

Desmond Tutu's visit to Eastern Oregon remembered

By DICK MASON
The Observer

COVE — A leather fisherman's cap worn by Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu saved the day for a party he was traveling with on Interstate 84 in Baker County four decades ago.

The South African was riding in a car with Rustin Kimsey, then the bishop of the Eastern Oregon Diocese of the Episcopal Church, and his wife, Gretchen, on a hot August day in 1983. The three had left the Ascension School Camp in Cove a half hour earlier. They were bound for the airport in Boise, where they were supposed to pick up Tutu's daughter, M'Pho, before returning to Cove where Tutu was making presentations during a week-long conference.

The trip to Boise was going well until the car overheated because of a malfunctioning radiator. The vehicle was stranded on the side of Interstate 84 and the situation looked bleak before Tutu spotted a drainage ditch below the road.

"Undaunted by the steepness and while wearing his leather fisherman's cap, he scampered down the ravine, dipped his hat into the drain ditch and brought enough water to our overheated radiator to cool it. Soon we were on our way again," Gretchen Kimsey said.

The three, after a stop in Baker City for repair work,

made it to Boise to pick up Tutu's daughter and soon returned to Cove.

Gretchen Kimsey has fond memories of that day and of Tutu. Kimsey's husband, Rustin, had become a good friend of Tutu's after getting to know him at international meetings of Episcopalian church leaders. Tutu, who had just attended a meeting of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, B.C., had come to Cove to speak at the Ascension School Camp at Rustin Kimsey's invitation.

'He spoke straight to the heart'

The Kimseys were among about 70 people who attended the 1983 conference Tutu spoke at. Tutu, who died Dec. 26, 2021, at the age of 90, was well known but not yet in the international spotlight in 1983. He was a year away from being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Tutu, on the verge of major celebrity status, was able to move about freely in Northeastern Oregon.

"He was not well known yet. I think it was fun for him to be anonymous," Gretchen Kimsey, who lives in The Dalles, said.

Kimsey marveled at Tutu's ability to connect and communicate with people using plainspoken brilliance at the conference in Cove.

"He never spoke in complex terms. He spoke



Ascension School Camp/Contributed Photo

Churchill Pinder is ordained as a deacon in the Episcopal Church by The Most Rev. Desmond Tutu, left, and The Rt. Rev. Rustin Kimsey at the Ascension School Camp in Cove in 1983.

straight to the heart," she said.

Kimsey was also struck by Tutu's sense of humor, which he displayed during his visit to Northeastern Oregon and throughout his life.

"He brought laughter to a lot of people's lives, and we

all know how healing laughter can be," she said.

Kimsey said her husband shared Tutu's sense of humor. "That is what drew them together," she said.

A great spirit

Jim Hayes, of Joseph, then

an eighth grader, was among the younger people who attended the 1983 conference at the Ascension Camp in Cove. Hayes said he was struck by the sense of happiness Tutu exuded.

"He was joyful, a great person," he said.

The Wallowa County resident grew more impressed with Tutu following the conference when he learned what he had endured while fighting apartheid in South Africa.

"I didn't understand how, after what he had gone through, he could have such great spirit," Hayes said.

The Rev. Churchill G. Pinder, of the Episcopal Church, who then lived in Baker City, was impressed with stories Tutu shared of his life in a close-knit setting.

"We all had the privilege of sitting at the feet of Desmond as he shared his experiences with the struggles in South Africa as well as his journey of faith," he said. "I clearly remember him describing his experiences of being very sick as a young child in a hospital and the impression he had when an Anglican priest came and visited him and prayed with him. Desmond shouted with glee, 'For me. What a wonder God's love is.'"

Pinder said the magnitude of the experience is hard to put into words.

"How can I explain the wonder of enjoying all the activities of Family Camp including playing softball,

singing around the campfire, and eating meals with Desmond Tutu and his family and many of the members of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon," he said.

Pinder was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church at the Ascension School Camp during a ceremony conducted by Tutu and Rustin Kimsey.

Sarah Moore, a former reporter for The Observer, who attended the conference, said that Tutu was always accessible.

"It was such an intimate setting. Everyone had access to a famous person. He was always willing to sit down and talk at meals and outside," said Moore, who now lives in Orcas Island, Washington, with her husband, David, who was the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in La Grande 40 years ago.

Moore said Tutu accepted the invitation to come to Cove because he knew Rustin Kimsey so well.

"His friendship with Rustin Kimsey is what made it happen," she said.

Rustin Kimsey died in 2015, and Tutu was among those who attended his service in The Dalles. Tutu came unannounced, because he did not want to take away attention from his friend.

"We were so happy to see him," Gretchen Kimsey said. "It was such a wonderful gesture."

There's no place like home for the holiday album

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — In the era of COVID-19, a group is trying to keep a Pendleton holiday tradition alive by turning an annual concert event into a recorded album.

On Thursday, Dec. 23, the Pendleton Jazz Club released its "Holiday Pageant (The Album) Vol. 2" a collection of local musical acts singing a combination of Christmas classics and seasonally appropriate deep cuts.

The album is meant to evoke the spirit of the Holiday Pageant, an event that usually occurs the Sunday before Christmas at the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. While the Holiday Pageant album is related to the hibernating live event, it's origins stretch back to a different holiday: St. Patrick's Day.

The album is officially credited to "Jazz Club & Friends," a reference to the fraternal organization that contributes significantly to the album and the group that will benefit from the record's proceeds. Jazz Club member J.D. Kindle said the Jazz Club was founded in the 1960s as a private club where local musicians could congregate, practice their craft and enjoy each other's company. True to their name, they mostly played jazz and big band songs.

"It was a place to get together, smoke, drink and get away from the wives for a while," he said.

As time went on, members gravitated toward more contemporary genres like rock, but the aim of providing space for Pendletonians to play music, either privately or for an audience, stayed the same.

Kindle said the Jazz Club's main fundraiser each year is organizing a day-long concert during St. Patrick's Day at the Rainbow Cafe. But in 2020, St. Patrick's Day arrived just as the onset of the coronavirus pandemic spurred the state to shut down indoor dining. With their main source of income on hold, the Jazz Club began to explore how to replace the revenue March 17 usually brought in.

The pandemic proved resilient in 2020 and when Great Pacific canceled its



Peter Walters/Contributed Image

The Pendleton Jazz Club released "Holiday Pageant (The Album) Vol. 2," a collection of local musical acts singing a combination of Christmas classics and seasonally appropriate deep cuts.

Holiday Pageant, "Holiday Pageant (The Album)" was born, with the money generated from the album sales used to help the Jazz Club pay its bills.

Addison Schulberg, a Jazz Club member and a manager at Great Pacific, said the Holiday Pageant was meant to be welcoming to all kinds of performances, including rock bands, string quartets or spoken word poems. The Jazz Club wanted to preserve that eclectic spirit on the album and began calling their friends.

Schulberg said assembling the musicians, recording them and then mixing and mastering their performances was a great deal of work, but the sales from the resulting album kept the Jazz Club in the black and the group had enough fun that they began planning Volume 2 after Christmas 2020.

The second volume features some holdovers from the previous year. Kindle returned to play "Cold, Cold Heart" by Hank Williams with a country band and "The First Noel" with a cello accompaniment. Another second timer was Ian Summerfield and his 7-year-old son, Harry.

Summerfield has been playing in the Holiday Pageant since he was in high school. Whether it was with friends or solo, Summerfield said he loved how the pageant's audience was

always warm and supportive, regardless of the performance.

In recent years, Summerfield had begun incorporating his young son Harry into performances. Harry loved Christmas music but would also suffer from stage fright. When the pageant moved to a pre-recorded format, Summerfield and Harry got another shot at performing together.

Father and son followed up "Last Christmas" and "12 Days of Christmas" in 2020 with "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Up on the Housetop" in 2021. Summerfield said many of the songs aren't his personal favorites, but it's been a bonding experience between the pair as they learn how to put their own personal spins on the venerable material.

Summerfield said he's trying to share his love of music with Harry without imposing it on him, and although he would love to perform with him again once live music returns at the GP, he only wants to do it with Harry's approval. Even if Harry eventually loses interest, Summerfield may have another young partner to play with. Summerfield said his 1-year-old son, August, is already starting to show an early love for music.

"Holiday Pageant (The Album) Vol. 2" is available for download at thejazzclub.bandcamp.com.

Lovely weather for sledding for two



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Danny Mize, left, age 11, and Haezin Mize, 12, have some fun in the snow at Aldrich Park in Pendleton on Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2021.

COMMUNITY BRIEFING

Gubernatorial candidates forum on hold due to weather

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Republican Party is postponing its forum of gubernatorial candidates due to weather.

The party planned to host the event Monday, Jan. 3, at the Pendleton Convention Center. But Suni Danforth, Central Commit-

tee chair, in an email announced the decision to postpone because of the latest onslaught of snow and cold temperatures.

The local GOP does intend to reschedule the forum, she stated.

For more information about the local Republican party, contact Danforth at 541-215-9389, ucrpchair@gmail.com or search www.facebook.com/groups/85685613647.

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