sold horses at his ranch near Lapwai.

"He was very excited when he came back to find out that money was being paid for people to ride horses in competition," Thomas said.

Sundown also rode bulls. One story tells of an especially bodacious bull known for sending riders to the hospital. Legend has it that Sundown stayed aboard until the bull quit in exhaustion and never bucked again.

The cowboy drew a crowd wherever he went.

Sundown's weyekin — his personal guardian spirit — was a horsefly, Wildbill said. The bronc rider tied one to his braids in a leather pouch. The only way for a horse to dislodge a horsefly is to flip over on its back. It took much the same effort to remove Sundown.

In 1911 came a famous and multi-racial showdown between Sundown, Pendleton's George Fletcher (who was black) and white cowboy John Spain. Sundown came in third after his horse crashed into a judge on the field and the rider went down. Spain got the win, though the crowd believed Fletcher

was the victor and roared its disapproval. Sheriff Til Taylor cut up Fletcher's hat into pieces and sold them until there was enough to buy a duplicate of Spain's trophy saddle for Fletcher.

Sundown again took third in 1915 and, discouraged, decided to call it quits at age 52. He spent some time posing for internationally known sculptor Alexander Phimister Proctor, who encouraged Sundown to give the title one more shot and offered to pay the entry fee. Sundown agreed.

Again, he made the finals. A 2016 *East Oregonian* "Out of the Vault" column describes his wild ride aboard Angel.

"Sundown rode first, using an old saddle with a slick tree and the standard-issue halter and rope provided by the Round-Up. He constantly spurred Angel throughout the ride, waving his large hat in the air, long woolly chaps flapping like flags. It was an all-or-nothing ride and a huge gamble."

Seven years later, Sundown died of pneumonia, but the memory of his feat hasn't faded away.

This year's official Round-Up poster by artist Bob Coronado features Sundown. Tamastlikt Cultural Institute also showcases Sundown in its current exhibit "Legend & Legacy: Jackson Sundown and Happy Canyon A Century Later." Admission is free throughout Round-Up week. The rodeo crowd during each of four performances will view a three-minute video about Jackson Sundown created by Cedric Wildbill.

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Poll: Support for Measure 97 erodes with pros/cons

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

An overwhelming majority of Oregon voters support a corporate sales tax measure on the November ballot, according to a new poll by icitizen, a nonpartisan survey firm.

It's the second poll in less than a week to show Measure 97 with a big lead, but the icitizen survey included several follow-up questions, which indicate that voters' opinions change when they learn more about arguments for how the gross receipts tax would work.

"This suggests messaging about the effect on an Oregonian's pocketbook can make for a tighter race in November, depending

on either camp's ability to market the measure in their favor," said icitizen polling analyst Cynthia Villacis.

The measure, backed by a coalition of public employee unions, would levy a 2.5 percent tax on certain corporations' Oregon annual sales exceeding \$25 million.

The poll, taken from Sept. 2-7, found that 59 percent of 610 respondents favor the tax and 21 percent oppose it. After voters heard arguments against the measure, that support dwindled to 40 percent while opposition spiked to 31 percent. The poll has a 4 percent margin of error.

For instance, 65 percent of respondents said they would be less likely to support the measure if they

had to pay \$600 per year in the form of higher prices and lost job growth resulting from the tax. That figure is based on a May estimate by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office.

Similarly, 59 percent of respondents were more likely to vote for the measure if the revenue were to fill a \$2 billion annual gap in funding needed for quality education in the state. That figure comes from the nonpartisan Quality Education Commission.

When asked how the money should be spent, the most common response — from nearly a quarter of those polled — was education spending.

The icitizen poll mirrors another independent

survey, this one by DHM Research taken from Sept. 1-6, which found 60 percent of respondents support Measure 97, while 30 percent opposes it.

"At 60 percent (support) in back-to-back polls, Oregonians are clear they want corporations to pay their fair share," said Katherine Driessen, a spokeswoman for Our Oregon, the nonprofit advocacy group backing the measure. "When we share with voters that large and out of state corporations pay little or no taxes, they're eager to hold them accountable. They support 97 because Oregon voters know great schools and quality care for our seniors makes Oregon strong."

DRONE: Pendleton is home to two RMAX drones

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the technology is capable of helping farmers better manage their fields.

Specifically, agriculture drones like the RMAX are built with equipment that allows growers to spray crops more precisely, which not only saves money on herbicides and pesticides but also helps the environment by placing fewer chemicals into the soil. Other types of drones — like the experiment station's own "Octocopter" — can fly different types of cameras and remote sensors over fields to determine where there might be a problem, or predict yields even before harvest.

Young Kim, CEO of a Virginia-based company called Digital Harvest, coined the term "digital agriculture" to describe this convergence of technology in the world of farming. Kim is now one of the leaders behind the Oregon Unmanned Aerial Systems Future Farm in Pendleton, a real-world testing ground for how drones can be used to help farmers across the country grow more food, cheaper.



Staff photo by George Plaven
The Yamaha RMAX Type II agricultural drone took flight during a demonstration Monday at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center north of Pendleton.

With the governor-appointed Board of Agriculture in town for its quarterly meeting, Kim said Monday's test flight at the experiment station north of Pendleton is part of the ongoing research and discussion of how drones will ultimately fit in agriculture, and what exactly they're capable of doing.

"Those are the kinds of things we want to test right here in Pendleton," Kim

said. "We're in the market to learn."

Pendleton is now home to two RMAX drones, one of which is operated by Digital Harvest on the Future Farm and the other by Yamaha, which has opened a local office at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport. Working as strategic partners, the two companies are trying to figure out how the vehicles can be used to safely and reliably spray crops at night, when there's less heat and wind that could cause some applications to go to waste.

Jeff Lorton, director of the Duke Joseph marketing agency and project manager at the Future Farm, said the RMAX is the most advanced agriculture drone in the world. Yamaha already has 2,500 of the aircraft operating in Japan, though Lorton said U.S. agriculture is where the opportunity for the industry lies.

"Make no mistake, we are the market," Lorton said.

The RMAX is the product of 35 years of engineering. It weighs approximately 200 pounds, and with a 250-cc engine, Lorton jokes it's more like a snowmobile

with a propeller. The Oregon Department of Agriculture is already interested in what the drone industry has to offer, Lorton said.

"Essentially, ODA is in kind of a period of transition. Digitization of agriculture is creating a whole bunch of new things for them to think about," he said.

Katy Coba, ODA director and incoming Oregon Chief Operating Officer, admitted there are still hurdles to clear with operations and regulations of agricultural drones in Oregon, but the agency is well aware that this kind of technology represents the future of the industry.

"We know how agriculture is adopting new technology on a day-to-day basis," Coba said.

Lorton said demonstrations like the one held Monday are a reminder to "wake up, pay attention and get invested."

"Agriculture is the last great human endeavor to be digitized," he said. "It's the biggest thing people do."

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EOTEC: Wants occupancy cap of 2,700 people for entire project

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Despite concerns that the contract was awarded months behind the original schedule, Smith said he felt Hendon Construction would be "aggressive" in trying to meet the 2017 deadline and still had the ability to do so.

During the special meeting the board also made plans to attend a Hermiston Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday at 7 p.m. at city hall, when the commission will discuss EOTEC's request for a variance on parking requirements.

As things stand now, fair week will be the only time that more than one of EOTEC's main components (event center, barns and rodeo arena) can be used at the same time. The board plans to ask the commission to instead set an occupancy cap of 2,700 people for the entire project, meaning that a meeting in the event center could happen at the same time as a high school rodeo as long as the total combined attendance does not exceed 2,700 people.

The planning commission held a public hearing on the matter in July, but after concluding that the applicant had not presented enough evidence to justify the variance, continued the hearing to Wednesday in order to give the board more time to gather evidence.

Don Miller, who represents the Umatilla County Fair on the EOTEC board, said that the fair board was beginning to make plans to move all of its equipment and other possessions out of the current fairgrounds, which will be turned over to the Hermiston School District on Jan. 1. He said it was the fair board's understanding that those items could be stored at the new fairgrounds, which means that the EOTEC board needs to start thinking about a secure storage location on the site.

The EOTEC board's next regular meeting will be Sept. 30 at 7 a.m. in the EOTEC event center.

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

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