

HERMISTON

Couple crowned king and queen 64 years after their original prom

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Donald and JoAnn Clayton didn't go to their high school prom because of a lack of communication.

"His story is, he asked me and I didn't ever give him an answer," said JoAnn with a laugh. "And my story is, he just presumed I'd go. So we didn't go!"

Fortunately, the Claytons got a second chance at the high school tradition, going to the Hermiston High School prom nearly 64 years after the one they missed.

Earlier this school year the couple was visiting Hermiston from Port Angeles, Washington, where they've lived for more than 40 years. At that time, Donald stopped in at the high school to have a chat with principal Tom Spoo. He asked if he and his wife could attend the Hermiston prom, and Spoo happily agreed.

But what the couple didn't know was the school had some ideas of their own. District librarian Delia Wallis, leadership adviser Dave Rohrman and students from the student government class began planning ways to make the evening special for the couple.

"We had just intended to show up," JoAnn said.

Instead, the school treated the Claytons to an evening they won't forget. They were chauffeured around in a 1951 Mercury by Fred Clark of the Hermiston Classic Car Club. They were served dinner by Ford Bonney of Hale's Restaurant and stayed at Oxford Suites.

At the prom, Donald was dressed in his Marines Corps uniform and JoAnn donned a blue dress. The couple was seated at a special table, where students came up and chatted with them.

Wallis said students were very interested in the couple's story.

"Several students hugged the pair, and



Contributed photo
Donald and JoAnn Clayton were selected as the Hermiston prom king and queen Saturday. The couple graduated from HHS in 1952 and 1953 but their trip together to prom was delayed more than 60 years.

others made a special point of thanking Donald for his military service," Wallis said.

The biggest surprise of the night, though, came a bit later in the evening.

"They crowned us king and queen of the prom," said JoAnn. "It was beautiful. The kids were gracious, and the faculty were just wonderful."

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— JoAnn Clayton,
Hermiston High School prom queen

Students formed a circle around the couple as they danced to "You Belong to Me" by Jo Stafford.

Students also took the opportunity that evening to hear about the Claytons' life in Hermiston, long before any of them were born.

JoAnn, who was JoAnn Walker at the time, graduated in 1952, the last class to graduate from the "old high school," Hermiston Union, which later became the junior high. Donald was in the first class to graduate from the "new" school in 1953. Donald joined the Marine Corps shortly after graduation and used his "senior sneak day" to enlist. After he had left for boot camp, JoAnn said she got a call from Donald. "He called me and said, 'When I get back, we're getting married.'"

Students attending the 2017 prom also got a little bit of advice from the couple, who got married Oct. 5, 1953, at the Methodist Church in Hermiston.

"Be sure to pick the right person and then hold on," JoAnn said.

After Donald got out of the service, he enrolled at Washington State University in 1957. The couple lived in Eastern Oregon and Washington for several years before moving over to the west side of Washington.

They adopted three children and now have nine grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

"I still can't believe it all happened," JoAnn said. "My husband and I still look at each other and shake our heads."

HERMISTON

City employee loaned to chamber to learn how to run conference center

Council approves changes in parking downtown

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston has loaned the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce one of its employees in exchange for training on how to run the Hermiston Conference Center.

The city council amended its contract with the chamber Monday, creating a transition to when the city's parks and recreation department takes over management of the center from the chamber on January 1, 2018.

The chamber's own conference center facilitator recently resigned, and the chamber's executive board and city staff came to an agreement that for the rest of 2017 a parks and recreation employee will fill the position. The city will not reduce the amount of money it is paying the chamber to run the center, however, in recognition of the valuable training that employee will receive on facilitating events in the building.

Diana Picard, formerly a part-time employee in the parks and recreation department, will take the full-time job.

The staffing move was one of several discussed during a work session before the council's regular meeting Monday. City manager Byron Smith said as the city has grown and circumstances have changed, the city has become overdue for some restructuring.

Some of those changes will involve new titles and duties (and corresponding salaries), so Smith said he wanted to run them by the council before including them in the upcoming 2017-2018 budget.

The changes will add about \$50,000 per year in salary costs, but Smith said the city is netting about \$25,000 per year after a recent change to U.S. Bank helped increase interest earnings and reduce fees. He said the city will save another approximately \$85,000 per year thanks to a decision to outsource utility bill mailings to a national company.

"Mixing that with the new (remote-read) water meters we're installing, that's really going to free up staff to take on some other roles," he said.

Smith said the city doesn't really have one dedicated person to handle human resources, and so he would like to reclassify one of the city's customer

service representatives as a human resource specialist after she goes through the needed training.

City finance director Amy Palmer's title would change to administrative services director and she would take on some new duties such as supervision of the human resources position. Palmer was previously the city recorder as well, but that duty would be transferred to the city's executive assistant Lilly Alarcon-Strong.

The city's current part-time accounting technician who spends .25 FTE on city duties and .25 FTE on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center would be bumped up to a full-time employee spending half of her time as an administrative assistant for public works.

"If it makes us more efficient, and it's not going to cost us significantly more money, then our job is to set policy and yours is to steer the ship," mayor David Drotzmann told Smith after council members said they trusted the suggestions.

On Monday during their regular meeting, the council approved changes in parking downtown. The city has already begun restriping parking on Gladys Avenue in front of the Hermiston Public Library to change from parallel parking to diagonal, which will add four more spaces.

On Monday the council agreed to also switch to diagonal parking on the east side of Northeast Second Street between Main Street and Hurlburt Avenue, gaining two extra spaces. That will eventually match the diagonal parking planned for the eastern side of the city's new festival street between Main and Gladys.

Morgan said business owners along Second Street were excited for the diagonal parking, which will create extra spots, be more welcoming to people who don't like parallel parking and reduce inefficiencies from long vehicles hanging over into the next spot.

The city had sent out legal notice of a discussion to expand Hermiston's enterprise zone, which gives certain types of companies a property tax break for capital construction projects that bring new jobs to the city, but the council tabled that discussion until June 12 because Smith said the city is still negotiating with the company in question.

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PENDLETON

Rivoli restoration receives \$100K grant

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Downtown Association secured a \$100,000 grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department on behalf of the Rivoli Restoration Coalition, which will help restore the historic Rivoli Theater into a modern performing arts center.

Thanks to the proceeds from the grant, coalition president Andrew Picken said internal excavation work could begin as soon as July.

Both sides credit the collaboration for landing the grant, the largest in the coalition's history.

Association executive director Molly Turner said the state grant was only available to Oregon Main Street programs like the Pendleton Downtown Asso-

ciation. The association will take a 5 percent cut for processing the grant, the rest of which will go toward work at the Rivoli.

Turner praised the coalition for its thoroughness in planning out the project, which made applying for the grant easier.

"Chance favors the prepared mind," Picken said. "In this case, chance favored the prepared organizations."

With restoration and architectural plans already completed, Picken said the coalition has spent 2017 focusing on raising money for the first phase of construction, which includes some internal demolition, excavation and beam installation.

With the grant in hand, the coalition has raised 31 percent of the \$559,114 needed for the first phase of the project. But Picken said

they do not need to wait to raise the rest of the money to begin construction, and hopes to start the demolition process in July.

Volunteer groups have already removed 95,000 pounds of debris from the old movie theater, but the rest of the work requires skilled labor to complete.

Picken said that work will include the removal of all "nonessential" items that could pose as a safety hazard. Any historic aspects that need to be removed from the theater will be recreated during a later portion of the restoration.

Association president Fred Bradbury said the Rivoli restoration fits into the association's strategic plan and meets their goal of building partnerships throughout the downtown area.

Picken was eager to test out the partnership again.

"I don't see a reason why we can't do this with every grant," he said.

Turner said any signs of progress at the Rivoli will be important for future grant opportunities. She added that the association is willing to help any downtown business or organization when it comes to seeking grants.

In total, the state provided \$2.4 million in grants to organizations across Oregon.

In addition to Pendleton, Eastern Oregon communities that received grants include Burns, Enterprise, Baker City, John Day, La Grande and Weston.

In Weston, the state granted \$70,000 to repair brickwork on the Longbranch Saloon, located at 201 E. Main.

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HERMISTON

School board adds three paid days for teachers

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Hermiston teachers will work three extra paid days next school year.

The school board also approved a tentative agreement with the Hermiston Association of Teachers at Monday's meeting. They approved a two-year contract that includes the addition of three days, bringing the total to 192 working days for the school year, and a cost of living salary increase of one percent for the first year and 1.5 percent for the second year.

The school's updated calendar was released, and includes the additional workdays. Teachers will now have an additional workday on Aug. 21, 2017, and students will have two additional school days, Dec. 18 and 19, before Christmas break. Those two days were previously snow make-up days.

During the meeting, members of the district's online/flex and hybrid learning team spoke to the district about the success of the blended learning program, which combines aspects of both online and classroom learning. Those

students attend school on a typical schedule, but have a range of traditional teacher instruction, independent time and online learning.

"It's not intended to replace a classroom teacher," said Amber Utter, an instructional coach for the district. "The idea is to personalize learning, deliver content to give students more control, and give them accountability," she said.

The board also unanimously approved the hire of Christie Petersen as the Sunset Elementary School principal. Petersen is a longtime educator, with many years of classroom

experience and, most recently, several years as a professor and instructional coach in the Willamette Valley. Petersen will begin her job July 1, replacing outgoing principal Devin Grigg.

"I am so excited to be serving with an outstanding group of distinguished colleagues in such a strong district," Petersen said in a statement.

I am having a hard time putting into words, the admiration, appreciation and thanks that I feel for our wonderful team of First Responders.

On the afternoon of April 11th, my husband and I were returning from walking our dog. We were in our pickup, and my husband was driving. He had just pulled into the driveway, said he didn't feel well, then collapsed. Fortunately, his foot was still on the brake, because he hadn't gotten it into Park. I called 911, put the pickup in Park, and went around to the drivers side. The dispatcher was very patient with me in spite of the fact that I was panicked because he had stopped breathing. She asked me if I could get him to a flat surface, and I said "no" but I could put the seat down and was pumping his chest as she tried to calm me down. The EMS team consisting of Fire Department, Police Officers and EMT's got to my home in record time and pulled him out of the pickup and did CPR in our driveway.

They got a pulse, took him to the airport and Lifeflighted him to St. Mary's Hospital in Walla Walla, where he was in ICU for 10 days. I am a firm believer in prayer, and it is truly a miracle of medical and heavenly coordination that brought my husband back to our family.

I commend everyone involved and want to publicly say "THANK YOU" from the bottom of my heart. YOU ARE WORTHY OF OUR RESPECT.

Thankfully, Charlotte Garner

Mother's Day is May 14th

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