

Former Eastern Oregon drug crime boss in jail for thefts

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Carlos Joaquin Barragan used to run one of the largest illegal drug operations in northeast Oregon. Now he's in jail for jewelry theft and ripping off a local car club.

Barragan in 2009 helped set up the largest illegal marijuana crop in Grant County, and in 2011 in federal court he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to manufacture and deliver more than 1,000 marijuana plants.

Barragan served almost six years in the federal prison in Sheridan and returned to

Hermiston. Police there arrested him Nov. 17 and booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.

Hermiston police Chief Jason Edmiston said Barragan is the subject of a drug possession case and the two theft cases, one involving the Hermiston Classics Car Club.

Larry Storment was the recent club president and recalled Barragan as a "nice, friendly guy." They lived a couple doors apart, Barra-



Barragan

gan would visit when Storment rolled out his 1955 pickup, and Barragan hung with Storment's son, Richard Storment, who state court records show has a criminal record. His last conviction was in 2008 for second-degree assault, a felony.

The car club needed a new treasurer, Larry Storment said, so he was handling the club's checkbook and one day tucked it away inside his desk at home after paying a club bill. He said that's when Barragan had access to the checkbook.

He took five checks from the book in early August, Storment said, and wrote them for

\$200 each and cashed four at a local bank machine.

"You can take checks to an ATM and 30 minutes later withdraw the money," he said, and Barragan did that four times. He gave the fifth check, Storment said, to another guy who cashed it at a local credit union.

"That guy fled the country to Mexico, but Carlos they got," he said.

The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office charged Barragan on Nov. 19 with multiple counts of forgery and theft. His defense attorney, Herman Bylenga of Pendleton, filed to dismiss a month later because the par-

ties reached a civil compromise. Storment said Barragan's family made restitution and gave the club the \$1,000 it was out, and that's significant for the club's work.

"We give that money away," he said. "That's what we do with it. We give it away to some needy organizations around town."

Court records show Circuit Judge Christopher Brauer on Dec. 20 signed the motion to dismiss due to the restitution.

But the law was not done with Barragan. The district attorney on Dec. 23 charged him with first-degree theft. Edmiston said the charge

stems from stealing jewelry worth more than \$1,000 in November from residents at the Country Squire Estates, the trailer park at 1500 N.E. 10th St. Court records show the case goes to trial Monday. And Edmiston said there remains the matter of the drugs Barragan had on him at the time of his arrest. He has yet to face charges for that, however.

Barragan remains in the county jail, and Storment said that is where he needs to be.

"He came to our house and we treated him like a guest," he said, "and he took advantage of us."

Nebraska artist pieces together 'Parallel Worlds'

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Shea Wilkinson creates art quilts using free motion quilting and hand embroidery. Using materials including silk and cotton fabrics, polyester, cotton and silk threads, and wool, Shea creates stories, using stitch to amplify the textures of the spaces.



Wilkinson

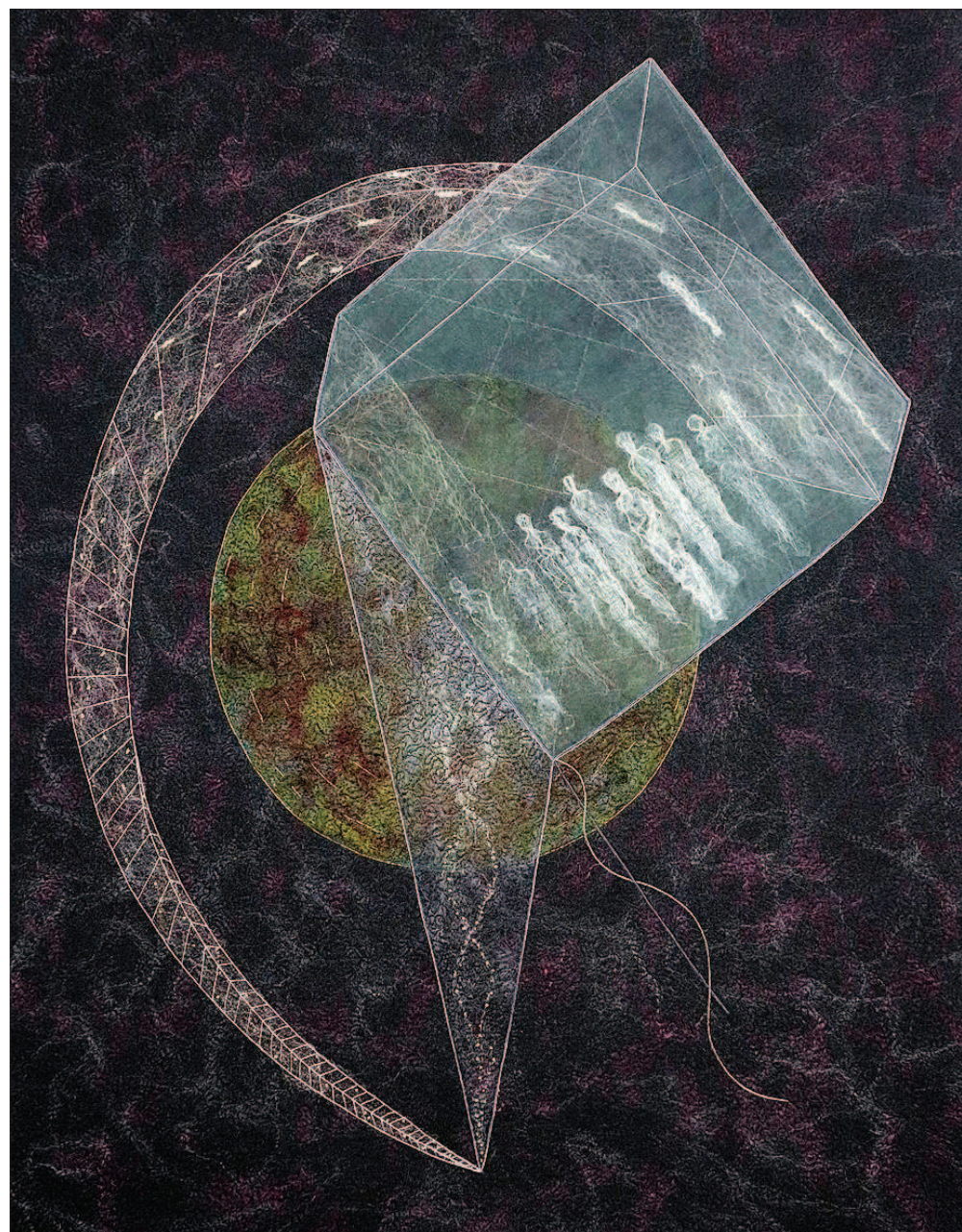
"The stories that I tell through my work are related to imagery from science, natural and extraterrestrial worlds, and mythology," she said. "I find natural phenomena has the potential to seem unreal or supernatural when seen from an unusual perspective, which I strive to share with the viewer."

An exhibit featuring her work, "Parallel Worlds," opens Thursday at Betty Feves Memorial Gallery. The free event runs from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the gallery, located in Pioneer Hall at Blue Mountain Community College, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. An artist talk takes place at 5 p.m. via Zoom video conference from her studio in Omaha.

The Nebraska fabric artist is interested in educating viewers about the art form. The exhibit also includes a display of time-lapse videos of her working in her studio.

"Aside from loving the act of quilting, and the daily rhythm of the machine, I also enjoy the chance to immerse myself in topics that I find visually and intellectually exciting," Wilkinson said.

A self-taught fiber artist, Wilkinson began sew-



Contributed photo

"Full Circle," created with silk, organza, cotton, polyester and silk threads, silk, wool and bamboo fibers and glass beads, is featured in "Parallel Worlds," an exhibit by Shea Wilkinson. It opens Jan. 10 at Betty Feves Memorial Gallery at BMCC in Pendleton.

ing as a child. While teaching English in Mexico, she became passionate about creating art — returning to the United States to pursue her passion.

Her work has been featured in exhibits across the nation. In addition, Wilkinson has been recognized for her work, including receiv-

ing the James Renwick Alliance's Chrysalis Award for distinguished emerging artist in 2016. She has a bachelor's degree in international studies and German language from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

"Parallel Worlds" runs through Thursday, Feb. 7. The gallery is open Mon-

day through Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and by appointment. For more information, contact gallery director Lori Sams at 541-278-5952, lsams@bluecc.edu or visit www.bluecc.edu/community/feves-art-gallery. For the artist's website, go to www.sheawilkinson.com.

BRIEFLY

Heppner to enhance visitor experiences

HEPPNER — In an effort to shine, the First Impressions program is coming to Heppner.

In the fall, a visiting team conducted a "first impressions" assessment of Heppner. The public can learn about the findings of the report and continue discussions on how to support local businesses and community vitality.

The Heppner First Impressions Community Action Planning Meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 15 from 6-8 p.m. at Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main St. A free pizza dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m.

To ensure there is enough food and seating, people are asked to RSVP by Friday. For more information or to register, contact Heppner Chamber of Commerce at 541-676-5536 or heppnerchamber@centurytel.net.

Red Cross announces blood drives

In the coming weeks, the American Red Cross will hold several blood drives in the area

The need for blood is constant, especially during the cold winter months. Each day, blood donors help patients of all ages — from accident and burn victims to heart surgery and organ transplant patients. According to the American Red Cross, every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood.

Upcoming blood

drives are:
•Monday, Jan. 14 from 10:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston.

•Tuesday, Jan. 15 from 12:30-5:30 p.m. at Red Lion, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton.

•Friday, Jan. 18 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Umatilla City Hall, 700 Sixth St., Umatilla.

•Monday, Jan. 21 from noon to 6 p.m. at St. Anthony Hospital, 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton.

•Monday, Jan. 21 from noon to 6 p.m. at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston.

•Tuesday, Jan. 22 from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

•Friday, Feb. 1 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston.

While walk-ins are welcome, donors are encouraged to schedule an appointment by calling 1-800-733-2767 or via www.redcrossblood.org.

Library program gets crafty

HERMISTON — Free craft activities are available at the Hermiston Public Library.

The Free Saturday Crafts is each Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., while supplies last. The library is located at 235 E. Gladys Ave. Kids of all ages are invited to join the fun and get creative.

For more information, call the library at 541-567-2882 or visit www.hermistonlibrary.us.

Dancing with the Hermiston Stars takes center stage Jan. 12

Area nonprofits benefit from dancing competition

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

A handful of local "stars" will get schooled during the seventh annual Dancing with the Hermiston Stars.

Taking over organizing the popular event, the Hermiston Education Foundation is looking forward to a fun time while also providing a fundraising opportunity for seven local nonprofit organizations.

After working with professionals from the Utah Ballroom Dance Company throughout the week, the local stars will attempt to work the crowd to raise additional votes and money for their cause. In addition, they are vying for the coveted mirror ball trophy.

Dancing with the Hermiston Stars is Saturday at 7 p.m. in the Hermiston High School auditorium, 600 S. First St. Advance tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. They are available by clicking "Events" at www.hermistoneducationfoundation.org



Winebarger



Umbarger



Garberg



Frazier



Badillo



Bacon



Anderson

or the Hermiston School District office, 305 S.W. 11th St. Tickets purchased at the door are \$25.

With a theme of Music Legends, the performances should be legendary. The local dancers include Beth Anderson, a Hermiston High School drama teacher. Dancing for the Hermiston Education Foundation, the host organization provides grants to district employees to enhance educational opportunities for students. Anderson reports her last dance performance at age 6 was a tap routine to "I'm a Little Teapot." As for Jake Bacon, Highland Hills Elementary School principal, it's "Hammer Time." He hopes to dispel rumors that "you can't touch this" as he raises money for the Kiwanis Club of Hermiston.

Jonny Badillo, who's dancing for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), picked up some tips from

'I FELT LIKE I REALLY ACCOMPLISHED SOMETHING WHEN I MADE IT THROUGH MY 90 SECONDS. IT WAS A LITTLE SCARY BUT IT WAS FUN.'

Tricia Mooney, Hermiston School District superintendent

Umatilla-Morrow County Head Start co-worker Jesus Rome, who was a participant in the 2016 event (view at www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBFR9pfNOis). CASA volunteers provide support to foster children. Tony Garberg, director of cardiopulmonary services at Good Shepherd Health Care System, will breathe easy as he's raising money for the Hermiston Rotary Club. The service club is supporting Pioneer Relief Nursery to help prevent child abuse.

Kara Frazier, a first grade teacher at Desert View Elementary School, will kick up her heels for Made to Thrive. The local nonprofit provides support to at-risk youngsters through sports, activities music and art. Ashley Umbarger, who grew up attending Hermiston Campus Life, now serves as its executive director with her husband, Jeff. And, she's hoping to cut a rug and a check for the faith-based teen program. Mary Winebarger, who moved to Herm-

iston in 2010, got involved with Altrusa International of Hermiston in 2017, serving as treasurer. A semi-retired bookkeeper, she's hoping to add some cash to the ledger of the local service club.

Getting people to commit to dancing wasn't a difficult process, said HEF co-president Karen Sherman. The board contacted several local nonprofits and asked if they wanted to be involved with the fundraiser. The organizations then took steps to find people willing to dance on their behalf.

"I think that speaks volumes about our community — that organizations are full of people that will put themselves out there," said Tricia Mooney, Hermiston School District superintendent.

And, Mooney knows what it means to put her money where her feet are. Despite being apprehensive, she danced during the 2018 event.

"I felt like I really accomplished something when I made it through my 90 seconds," she said with a laugh. "It was a little scary but it was fun."

The winner will be determined by a combination of judge's scores, audience votes and money raised by each dancer. People can cast votes through donations at the event or via <https://squareup.com/store/hef>.

The first half of Dancing with the Hermiston Stars showcases the local dancers paired up with the professionals. The second portion features a program presented by the Utah Ballroom Dance Company. In addition to an evening of fun, Mooney said it serves as a way to support multiple nonprofits.

"The event has been going on for many years in Hermiston," she said. "It's a way to benefit a lot of different deserving organizations in the community."