

OSP to examine Finley Creek site where remains were found in 1978

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Oregon State Police are turning up the heat on an Eastern Oregon cold case.

OSP officers and OSP crime lab personnel soon will reexamine a site near Finley Creek, 18 miles north of La Grande, where the remains of an unidentified woman were found in August 1978.

The OSP team, which will have human remains detection dogs, will be searching for anything connected to the unidentified woman who was found there in a shallow grave more than 40 years ago.

State police will go to the site after the snow there has melted. State police detective Sgt. Sean Belding said his agency will be facing a big challenge.

“It will be a little like looking for a needle in a haystack,” Belding said.

Melinda Jederberg, of La Grande, a member of the Finley Creek Jane Doe Task Force, is more hopeful.

“We are very optimistic,” said Jederberg, who founded the task force in 2019.

A big reason for the confidence is that task force members went to the Finley Creek site where the woman’s remains were found twice in 2021 with cadaver dogs. The task force brought a single

dog once and two on another trip. Each of the two dogs indicated they found ground under which there are human remains at the same site at or near a tree.

“One dog pawed at the ground near the tree,” Jederberg said.

The task force members did not dig at the site because it is a crime scene and thus it would be illegal to disrupt it. They instead notified the Oregon State Police, which later decided to investigate the site and possibly dig there.

Suzanne Timms, of Walla Walla, who is assisting with the search as a volunteer, is glad highly trained OSP investigators will be examining the Finley Creek site.

“They know how to collect evidence without contaminating the site. I can’t wait,” Timms said.

A daughter’s search

Timms also is certain the Finley Creek Jane Doe is her mother, Patricia “Patty” Otto, of Lewiston, Idaho, who has been missing since Sept. 1, 1976.

Timms first suspected the Finley Creek Jane Doe was her mother in 2021 when she



East Oregonian, File

Suzanne Timms poses for a portrait at her home in Walla Walla on Oct. 26, 2021, alongside a missing person poster for her mother, Patricia “Patty” Otto, and a collection of documents pertaining to her disappearance. Timms believes the Finley Creek Jane Doe, discovered near Elgin in August 1978, is her mother, who went missing in 1976.

saw an image created by a forensic artist in Massachusetts, Anthony Redgrave, the operator of Redgrave Research Forensic Services. Redgrave was assisting the Finley Creek Jane Doe group, and the image he created look very similar to that of Timms’ mother.

Other details have contributed to Timms’ belief the Finley Creek Jane Doe is her

mother. The remains were found with a white shirt and red pants, which is what Patty Otto was last seen wearing before disappearing.

As part of the investigation in 1978, Lewiston police believed the Jane Doe could be Patty Otto, and Timms’ grandparents Thomas O’Malley and Ardys O’Malley were flown from Lewiston to La Grande to identify the body.

Timms said they were sure the remains were those of their daughter, because the white shirt and red pants were with the remains at Finley Creek.

“I found records indicating that they told the Lewiston police that the white shirt and red pants looked very similar to what my mother was wearing before she disappeared,” Timms said, who discovered

this information earlier this year.

Timms said she believes her mother was murdered in Lewiston by her father, and then taken to Finley Creek where he buried her in a shallow grave.

The OSP’s autopsy records for the Finley Creek Jane Doe, however, do not match those of Patty Otto.

Timms said the discrepancy is due to an error the state police medical examiner made of the skeletal remains for two Jane Does in his office at about the same time in 1978. She said she suspects he assigned his reports to the wrong Jane Does because his report for the second Jane Doe matches her mother’s autopsy photos and dental records.

“It appears that he had the two Jane Does confused based upon documents he wrote himself,” Timms said.

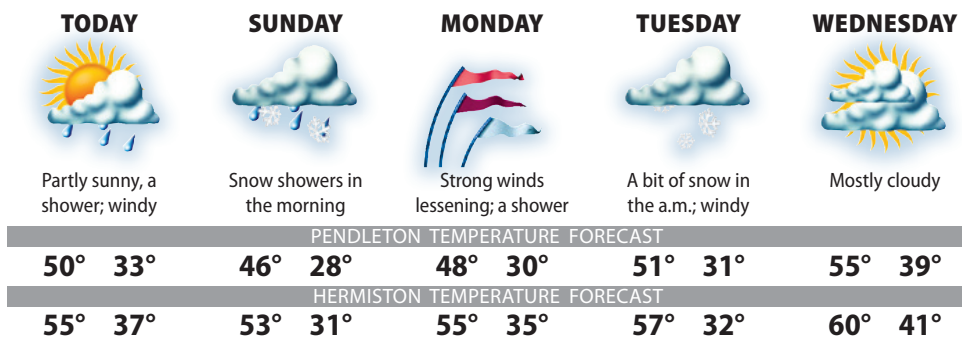
A cash award

Interest in the Finley Creek Jane Doe has picked up since Crime Stoppers of Oregon announced in March that it was offering a cash award of up to \$2,500 to help identify the murdered woman.

“It has generated a lot of calls about the case,” Jederberg said.

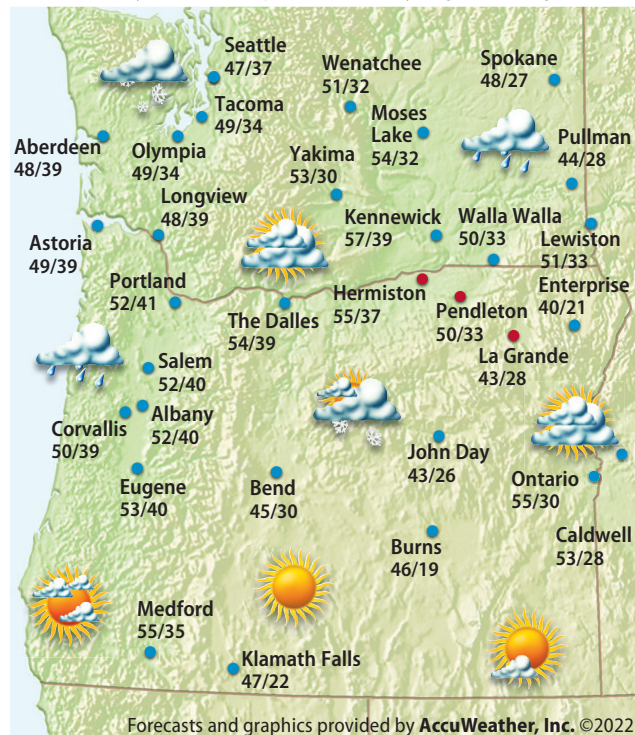
Jederberg said she hopes the reward and increased interest will encourage people to step forward.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



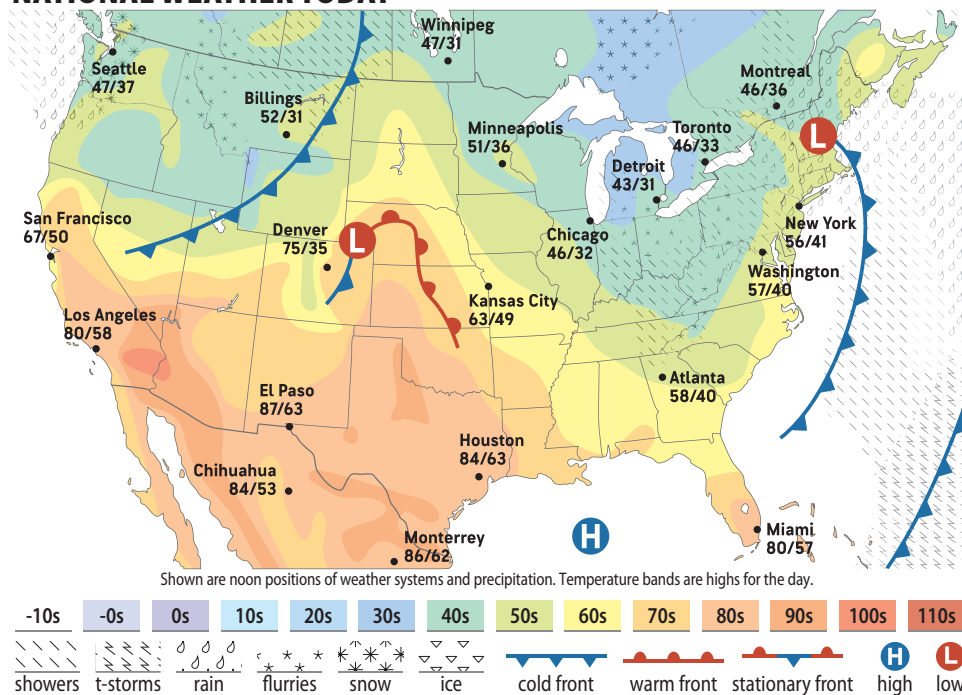
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	56°	39°
Normals	61°	38°
Records	83° (1925)	21° (1929)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.07"	
Normal month to date	0.39"	
Year to date	3.67"	
Last year to date	3.34"	
Normal year to date	4.46"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	62°	36°
Normals	64°	38°
Records	87° (1977)	22° (1952)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.14"	
Normal month to date	0.22"	
Year to date	2.09"	
Last year to date	1.73"	
Normal year to date	2.99"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Sun.	
Boardman	WSW 12-25	WSW 8-16
Pendleton	W 12-25	WSW 8-16
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:21 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:34 p.m.	
Moonrise today	11:40 a.m.	
Moonset today	3:20 a.m.	

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 101° in Fullerton, Calif. Low 8° in Jackson Dam, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Several classic cars vandalized at prom

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

IMBLER — On what is meant to be a highlight of the school year, several Imbler students saw their prom night end in disappointment.

Three vintage vehicles belonging to families of Imbler students were vandalized during the event, held at White Barn Estate outside of La Grande on the evening of April 2. Those involved still are looking for answers, while a local auto detailing shop provides its services to those impacted.

“The biggest thing to me was that these rigs only come out on very special occasions like this,” said Krager Muilenburg, one of the students whose vehicle was vandalized. “The three of us did our best to make them look the best that they could, so the fact that they got messed with for no apparent reason was very frustrating.”

Three vehicles were found covered in strawberry syrup after the event — a 1997 Ford

pickup truck, 1960’s Plymouth Duster and a 1970’s Chevrolet Blazer. The syrup reportedly damaged the paint on the vehicles, particularly one with a white paint job.

According to several involved, the cars belong to the students’ parents and grandparents, and the prom served as a special occasion in which the students were allowed to drive the vehicles.

“Those cars have been very precious to us,” Muilenburg said of driving his grandfather’s pickup by himself for the first time. “Ever since we were little, they were something we’ve taken care of and taken an interest in.”

The Union County Sheriff’s Office was made aware of the vandalism, and the car owners were encouraged to file a report. Sheriff Cody Bowen stated each will need to file a separate victim report. The vandalism has potential to be filed as criminal mischief, with the culprit being held accountable if identified.

Dirty Girls Detailing, a

car detailing service operating in La Grande, reached out to the students whose cars were vandalized and offered free services to help repair the vehicles — one of the students was a family member of the owners. The shop owners noted one of the cars had been in for service just before the prom event. Moving forward, the group is looking at possibly listing a reward for information provided regarding the vandalism.

“We wanted to show that we have their backs,” said Sammie Watson, one of the family members that owns and operates the auto shop.

The White Barn has hosted Imbler’s prom for the past several years, at no charge to the school. The estate serves as a scenic venue with views of the Grande Ronde Valley that hosts weddings and other events.

“It’s really unfortunate because these kids took a lot of pride in their cars,” White Barn owner Jeana Bingaman said.

IN BRIEF

OSP says wolf killed in March near Richland

RICHLAND — Oregon State Police’s Fish and Wildlife Division is asking the public for information about the killing of a wolf near Richland in March.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife employees reported to OSP on March 25 that a wolf wearing a tracking collar likely was dead. The collars send a signal if they haven’t moved for a significant period of time, suggesting the wolf is dead.

OSP troopers found the dead wolf about 1.5 miles east of New Bridge and 2 miles north of Richland.

The wolf, a year-old male, died around March 12-13, according to a press release from state police.

State police did not report how the wolf died and OSP’s public information office said the agency will not be releasing the manner of death.

During the past couple years, OSP has investigated cases where wolves were either shot or poisoned.

The Oregon Wildlife Coalition, a group of wildlife conservation groups, is offering a \$11,500 reward for information that leads to an arrest or citation in connection with the most recent wolf killing.

Anyone with information can contact OSP through the Turn in Poachers hotline at 1-800-452-7888 or *OSP (mobile). Reference case number SP22071683.

Three other wolves have been killed in eastern Baker County since the fall of 2020.

—EO Media Group

CORRECTION: The story “Price tag on Wallowa Lake Dam soars” in the Thursday, April 7, edition of the East Oregonian misattributed a quote as being from Sen. Bill Hansell spokesperson Ann Rava. She shared a quote from a report by the Regional Solutions Exchange.

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.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:



East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.

Copyright © 2022, EO Media Group

Circulation Dept.

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

Single copy price:

\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director (Eastside) EO Media Group:

• Karrine Brogotti
541-963-3161 • kbrogotti@eomediagroup.com

Multimedia Consultants:

• Angel Aguilar
541-564-4531 • aaguilar@hermistonherald.com
• Melissa Barnes
541-966-0827 • mbarnes@eastoregonian.com
• Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Business Office

• Dayle Stinson
541-966-0824 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising

Classified advertising: 541-564-4538
Legal advertising: 541-966-0824
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS

• To submit news tips and press releases: call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com
• To submit community events, calendar items, engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email community@eastoregonian.com, call 541-966-0818 or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements.
• To submit sports or outdoors information or tips, email sports@eastoregonian.com.

COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska
541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com