

MUSIC: 'Precious Lord' one of King's faves

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voice of the first singer of the night, Gina Johnson, set the tone.

*Ain't gonna let nobody
Turn me 'round
Turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let nobody
Turn me round
I'm gonna keep on walkin'
Keep on talkin'
Marchin' into freedom
land*

The crowd clapped along and whooped as the voices and guitar chords faded. Later, they stood, joined hands and sang "We Have Overcome."

Johnson belted out "Precious Lord," one of King's favorite songs, one often heard at his rallies.

Besides Johnson, other lead performers included Dan Haug and Steve Hines.

Earlier in the day, others honored MLK with elbow grease and benevolence during a Day of Service event at the Pendleton Center for the Arts. About 50 volunteers spent two hours scrubbing up the place. The group included the Blue Mountain Community College softball team.

In the kitchen, Kathy Beck and Carly Varela organized cupboards and cleaned the refrigerator. The pair professed a deep affection for both the arts center and volunteerism. They urged



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Dan Haug of Pendleton performs Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" on Monday at the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. in Pendleton.

others to jump in.

"Be the change you want to see," Beck said as she sorted storage container lids.

"Find something you love and engage."

Executive director Roberta Lavadour said helpers

polished floors, banished cobwebs, washed windows, spackled and dusted, among other chores. As they trickled out the door, Lavadour called out, "Nicely done."

Later that night, the group at the Great Pacific honored King in a different way — by getting lost in civil rights music of the 1960s.

Organizer Sarah Woodbury took the mic between songs and noted that positive change has come over the decades, though it hasn't always been linear. She harked back to the late '60s at the time of King's and Robert Kennedy's assassinations and the start of the Vietnam War.

"In that moment, a lot of people, my parents among them, felt as if all of the good work that had been done ... because of the work of King and others like him would be lost, and they didn't feel like there was a lot of hope for change or for justice," Woodbury said.

However, King always advised taking the long view. "We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope," Woodbury quoted King. "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

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LOVE: King preached persistence, humanity

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It was the writings and speeches of people like Martin Luther King Jr. that helped him extinguish that hate, he said. The words stopped feeling distant, like "reading a fortune cookie," and became a roadmap.

Chaney learned about the power of love and nonviolence from King, but he said sometimes people have a tendency to water down King's legacy to the point where they forget that he still spoke up for truth and still took action for justice.

"The thing that he was after was serving others and giving his life for that," Chaney said. "A lot of us are afraid just to lose a friend for speaking out."

King taught that "human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable," and Chaney said everyone must continue to fight for progress. "You persist with your message, you persist with your course, but you don't let it lose your humanity," he said.

Before Chaney's address, almost 100 people — black, white, Latino, Polynesian — bundled up and braved the cold and snow for a short peace walk around downtown Hermiston singing "We Shall Overcome" and pausing at city hall for a short speech by Mayor David Drotzmann.

While waiting for Chaney to arrive from another event in the Tri-Cities, attendees watched a cultural performance from the Children of Polynesia dance group and shared their feelings on Martin Luther King, Jr. during an open mic session.

Cassandra Frost said as a half-black, half-Indian woman who was raised by a white woman, she has experienced racism but has also experienced the harmony and support across races that King dreamed of.

"Keep encouraging each other, keep loving each other," she said.

Alex Hobbs took the opportunity to share part of King's "Letter from

Birmingham Jail," in which he addressed white religious leaders in the South who had called civil rights protests "unwise and untimely."

"I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate," King wrote, "who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.'"

Hobbs added her own voice, saying that today there

are many civil rights issues, from mass incarceration to immigration, that must be addressed by people of all races.

John Carbage, president of the Black International Awareness Club that has sponsored the event for the last 17 years, said that in recognition of its more diverse mission, the club will be changing its name in February to the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club. The group meets the second Saturday of every month at Starbucks at 2 p.m. and everyone is welcome.

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Rule easing public lands transfer concerns hunters

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A change in U.S. House rules making it easier to transfer millions of acres of federal public lands to states is worrying hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts across the West who fear losing access.

Lawmakers earlier this month passed a rule eliminating a significant budget hurdle and written so broadly that it includes national parks.

President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Interior secretary, Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, voted for the rule change as did many other Republicans. The Senate would have to weigh in on public land transfers as well.

"Anybody who uses them for any kind of outdoor activity — snowmobiling, mountain biking, hunters, all that — they're very alarmed by all this," said Boise State University professor and public lands policy expert John Freemuth. "The loss of access that this could lead to."

The rule passed by the House defines federal land that could be given to states as "any land owned by the United States, including the surface estate, the subsurface estate, or any improvements thereon."

About a million square miles of public land is managed by the federal government, mostly in 12 Western states, according to the Congressional Research Service. Some state lawmakers in recent years have made failed efforts to wrest control of those lands, mainly to reduce obstacles to accessing resources such as timber, natural gas and oil, Freemuth noted.

U.S. lawmakers have the authority to transfer those lands to states. Outdoor recreationists fear states

would then sell the land to private entities that would end public access.

Zinke, whose confirmation hearing to become Interior secretary is Tuesday, has a track record of opposing public land transfers. Last summer, he resigned as a delegate to the Republican National Convention, which favors such transfers.

"The congressman has never voted to sell or transfer federal lands and he maintains his position against the sale or transfer of federal lands," Heather Swift, a Zinke spokeswoman, said in an email.

Whit Fosburgh, CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, which works to guarantee places to hunt and fish, said he's inclined to excuse Zinke on his House vote favoring transfers because of his record being "very solid on these public lands issues."

Still, Fosburgh was irked that the House approved a rule that he said essentially allows federal public land to be given away as if it had no value.

Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, also voted for the rule easing transfers. But Simpson was also the driver of a 2015 bill that created three wilderness areas in Idaho after he got ranchers, recreationists and environmental groups to back the plan after a 15-year effort.

The possibility that President Barack Obama would designate a much larger area as a national monument is widely believed to have led to the bill passed by the House and Senate.

"There is no disputing Congressman Simpson is a supporter of public lands," Nikki Wallace, a spokeswoman for Simpson, said in an email.

Freemuth noted that even with a rule change, land transfers would face significant challenges.

UEC: Wind project between two counties

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said Monday they have not had the opportunity to review the filing, and would not be able to comment.

Both Lost Valley Ranch and Wheatridge Wind are in the permitting phase of their respective projects. Both would be built on land that extends into Columbia Basin and UEC service territories. Columbia Basin claims it has been working with UEC for more than a year to resolve the conflicts, but they have not been able to reach an agreement.

Construction of Lost Valley Ranch is already underway, despite not securing the state permits needed to operate. If approved, the 30,000-cow dairy would recycle wastewater to grow animal feed on ranch property.

Seven of those crop circles cross the southern boundary of UEC's service territory into the northern boundary of Columbia Basin's territory, yet Columbia Basin alleges that UEC began providing electrical service to approximately three of those circles sometime after June 20, 2016.

The other four irrigation

circles would also be served by UEC, according to Columbia Basin's complaint. At the time, UEC general manager Robert Echenrode reportedly told Columbia Basin manager Thomas Wolff that they would not stop without a court order.

Meanwhile, Wheatridge Wind Energy has received a proposed order from the Oregon Department of Energy to build up to 292 wind turbines between two main project areas — Wheatridge West, located about seven miles northwest of Heppner, and Wheatridge East, which overlaps into Umatilla County southwest of Echo.

Developers of the 500-megawatt wind farm, however, did not specifically address the location or operation of a transmission line as part of their project application. The company instead plans for UEC to develop the line separately.

On Jan. 6, Wheatridge filed an application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to direct UEC to provide the transmission service. Columbia Basin, in turn, motioned with FERC to intervene on the grounds UEC

would impinge on its service territory.

The transmission line would connect at one end to a substation within Columbia Basin's territory.

"If UEC builds the proposed transmission line, Columbia Basin either will be forced to use UEC's transmission line or to construct duplicate facilities to distribute retail power within Columbia Basin's exclusive service territory to serve the project's station service load, and to serve any future generation projects or other retail loads in the area," the co-op writes in its motion.

A contested case is currently ongoing against Wheatridge at the Energy Facility Siting Council. The status of Lost Valley Ranch is also up in the air, as a coalition of environmental groups are urging the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality to deny the project's Confined Animal Feeding Operation permits.

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Last astronaut to walk on the moon dies at 82

HOUSTON (AP) — Astronaut Gene Cernan traced his only child's initials in the dust of the lunar surface. Then he climbed into the lunar module for the ride home, becoming the last person to walk on the moon.

It was a moment that defined the Apollo 17 commander in both the public eye and his own.

"Those steps up that ladder, they were tough to make," Cernan recalled in a 2007 oral

history. "I didn't want to go up. I wanted to stay a while."

His family said his devotion to lunar exploration never waned, even in the final year of his life. Cernan died Monday at age 82 at a Houston hospital following ongoing health issues, family spokeswoman Melissa Wren told The Associated Press.

"Even at the age of 82, Gene was passionate about sharing his desire to see the continued human exploration

of space and encouraged our nation's leaders and young people to not let him remain the last man to walk on the Moon," his family wrote in a statement released by NASA.

On Dec. 14, 1972, Cernan became the last of only a dozen men to walk on the moon. Cernan called it "perhaps the brightest moment of my life. ... It's like you would want to freeze that moment and take it home with you. But you can't."

Sun Terrace Hermiston

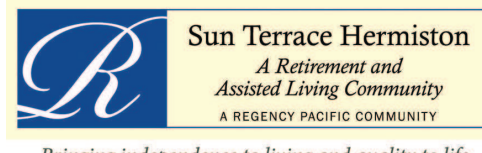
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