

Former La Grande man on front lines of New Zealand emergency

Dr. Matt Valentine treated many of the survivors after eruption

By DICK MASON
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — The stunning Dec. 9 volcanic eruption on New Zealand's White Island jolted the small nation and the life of Dr. Matt Valentine, an emergency room physician with deep La Grande roots. Valentine, based at Whakatane Hospital, 30 miles south of White Island, treated many of the survivors right after the volcano blew, an unanticipated event that left at least 16 people dead and more than two dozen injured.

The physician is the son of Eric and Meg Valentine of La Grande. Eric Valentine reported when his son arrived at Whakatane shortly after the eruption, the hospital, about the size of Grande Ronde Hospital, had 20 patients from the eruption.

"They all suffered from various degrees of steam burns from the brief but intense steam and ash eruption on White Island," Eric Valentine said, discussing what his son told him.

Medical staff treated and released a few of the patients but others needed critical care, placing enormous stress on the hospital personnel.

"They were spread very thin," Eric Valentine said.

The *New Zealand Herald* reported all victims at Whakatane



A recent view of the eruption at White Island, New Zealand.

Photo courtesy of the New Zealand Herald

Hospital had burns covering at least 30% of their bodies and 22 victims initially required airway support. Valentine said patients needed intubation and ventilators to help them breathe, but there was not enough equipment to go around. Whakatane Hospital reached out to other facilities for burn treatment supplies and transferred some patients to larger hospitals.

He said the worst cases went to Christchurch, a city of about 380,000 on the South Island where there is a major burn treatment center. According to the *Herald*,

in the hours after the eruption, 29 patients were under intensive care in Christchurch and at New Zealand's three other burn units, at Middlemore, Waikato and Hutt Valley.

"Fixed wing aircraft and helicopters were flying patients out all night," Eric Valentine said.

Matt Valentine grew up in La Grande and graduated from La Grande High School in 1989. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1994 and from Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, in 1999. He practiced medi-

cine in Florence on the Oregon Coast for five years before moving to New Zealand in 2008 to take his position at Whakatane Hospital.

Dr. John Bonning, president of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, also treated burn patients injured in the eruption. He told the *Herald* as he wheeled patients into Waikato Hospital after the eruption he could smell the sulfur coming from their clothing and saw "bits of dead skin" and "broken ash" peeling off their bodies.

"It was awful, just horrific," he

said. "Saying it was like a war zone would not be an understatement."

His comments came as New Zealand authorities imported 120 square meters of skin from the United States and Australia to help treat the victims' terrible burn injuries. The *Herald* reported that equates to about 60 donors — in New Zealand only five to 10 people donate skin each year.

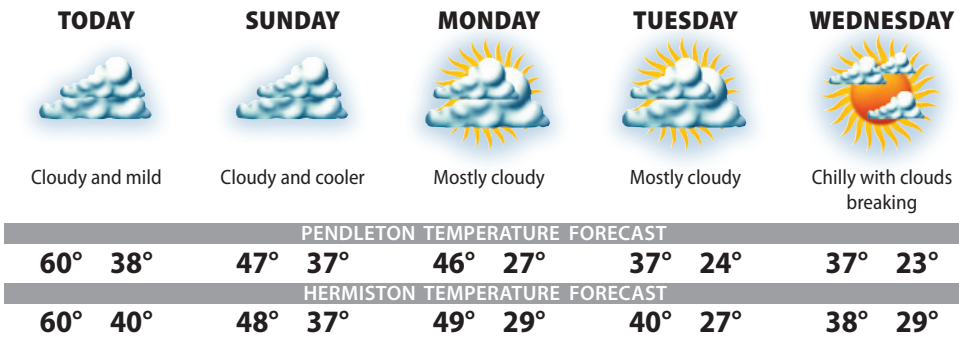
The demand for blood and plasma also increased dramatically since the eruption, Sarah Morley, chief medical officer at New Zealand Blood Service, told the *Herald*. And Heather Cleland, plastic surgeon and director of the Victorian Adult Burns Service, said the biggest challenge for treating patients with severe burns was fluid loss, resuscitation and protection of the airways.

"Once fluid loss occurs, the blood pressure starts to drop and the person will go into shock, so resuscitation and inserting (an) intravenous line is crucial to avoid organ failure," Cleland said. "The other issue is inhalation and protection of the airway, which can block off, creating a very dangerous situation. People often require a tube to be put down into their lungs to keep the airway open so the patient can still breathe basically."

Bonning also took to other New Zealand media to praise the staff at Whakatane Hospital.

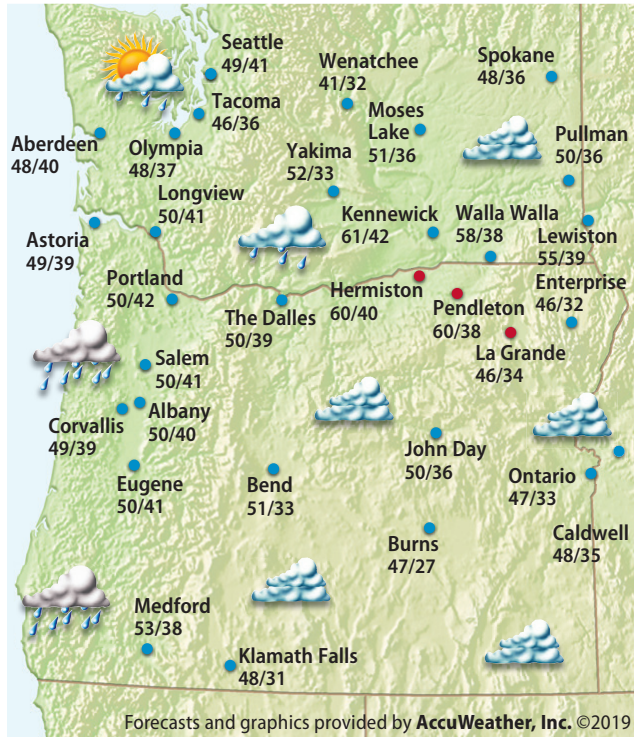
"Whakatane did supremely well," he said. "They received more critical care patients in 12 hours than they usually see in nearly 12 months."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



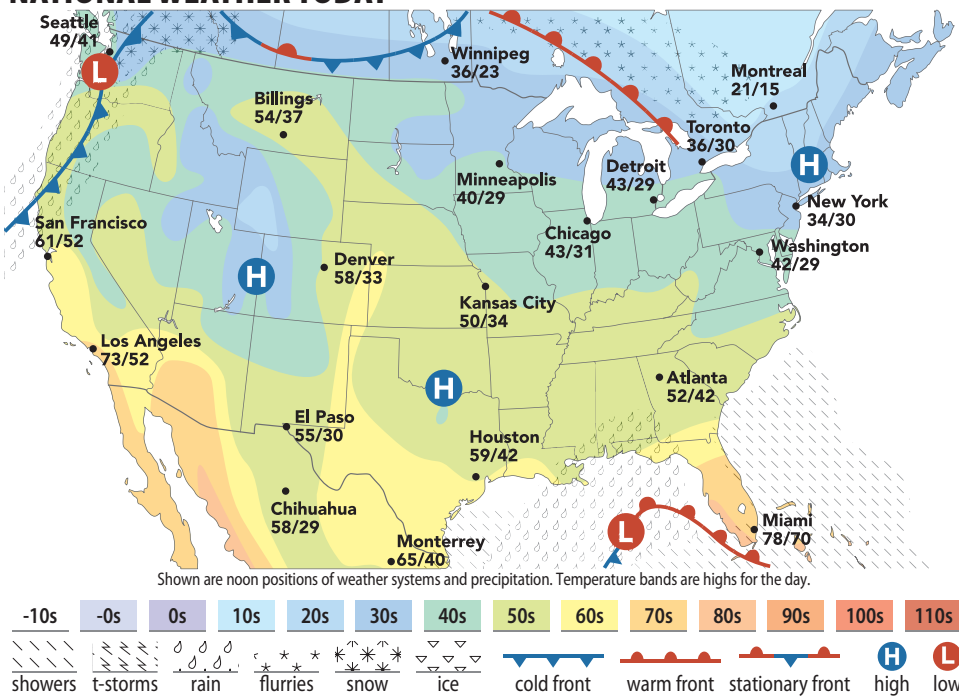
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	61°	56°	
Normals	39°	25°	
Records	66° (1900)	-12° (1990)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"		
Month to date	0.62"		
Normal month to date	0.98"		
Year to date	12.20"		
Last year to date	9.49"		
Normal year to date	12.45"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	66°	35°	
Normals	39°	27°	
Records	66° (2019)	-12° (1990)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.13"		
Normal month to date	0.99"		
Year to date	5.08"		
Last year to date	7.32"		
Normal year to date	9.46"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Sun.		
Boardman	WSW 4-8	N 4-8	
Pendleton	S 8-16	NNE 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:33 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	4:14 p.m.		
Moonrise today	2:15 a.m.		
Moonset today	1:35 p.m.		
New	First	Full	Last
Dec 25	Jan 2	Jan 10	Jan 17

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 79° in Fullerton, Calif. Low -20° in Waverly, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Legislators subject to public records law

By RACHEL LA CORTE
Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Washington Supreme Court ruled Thursday the Public Records Act fully applies to state lawmakers.

The justices heard arguments in June on the appeal of a case that was sparked by a September 2017 lawsuit filed by a media coalition, led by The Associated Press. It sought sexual harassment reports, calendar entries and other documents.

The coalition argued lawmakers have been violating the law by not releasing the information. Lawmakers have long said they are not

subject to the law that applies to other elected officials and agencies.

The justices ruled in favor of the media coalition in a 7-2 decision.

A Thurston County superior court judge ruled in January 2018 that while the offices of individual lawmakers are subject to the Public Records Act, the House and Senate were not. The Legislature appealed the portion of the ruling that applies to the legislative offices, and the media coalition appealed the portion of the ruling that applies to the House and Senate.

While the media won its argument that individ-

ual lawmakers must release records, a majority of the Supreme Court justices ruled the institutions of the Legislature, the House and the Senate, are not required to.

The state's public-records act was passed by voter initiative in 1972.

The Legislature has made a series of changes to it in the decades since, and lawyers for the House and Senate have regularly cited a 1995 revision to a 1971 definition of legislative records in their denials to reporters seeking records. The House and Senate release limited records, including travel, and payroll records and reports submitted to the Legislature.

BRIEFLY

Judge won't dismiss lawsuit against Monsanto

SEATTLE — A judge says he won't throw out Washington state's lawsuit against Monsanto over pervasive pollution from PCBs.

In a ruling Thursday, King County Superior Court Judge Jim Rogers declined a request by the agrochemical giant to dismiss the case. Rogers said Monsanto had waived its right to bring the motion to dismiss by not filing it sooner and that Washington had stated a plausible case against the company.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson in 2016 made Washington the first U.S. state to sue Monsanto over its manufacture of PCBs, the toxic industrial chemicals that have accumulated in plants, fish and people around the globe for decades. Ferguson alleged that Monsanto long hid what it knew about the harmful effects of PCBs.

Oregon has also sued, and a judge there declined to dismiss that case last January.

Monsanto was the sole U.S. maker of PCBs until it stopped producing them in 1977. The chemicals, which have been linked to cancer and other health problems, were banned two years later.

The company has said the case lacks merit, and it noted that Washington and other government entities were among the users of PCBs.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, were used in many industrial and commercial applications, including in paint, cool-

ants, sealants and hydraulic fluids.

Boise woman convicted of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation

BOISE, Idaho — A jury has found a Boise woman guilty of abusing an elderly couple she worked for as a caregiver.

Sherri L. Watring, 53, was arrested in January and charged with two counts of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adult and one count of exploitation of a vulnerable adult. An Ada County jury convicted her of all the charges on Wednesday after a three-day trial.

Prosecutors said she worked as a caregiver for an elderly couple between 2016 and 2018, using her power of attorney to take money from the couple and denying the elderly woman adequate medical treatment and nutrition.

Prosecutors also said that when the elderly man died in February 2018, Watring had him cremated and didn't tell his family about it. They say when she was fired from the job weeks later, she took the ashes with her, spread them in a location unknown to the family and later turned the empty urn over to police.

The elderly woman died while under hospice care in June 2018.

Watring is scheduled to be sentenced on March 6. She faces a maximum of up to 10 years in prison for each abuse charge.

— Associated Press

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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