

# Robbery:

*Continued from Page A1*

Instead, she said, he got in his car, then took off.

Amanda West said the police arrived and she pointed toward the escaping car.

As the police gave chase, the Wests said they noticed several \$100 bills lying on the pavement and blowing in the wind. At first, they said, they thought it was the cash Jim West had tossed, so they collected it.

It was not until later, when they learned of the bank robbery, they realized the money belonged to the bank.

Following their ordeal, they said, a Stanfield police officer interviewed them for 30 minutes in a parking lot. They turned in the stolen money at that time, they said.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston confirmed the Wests were held up following the bank robbery.

## The aftermath

“We don’t have any closure, and it was so traumatic,” Amanda West said. “Weeks went by, and we weren’t contacted by anyone.”

She added this seems especially odd, considering they viewed the man without a mask, following the bank robbery.

The suspect, while inside the bank, was wearing a mask, she said. Also, she said, she and her husband were the ones who pointed to the man and his car as he was leaving the scene.

They learned through media reports of the arrest of Clifford Uptegrove, 58, of Yakima. He was accused of robbing the bank. He was initially held in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on charges of first-degree robbery, first-degree theft and felony fleeing and unlawful use of a weapon. His bail was set at \$1 million.

They also discovered the suspect previously had pleaded guilty to an armed bank robbery charge. He

had been serving time at the Federal Correctional Institution, Otisville, a medium-security prison near Otisville, New York. He had a release date of March 17, 2022, but was released on compassionate release due to asthma and being at an increased risk of developing COVID-19.

Learning of the suspect’s past, and reflecting on their brush with death, the Wests said they remain affected.

“We can’t go into a crowded building,” Amanda West said. “It’s hard for us to park in a parking lot. I can’t go into a convenience store without feeling scared.”

The Wests were so upset by their experience, they could not celebrate the Christmas season like they would have otherwise, they said. Gatherings were just too painful.

“Multiple times, we pulled up to places we intended to go, but we decided not to go because it was just too scary for us.”

Their situation was made worse, Amanda West said, after a call from Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus. She said he told her Uptegrove would not face any charges related to holding the Wests up at gunpoint.

“He is being prosecuted for robbing a bank, but it’s the federal government will be the ones prosecuting him for that,” she said. “He’s not being prosecuted for what he’s doing to us.”

She added, “If it’s going to be before a judge in a few years, I want the judge to know that he didn’t just rob a bank. He also held us at gunpoint.”

## Answers from the district attorney

Primus explained why he has not yet brought charges related to the attempted carjacking.

“Committing this new crime, it is again a federal case in which he is going to have substantial time within the federal system as a result of that,” Primus said.

He added the alleged crimes involved multiple

jurisdictions, with the major jurisdiction being with the federal government.

“I have been in communication with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to determine whether or not that was going to stay with them, or if it would come to our office,” Primus said. “We’re working on that, and we will make a decision.”

Key to a resolution of the charges is the question of whether the bank robbery and action against Amanda and Jim West are one continuous course of conduct or separate events. Once this is decided, Primus said his office may well prosecute Uptegrove.

“Just because a case hasn’t been charged yet doesn’t mean it will not be charged,” he said.

He added the state has three years to file the charges of armed robbery, so his office has time to make that decision.

## Victims search for peace

With questions still unanswered, and the incident still fresh in their minds, the Wests report a mix of emotions. Amanda West said she has even felt gratitude to the man who held her and her husband up at gunpoint. For all of the mental anguish he has imposed on them, he did not kill her or her husband. He could have, she stated, but he did not.

As time has passed, they both said their mental state has improved, though they still are processing the event. They said they want the man to stay in prison and not be able to do to others what he did to them.

Uptegrove is in custody in Multnomah County Detention Center, Portland. The Multnomah County Sheriff’s website states Uptegrove was booked into the facility on Dec. 29.

The Wests expressed their desire to feel normal again, like they did before this ordeal. But getting over this, Amanda West said, is going to take a while.

# SHIP:

*Continued from Page A1*

a diverse employment base.

“We don’t necessary just want to have a parcel that’s 200 acres that can accommodate one really large development,” he said. “This helps accommodate the machine shops, the electricians, the plumbers, those types of operations that need an acre for a laydown yard and equipment.”

The city’s interest in a diverse set of employers is due to a hard lesson, Morgan said.

The closure of Hermiston Foods in 2017 resulted in the loss of about 200 permanent, full-time jobs. At the same time, Union Pacific scaled down some of its machine shop operations. Though Morgan said large employers are valued and are important, it is important for Hermiston to “not be beholden to one, single, large employer.”

## Attracting business

Morgan agreed his situation with SHIP is something akin to the plot of the 1989 classic baseball movie “Field of Dreams.” In the



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Utility conduits sit along East Cook Avenue on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022, in the South Hermiston Industrial Park in Hermiston.

film, a farmer builds a baseball field in the middle of his crop. A ghostly voice tells the character that if he creates the ball field, people will come.

Likewise, the city has placed infrastructure and is looking for businesses to fill the space.

Sometimes, he said, communication with interested businesses is frustrating. Companies learn of the area and express interest, he said. Then, they sometimes ask to see the city’s top vacant buildings. When he tells them there are not any vacant buildings, they lose their excitement for Hermiston.

He said the best the city can offer now is space with electricity, roads and plumbing. SHIP gives businesses area for development. Morgan called this “economic gardening.”

“Even though there isn’t an existing building ready for somebody to come in, the ground is ready for someone to come in,” he said. “They can throw up a building pretty darned quick.”

Morgan said he does not expect SHIP to fill up immediately. Rather, he explained, it is something that will bring in new developments over several years.

# Masks:

*Continued from Page A1*

told the New York Times on Feb. 17. “We’re not in denial of the hell that has been the last two years. This is not like World War II, where we can have a ticker-tape parade and announce the end.”

OHSU’s forecast showed a strong trend toward significantly lower infections, hospitalizations and eventually, deaths.

OHSU said Oregon masking rates have remained among the highest in the nation, with surveys showing roughly 80% of residents have continued to cover up indoors.

Oregon was one of the last states to drop outdoor mask mandates when Brown lifted the restriction in November.

Graven said the forecast was starting to show an erosion of state residents’ sustained high level of not gathering indoors with people outside of their households.

“Those rates have begun to tick up,” the OHSU statement that accompanied the forecast said.

Graven cited Denmark as an example of where omicron seemed on the way out, only to rebound because of the public getting ahead of pandemic policies.

“They gave up on public health measures at what

they thought was the peak — and it turned out not to be the peak and they had even more people hospitalized,” Graven said.

The highly contagious omicron variant was first confirmed in Oregon on Dec. 14.

The average peak of omicron in the 50 states was about a third higher than the per-capita peak in Oregon.

If Oregon had the national average of cases, the number of people with COVID-19 in state hospitals would have likely hit 1,540.

The actual peak of 1,130 on Jan. 27 fell just short of the pandemic hospital record of 1,178 on Sept. 1, 2021, the top of the severity of the delta variant wave.

**Michael's**  
Fine Jewelry, Inc.

**We're closing our doors FOREVER!**  
*After serving Pendleton for 20 years, it is time to retire.*

*All jewelry, watches, clocks and giftware drastically reduced for*  
**IMMEDIATE SALE**

**EVERYTHING MUST GO!**  
including cases, furniture, displays, even some tools and equipment

**ALL SALES ARE FINAL!**  
.....  
**Hurry in for great prices before they're gone!**

**Community Counseling Solutions**  
*Changing Lives*

- \* Adult, child & family therapy
- \* Mental health & crisis services
- \* Psychiatric evaluation & treatment

595 NW 11<sup>th</sup> St., Hermiston, OR  
541-567-2536

331 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Pendleton, OR  
541-276-6207

299 N. Columbia  
Milton Freewater, OR  
541-276-6207

**Get Help, Understanding, & Hope**

- \* Chemical dependency & substance abuse treatment

435 E. Newport, Hermiston, OR  
541-564-9390

211 SW 1<sup>st</sup> St., Pendleton, OR  
541-278-6330

707 E. Broadway Ave., Milton Freewater, OR  
541-278-6288