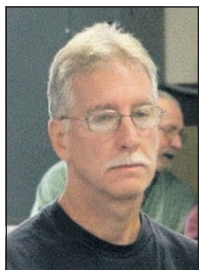


# Cop killer released, back in Monument

By SEAN HART  
EO Media Group

Twenty-five years after killing a John Day police officer, Sidney Dean Porter is back in Grant County.

Porter, 57, was released from custody Friday, March 24, and transported by family members to the Monument area, where he will reside "for the time being," Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said. Porter will be supervised on parole by Grant County Community Corrections.



Porter

Director Todd McKinley said the department will work to help Porter succeed outside of prison.

"I respect the wide range of emotion that the release of Mr. Porter invokes," he said. "However, I and those I work with are committed to fulfilling our role in helping Mr. Porter be a successful citizen in good standing in Grant County."

Porter pleaded guilty to aggravated murder for the 1992 killing of officer Frank Ward, who had responded to a report of domestic violence at Porter's residence. Porter "bludgeoned Ward with his fists and a 10-pound piece of firewood," according to court documents.

A lack of evidence provided at an exit inter-

view in 2013 and legal errors by the Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision hastened Porter's release. The parole board issued a prison release date in 2013 after little evidence was presented at a required exit interview, but the date was postponed after further evidence was provided. The board, however, did not hold a hearing with Porter at the time of the postponement.

The Oregon Court of Appeals ruled the parole board should not have postponed his release without "a timely hearing" and reinstated the 2013 release date because of the legal errors by the board. The Oregon Supreme Court denied a request to review the appeals court decision.

Carpenter, who fought to keep Porter imprisoned, said it is "time to move forward."

"With regard to Mr. Porter, our community has a wide variety of opinions as to what 'should be,'" he said. "As district attorney, I have to accept and work with 'what is.' In terms of incarceration, Mr. Porter is deemed to have paid his debt to society. ... I hope that Grant County will set aside any outward expressions of malice and proceed with cautious optimism."

# Trio of fires keep firefighters busy

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Marc Sokoloski awoke after midnight to pounding on his door at 3110 N.E. Riverside Ave., Pendleton. Drivers along Highway 11 rushed to the house to warn people there was a structure fire at the back of the long gravel driveway.

"I saw it, and it was pretty much all engulfed," Sokoloski said, taking a break from going over the charred remains with an insurance agent Thursday afternoon.

The fire raged through his large, aluminum-roofed shed and burned the boat inside. Sokoloski said flames shot out the east side and hit the Keystone Hideout travel trailer. He went to move the trailer, he said, but saw the fire threatened the dog kennel next to the shed's southwest corner.

Sokoloski said he bolted past the burning building, hauled himself over the kennel's side and rescued the family's two little dogs. Everyone was OK, he said.

The Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Service received the call-out for the blaze at 12:24 a.m. Fire chief Mike Ciraulo said the crew found the structures "fully engulfed" in flames.

At 12:51 a.m., after fighting the blaze for about 20 minutes, Pendleton received a call for a second fire — this one at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, the state's medium-se-



Staff photo by Phil Wright

Fire early Wednesday at 3110 N.E. Riverside Ave., Pendleton, destroyed this shed, damaged the nearby dog kennel and burned through a recreational trailer. Owner Marc Sokoloski said he rushed to the kennel and save his family's two dogs.

curity prison on Pendleton's west side.

Pendleton called the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District for aid. Pilot Rock fire chief Ron Neeley said that call came at the same time the district had a fire of its own a little out of town up East Birch Creek.

A shed was aflame and became a total loss, Neeley said, but no one was injured, and the fire did not spread to other buildings.

Ciraulo said with no one to help, a team broke off from the Riverside fire to tackle the blaze in the prison's carpentry shop, a

building about 300 feet by 50 feet.

Staff at the prison acted quickly and used multiple fire extinguishers to try to quell the fire, according to a written statement from prison spokesperson Jackie Peck. They kept the fire to three walls within the shop's tool room.

Peck reported the Pendleton crew arrived at 1:05 a.m.

"The security guards there did a great job of keeping it contained," Ciraulo said. Off-duty firefighters also came in, and the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department sent two members.

Yet the night was not done.

Ciraulo said the department had to send a unit on a medical call while at the prison fire.

"Our saving grace was that there were no injuries and neither fire was challenging," he said.

If the emergencies had been akin to the difficulties firefighters faced in battling the Christmas Eve fire at 503 N. Main St., Ciraulo said, no one would have been able to respond to another crisis.

The three fires remain under investigation for causes.

## BRIEFLY

### Crash near Adams claims life of Bismarck woman

PENDLETON — Oregon State Police identified the victim in Tuesday afternoon's deadly crash on Highway 11 near Adams.

Kalli R. Thompson, 26, of Bismarck, North Dakota, died at the scene. Mike Turner, lieutenant with state police in Pendleton, said Thompson lived multiple places, including recently in Alaska, but Bismarck was her family home. He said she did not have local relatives.

Thompson was northbound in a Ford Explorer around 1:15 p.m. when she went into the southbound lane and sideswiped a semitrailer, striking its rear axle, according to state police. She then hit a second semi, which caused her vehicle to roll. It landed upside down next to a wheat field along the northbound lane of the highway.

The impact ejected Thompson, and she died next to the Ford.

The semi drivers, Antonio Vargas, 48, of Pasco, and Dimitriy L. Ryabchinskiy, 38, of Vancouver, Washington, along with one passenger were not injured.

Turner said there were several witnesses to the crash, but what caused Thompson to enter oncoming traffic remains a question.

### No signs alleged illegal strip club still in operation

UMATILLA — After Umatilla County's code enforcement office began investigating allegations of an illegal strip club operating outside of Umatilla, activity at the storefront in question seems to have ceased.

In February, neighbors of 82090 Highway 395 North filed complaints with the county's planning department that someone had run a strip club out of the building over the

weekend of Feb. 25. No one has applied for the land use permits needed to run that line of business on the property.

Since then, planning director Tamra Mabbott said county code enforcement has sent a letter to the landowner, informing them that strip club operations must cease on the property until all needed permits are acquired. Mabbott said that they have not received a response, but there has also not been any signs of more strip club activity in the building.

Umatilla planning director Bill Searles said his office has not received any more reports about use of the building as a strip club either.

If a business is operating in the county without the needed land use permits, it will first receive a warning to cease operations until the proper permits are obtained, followed by fines if the behavior persists.

### Mishra a finalist for Washington superintendent job

HERMISTON — Jon Mishra, the executive director of Special Programs for the Hermiston School District, is a finalist for a superintendent position in the Waitsburg, Washington.

Mishra was the only one of five candidates to be invited back for a final interview, and will meet with the public and the school board.

Mishra has been with the Hermiston School District since 2009, and has served in his current role since 2014. He said he expects to find out the results of his interview on Friday.

Hermiston Assistant Superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district has not yet begun to look for another director of Special Programs in the event of his departure.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

# Hermiston OKs festival street design loan

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
East Oregonian

The Hermiston City Council had a busy meeting Monday, approving changes to the supplemental budget, approving a loan to fund the festival street project and discussing the progress at EOTEC.

The council issued a proclamation declaring April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month, reviewing some photos presented by Police Chief Jason Edmiston. His niece, Alexxyss Therwanger, died last year in a crash believed to have been affected by texting distract-

tions. Alexxyss' car will be featured in a display about distracted driving, which will be at the Hermiston High School parking lot April 3 and 4.

The Hermiston City Council entered an intergovernmental agreement to loan the Urban Renewal Agency \$100,000 for the festival street design.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan presented some photos of construction going on at the EOTEC grounds, including stadium seats and a small animal barn for which roofing will start later this week.

The council unanimously approved the

changes requested by city finance director Amy Palmer for the supplemental budget. The resolution for the hearing authorizes additional expenditures in nine funds, transfers between budget categories in two funds, a reduction of expenditures in one fund and inter-fund transfers between four funds. The non-departmental category will be increased by \$35,000 for a sewer expansion feasibility study. The reserve fund will be supplemented by \$27,200 for repairs at the aquatic center, and personnel services are being increased by \$8,000.

The total supplement

to the city budget is \$6,947,967. For reserves for future expenditures, \$70,473 was requested.

Morgan discussed the ridership for the Hermiston public bus system this month, and said the city will eventually look at changing services to reach more people. The bus currently makes four complete trips through town, each lasting about an hour and 15 minutes. Morgan said the city will also look at ways to make the service available to more people, potentially changing hours to serve those that work an 8 to 5 job. Currently, the free service runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## HERMISTON

# Children injured but in good spirits after accident

East Oregonian

The Oregon State Police has released the names of the drivers involved in Monday's head-on crash north of Hermiston.

Trooper Mitchell Goldman, who responded to the crash, said the first vehicle, a silver Jeep SUV, was driven by Jocelyne Vargas, 21, from Umatilla. The second vehicle, a Honda CR-V, was driven by Hermiston resident Jose Antonio Lemus, 28. Lemus' three children were in the car as well — a boy and a girl, both 6, and a boy, 4.

All those involved in

the crash were taken to the hospital and treated for injuries. Goldman said the 6-year-old boy was flown to Portland due to concerns about internal bleeding, but by Wednesday he was back in Hermiston and his injuries were found to be external only.

The six-year-old girl had some cuts and bruises on her arms and legs, and the four-year-old boy had a swollen head with some lacerations, but as of Wednesday, Goldman said the swelling was decreasing.

Lemus' left leg was pinned in the car, and he had to be extricated from his vehicle

by the fire department. He has a broken left leg, and a punctured right lung.

Goldman said at the scene, Vargas appeared to have some fairly severe lacerations on her head, and that she wasn't wearing her seatbelt at the time of the crash.

Goldman said he visited Lemus' family at the hospital on Wednesday, and that all appeared to be in good spirits after the accident.

The crash occurred around 9:57 p.m. Monday night, at mile marker 4 on North Highway 395. According to the OSP report, Vargas took her eyes

off the road, and when she looked back discovered she was about to hit a car in front of her. To avoid that, she swerved, going into oncoming traffic, and hitting Lemus' Honda CR-V head on.

Goldman said Vargas was issued a standard citation but no criminal charges.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 also responded to the call.

Friday Meals

LENT

March 31th from 5 to 7:00 p.m.  
@ the St. Anthony Hospital Blue Mountain Cafe

**Cedar Wrapped Salmon** - \$7.50/Adults  
- \$7.00/Children & Seniors  
*with Rice Pilaf & Buttered Green Beans*

**Baked Potato Bar** - \$4.00/with toppings  
*All you can eat.*

**Salmon/Potato Bar Combo** - \$11.50

**Clam Chowder Bread Bowl** - \$4.25  
*Single Cup \$1.25*

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2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton, OR 97801

## SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.