

# GENEVA: She wore pink for the special occasion

Continued from 1A

Ralph said his parents always worked hard to give their children a good life, and Geneva frequently sacrificed things she needed — even new underwear — so that her children could enjoy their childhood.

“I remember that holey underwear hanging on the line and I used to shake my head, but I couldn’t refuse that dollar to go ice skating with my girlfriend,” Ralph said.

He said his mom never complained, even when the family’s vacation plans meant that she went straight from a long graveyard shift to a six-day hike with the family. As Geneva’s only boy, he said he could “do no wrong in her eyes” and that knowledge affected his choices his entire life.

“I did the best I could not to shame her and the family,” he said. “I avoided a lot of mischief because of my love for her.”

When Ralph decided to become a doctor, his parents told him they couldn’t afford to help pay his tuition, but they did help in other ways. He used to mail his laundry



Ralph Eddings of Snoqualmie, Washington, at left, tells a story about his mother, Geneva, during her 109th birthday party on Thursday in Hermiston.

home and his mother would do it for him and send it back, which at the time was cheaper than going to a laundromat.

Muriel said her mother was a “super-mom” and she’s grateful they have been able to remain close.

“Dad died in about 1983, so Mom and I have been kind of pals since then,” she said.

Surrounded by family and friends on Thursday, Geneva accepted birthday hugs, well-wishes and cards that she read out loud to the group. She wore pink for the special occasion, along with a rose and a birthday sash. Muriel announced to the group that Geneva had become a great-great-grandmother for the first time a few days earlier.

Geneva said she was grateful to everyone who came, and thought the cake was delicious.

“Thank you all,” she said, after struggling to find the right words to express her emotions.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

# PERS: Some of the ideas may require legislative approval

Continued from 1A

that sum by cutting costs elsewhere in the budget or raising revenue.

Suggestions from the task force have included using some of the state’s reserves and rethinking how certain parts of state government, such as educational institutions and the state’s liquor control commission, are run or structured.

While some of the ideas task force members floated at the most recent meeting Monday involved reducing costs, such as consolidating some of the state’s public universities and community colleges, many ideas involved raising new revenue to help pay off the unfunded liability, such as a placing a surcharge on liquor or on certain state-issued licenses and permits.

Some of the ideas may require legislative approval, and indications are they may face some pushback. However, the task force has about two more months before its final report is due

to Brown Nov. 1, and task force meeting materials note that “there is significantly more work to do between now and then.”

The governor, in turn, is expected to choose which proposals to bring to the Legislature.

House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, voiced disapproval of some of the early proposals in a prepared statement.

McLane claimed the task force was signing on to a “myth” that the way to reduce the unfunded liability is by raising revenue and argued instead for having state employees contribute “their fair share toward their retirement accounts.”

However, attempts at curtailing public employees’ retirement benefits going forward stalled out during this year’s legislative session, despite an early session effort by state senators on both sides of the aisle.

State Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, an advocate

for revenue reform, said the state has already attacked the “low-hanging fruit” when it comes to PERS, such as in 2003, when the Legislature created a new tier of retirement benefits that were scaled back from the plans offered employees who had been hired earlier.

Hass did not comment on specific proposals from the governor’s unfunded liability task force, but said he believes the unfunded liability problem could be addressed with tax reform.

Despite failure of revenue reform in the most recent session, he thinks with a different approach, “evening out” the tax code could allow the state to devote more money toward paying down the unfunded liability. In particular, Hass has been critical of the volatility of the income tax — the state’s primary source of general fund revenue — and its property tax structure.

Hass pointed to this session’s transportation package as an example of how an agreement on taxes

could be reached: a bipartisan group of legislators hosted a series of public meetings across the state and ended up with policy proposals that weren’t “conspicuous” back in 2015, when an attempt at a transportation package failed during that year’s long session.

“When the transportation package in 2015 was on deck, it looked a lot different and actually less ambitious than the one we actually passed,” Hass said.

Hass acknowledged differences between transportation and taxes — especially when it comes to public opinion. But Hass believes legislators recognize the obstacles in place, and that they are not “insurmountable” in the face of the unfunded liability issue.

“It doesn’t mean we’ll just throw up our hands and never fix it,” Hass said.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

# FLAG: Moody has inquired about setting up shop in another part of town

Continued from 1A

and Blagg had reached a compromise for the 2017 event during a discussion they had about two weeks ago with the Cowboys: Liberty Flags & Gifts would display only one Confederate flag on the inside of their booth and refrain from flying any Confederate flags above their Main Street booth, as they did last year. Additionally, the owner wouldn’t make any comments to the media or talk about politics.

Moody said the vendor had done something similar at Bohemia Days in Cottage Grove when a complaint caused Liberty Flags & Gifts to advertise their supply of Confederate flags with a sign instead of a display.

But a few days ago, Moody said they received a letter from the Main Street Cowboys, noting the organization would not approve their application.

“Basically, they’re just dumping on our freedom of speech,” she said.

Blagg said he and Moody talked about these issues but a compromise was never

“We choose what is the best fit for the show.” — Johnny Blagg, Main Street Cowboys vendor director

reached because the Main Street Cowboys had never approved the application.

The Confederate flag has long been a polarizing symbol, but it has reached a boiling point in recent weeks.

When a group of so-called alt-right activists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Aug. 12 to oppose the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue, protesters and counter-protesters clashed in public spaces.

In the afternoon, an Ohio man allegedly drove a car into a group of counter protesters, killing a woman and injuring several others.

Following the events in Charlottesville, a Pendleton woman organized a local march against racism, leading a group of more than 200 people in a demonstration across downtown Pendleton.

Besides the local political climate, Blagg said the local media making a “mountain out of a mole hill” over

the issue played a role in the Main Street Cowboys’ decision.

Following inquiries from the *East Oregonian* about Liberty Flags & Gifts return, Blagg said they wanted to avoid “last year’s ruckus,” adding that it was nothing personal.

“We choose what is the best fit for the show,” he said.

Moody said the short notice about their application means that they’re “dead in the water” when it comes to booking another event for that weekend.

Since the Main Street Cowboys only oversee vendors on South Main Street, Moody has inquired about setting up shop in another part of Pendleton but hasn’t heard back yet. If Liberty Flags & Gifts misses the whole week entirely, she said they’ll miss out on \$5,000 to \$6,000 in sales.

When interviewed Thursday, Great Pacific Wine and Coffee co-owner Carol Hanks seemed

relieved that the vendor wouldn’t make a return to Main Street, in front of her restaurant.

“They’re a symbol of hate,” she said of the flags.

Hanks said she did complain about the flags last year and was concerned that the vendors would sell even more at this year’s event.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.

**Route work pays for my children's activities.**



**Become an East Oregonian Carrier.**

**211 SE Byers Ave. Pendleton or call: 541-276-2211 1-800-522-0255**

**EAST OREGONIAN**

# Trump administration cuts funds for health care sign-ups

WASHINGTON (AP) — Affirming its disdain for “Obamacare,” the Trump administration on Thursday announced sharp cuts in programs promoting health care enrollment under the Affordable Care Act for next year.

Advertising will be cut from \$100 million spent on 2017 sign-ups to \$10 million, said Health and Human Services officials.

Funding for consumer helpers called “navigators” will also be cut about 40 percent, from \$62.5 million for 2017, to \$36.8 million for next year. That change reflects a new performance-based ethic that penalizes navigator programs failing to meet their sign-up targets, administration officials said.

About 12.2 million people signed up for subsidized private health insurance under Barack Obama’s signature law this year, many in states that President Donald Trump carried in November. Current enrollment is estimated to be around 10 million, due to attrition also seen in prior years.

Top Democrats accused the administration of malice.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California said the administration is waging a “cynical effort to lower enrollment” that would “create chaos” and increase premiums.

Her Senate counterpart, Chuck Schumer of New York, said the administration “is deliberately attempting to sabotage our health care system,” adding that “the American people will know who’s to blame.”

It was unclear how Trump’s latest move might affect a planned effort in the Senate to craft bipartisan legislation that would stabilize insurance markets.

Trump and congressional Republicans have been unable to deliver on their vow to “repeal and

replace” the 2010 health care law, but the president has repeatedly pronounced the program on the verge of collapse.

On Twitter and in interviews, Trump has threatened to give “Obamacare” a nudge by cutting off payments to insurers that help reduce consumers’ copays and deductibles. Still, his administration has continued making payments month to month.

Independent observers say the ACA’s insurance markets have problems, but are not about to implode. For next year all U.S. counties will have at least one participating insurer, although consumers in close to half of counties will only have a single carrier serving them. Some major insurers have left the program after taking deep financial losses.

HHS officials announced the promotional cutbacks in a conference call with reporters. The three officials who described the details of the cuts refused to be identified by name.

The administration says the government hasn’t gotten much bang for its buck as far as ACA advertising and the navigator program, with some enrollment centers signing up very few customers.

By comparison, HHS said the combined advertising budget for Medicare Advantage and Medicare prescription drug plans is \$9.7 million.

HHS officials said the 98 navigator programs funded by the ACA enrolled fewer than 82,000 people, or less than 1 percent of the total. Navigator staffers are supposed to guide consumers through the sometimes complicated enrollment process, which involves estimating income for the coming year, proving citizenship or legal residence, and sorting through various health plan options.

- EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY -

*Administrative Support / Inside Sales*

Great work environment. Super awesome team. Good base pay PLUS commissions. Retirement plan. Weekends off. Interested?

We are looking for a motivated, confident individual to join our team at East Oregonian in Pendleton. This full-time position will do inside sales and provide administrative support to the advertising director and publisher.

No media or sales experience? No problem, as long as you understand the importance of great customer service, working hard and a desire to enjoy your job.

**Could this be you?**

Benefits include Paid Time Off (PTO) and 401(k)/Roth 401(k) retirement plan. Send resume and letter of interest to EO Media Group, PO Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308-2048 or e-mail [hr@eomediagroup.com](mailto:hr@eomediagroup.com)

**Come work with us! We are an awesome team.**

Send resume and letter of interest to **EO Media Group**, PO Box 2048 • Salem, OR 97308-2048, by fax to **503-371-2935** or e-mail [hr@eomediagroup.com](mailto:hr@eomediagroup.com)

**EAST OREGONIAN**

*Come work with us! We are an awesome team.*

