

Kirk Douglas brought his star power to Central Oregon

Veteran actor shot a number of films in the Bend area

By KYLE SPURR
EO Media Group

BEND — The day after her high school graduation, Jean Drost and the other girls in the 1955 Water Pageant Court were invited to a film set outside of Bend to meet the Oscar-nominated leading man with the rugged good looks.

Kirk Douglas.

Douglas was starring in the Western movie “The Indian Fighter,” which was being filmed in a fictional fort built near Benham Falls.

Drost and the girls took several pictures with Douglas. She remembers the movie star being personable and asking them about the Water Pageant Court.

“That was our claim to fame,” Drost recalled recently. “Having a picture with Kirk Douglas.”

Douglas would go on to a long movie career starting in “Lust for Life” (1956) and “Spartacus” (1960). He returned to Central Oregon in 1966 to film “The Way West.”

Drost, now 82 and living in Gardnerville, Nevada, was reminded of that day with Douglas after news broke Wednesday of his death at 103.

“I remember it very vividly because it was such a big event for a



Photo courtesy of the Deschutes Historical Museum

Kirk Douglas and Elsa Martinelli starred in the 1955 movie “The Indian Fighter,” which was filmed in Bend.

young girl,” she said.

Douglas and his production company, Bryna Productions, chose Central Oregon as the location for “The Indian Fighter.”

The Bend Chamber of Commerce invested about \$30,000 to build Fort Benham with the hope it would be used for future movies.

“Movie producers were looking for these big open spaces, and we still had big open spaces,” said Kelly Cannon-Miller, director of the Deschutes Historical Museum.

“They scouted out around here and found the spot out by Fort Benham.”

Fort Benham was used in two other movies, “Oregon Passage” (1957) and “Tonka” (1958), and in episodes of the TV show “Have Gun Will Travel.”

But the fort did not draw any other cinematic attention, and the surrounding area was burned in 1962 from a campfire that got out of control. The fort was also vandalized and starting to weaken.

In 1963, the U.S. Forest Service

decided to demolish the fort.

“The Forest Service at that point found it to be a hazard and that it was a danger,” Cannon-Miller said.

In the eight years it stood, the fort was a moneymaker for the region. It brought in more than \$1 million to the local economy, according to the Bend Chamber of Commerce.

Having the fort and a movie star like Douglas coming to Bend brought a boost to the region during down years after the Shevlin-Hixon

mill had closed, Cannon-Miller said.

“It’s still an economically shaky time period,” Cannon-Miller said. “It was a big deal for him to pick here.”

For longtime Bend resident Bill Boyd, filming at Fort Benham was a highlight of his childhood.

Boyd was an extra in the movie “Tonka,” along with other members of his high school marching band. They each earned about \$10 a day.

“Tonka” was filmed three years after Kirk Douglas came to Bend for “The Indian Fighter.”

Boyd and other band members were asked to play music while on horseback. The problem was some of them had never been on a horse before, Boyd said.

“Chaos reigned,” Boyd said. “Horses were going every which direction and some were bucking. It was a general mess. I don’t know why they thought an untrained group was capable of doing cavalry maneuvers.”

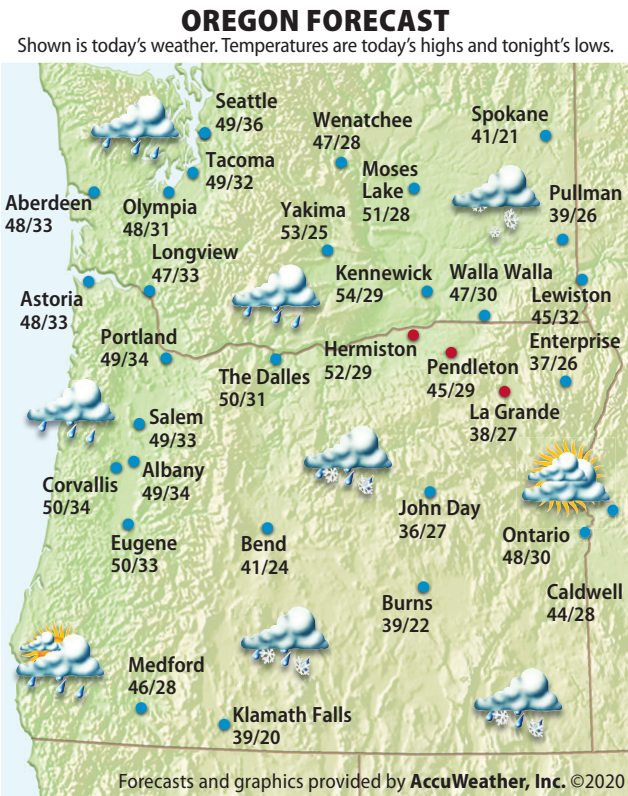
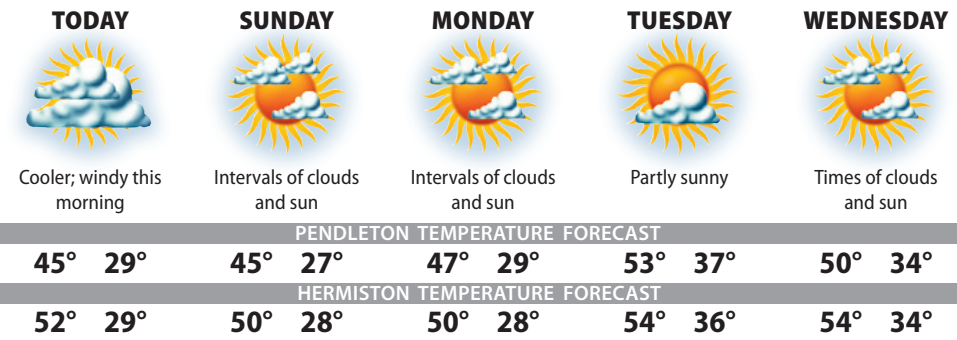
The day the girls in Water Pageant Court met Douglas, they were also able to walk around the fort and watch some of the scenes be filmed.

Drost said she felt a part of the movie.

She enjoys rewatching “The Indian Fighter,” to bring back the memories of meeting Douglas and of her early life in Bend.

“All of us Bendites have to watch the movie,” she said. “I’ve watched reruns of it because I enjoy seeing the country.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	56°	49°
Normals	45°	29°
Records	65° (2015)	-19° (1929)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.32"
Normal month to date	0.32"
Year to date	3.34"
Last year to date	2.86"
Normal year to date	1.70"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	59°	50°
Normals	46°	29°
Records	68° (2015)	-25° (1929)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.03"
Normal month to date	0.24"
Year to date	0.27"
Last year to date	2.21"
Normal year to date	1.52"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sun.
Boardman	WSW 10-20	SW 6-12
Pendleton	W 10-20	SW 4-8

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:09 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:11 p.m.
Moonrise today	4:36 p.m.
Moonset today	7:04 a.m.

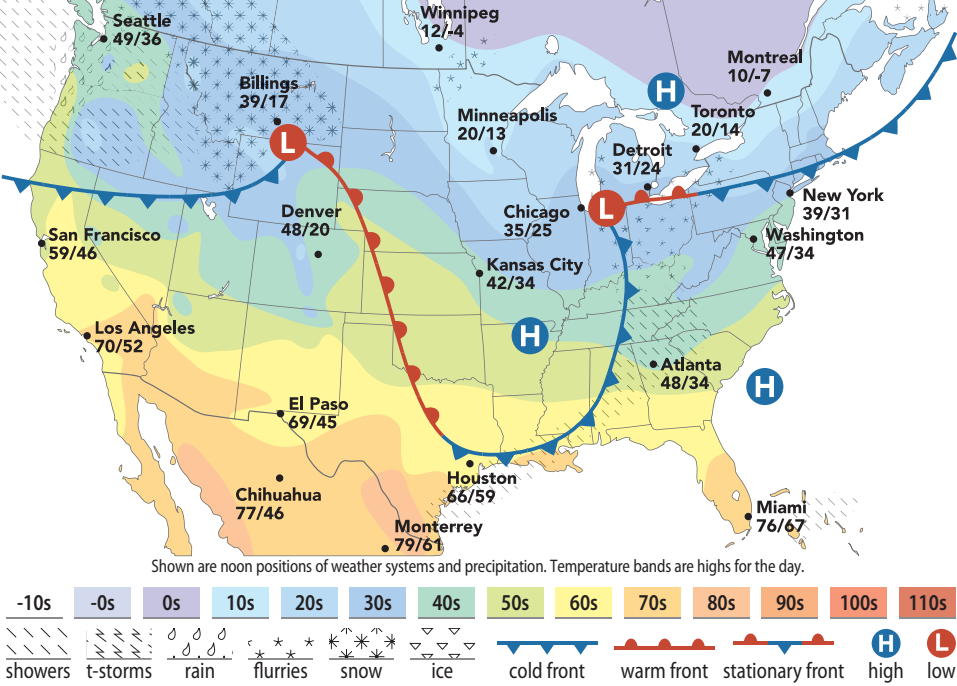
Full	Last	New	First
Feb 8	Feb 15	Feb 23	Mar 2

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 86° in Falfurrias, Texas Low -24° in Langdon, N.D.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Sen. Kim Thatcher announces run for Secretary of State

Keizer lawmaker becomes the first Republican to enter the race

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE AND SAM STITES
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, announced during a massive Timber Unity rally at the Oregon Capitol on Thursday that she is running for secretary of state.

Thatcher, who previously served in the House, has been in the Senate since 2015.

Secretary of State Bev Clarno, the Republican incumbent, isn't running for the office. She was appointed by Gov. Kate Brown to replace Dennis Richardson, who died last year.

Richardson was the first Republican to win a statewide office since 2002.

“I want to focus on

what Dennis Richardson focused on when he became secretary of state,” Thatcher said. “He did a lot to make sure we have fair elections; make sure we have access for everyone to the ballot initiative and referendum process; and to not use the Corporations Division to punish businesses, but help them succeed. Those are going to be my focus.”

Thatcher’s campaign website promises “Accountability. Transparency. Integrity.” The secretary of state oversees state elections, audits government programs and registers businesses. Oregon has no lieutenant governor, so its secretary of state is second in line to the governor.

In 2014, allegations surfaced against Thatcher’s family business, KT Contracting and Highway Specialties LLC, that the company committed contract fraud while subcontracting a state highway job in Eugene back in 2005.

“Absolutely, I learned

from that experience,” Thatcher said. “I’ve worked in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, and it’s unacceptable to me that Oregon is one of the hardest places to work and be a business owner. I’d like to use the Corporations Division, especially the small-business ombudsman we opened a few years ago to help (businesses) with technical assistance and to get over the hurdles of red tape and all that.”

Thatcher is the first Republican to enter the race. The filing deadline is March 10 ahead of the May 19 primary.

Four Democrats are vying for their party’s nomination: Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, former House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson of Portland, former Congressional candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner and Cameron Smith, who most recently was the head of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

BRIEFLY

Forest Service drops cost for Oregon wilderness permits

SALEM — The cost to hike and camp in three of Oregon’s most popular wilderness areas won’t be as high as expected.

The Statesman-Journal reports the U.S. Forest Service announced Thursday that it would cost \$1 for a day permit and \$6 for an overnight permit to enter the Three Sisters, Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington wilderness areas beginning this summer.

That’s a drop from the \$4 to \$11 per person, per day, that was proposed earlier this year and received an overwhelmingly

negative response from over 13,000 public comments.

The permit system is intended to limit overcrowding and environmental damage in 450,000 acres of Oregon’s most beautiful, but fragile backcountry.

Permits will go on sale at Recreation.gov beginning April 7 and be required from May 22 to Sept. 25, even though some key questions about the system still need to be finalized.

Under the limited entry system approved earlier this year, each trailhead in the three wilderness areas will have a quota of permits people must buy before entering.

— 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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