

Wildlife refuge occupation part of long-running fight

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Associated Press

BURNS, Ore. — The small group of armed anti-government activists occupying a remote wildlife preserve in Oregon's high desert gave visitors free access to the snowy site Monday, allowing some local residents and ranchers in to satisfy their curiosity or show support.

The group also appeared to be trying to keep the site tidy, picking up cigarette butts from the ground and keeping vehicle and foot traffic primarily to roads and pathways. Federal authorities made no immediate attempt to retake the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which about two dozen activists seized over the weekend as part of a decades-long fight over public lands in the West.

There appeared to be no urgent reason for federal officials to move in. No one has been hurt. No one is being held hostage. And the refuge is a bleak and forbidding stretch of wilderness about 300 miles from Portland, and it's the middle of winter.

Some have complained that the government's response to the situation in Oregon would have been more severe had the occupants been Muslim or other minorities.

But others said from a tactical standpoint, the government's cautious response would make sense no matter who was holed up in the government building in the reserve.

Meanwhile, the group said it wants an inquiry into whether the government is forcing ranchers off their land after the father and son who were ordered back to prison for arson on federal grazing lands reported to a federal facility in California on Monday.

The demanded a government response within five days related to the ranchers' extended sentences.

Ammon Bundy — one of the sons of rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a 2014 Nevada standoff with the government over grazing rights — told reporters that Dwight Hammond and his son, Steven Hammond, were treated unfairly.

The Hammonds were convicted of arson three years ago for fires on federal land in 2001 and 2006, one of which was set to cover up deer poaching, according to prosecutors. They said they lit the fires to reduce the growth of invasive plants and protect their property from wildfires.

The men served their original sentences — three months for Dwight and one year for Steven. But an appeals court judge ruled the terms fell short of minimum sentences that require them to serve about four more years.

Their sentences have been a rallying cry for the group, whose mostly male members said they want federal lands turned over to local authorities so people can use them free of U.S. oversight.

The father and son reported to a federal prison Monday in California, said Harney County, Oregon, Sheriff David Ward. He provided no other details.

The Hammonds have distanced themselves from the protest group and many locals, including people who want to see federal lands made more accessible, don't want the activists here, fearing they may bring trouble.

At the time of the Bundys' 2014 Nevada standoff, there were \$1.1 million in outstanding grazing fees, and no payments have been made since then. The fees continue to accrue, although Bureau of Land Management spokeswoman Bev Winston couldn't give a specific updated figure on the debt.

The disputes harken back to a long-running struggle over public lands between some Westerners and the federal government, which owns nearly half the land in the West.

In the 1970s, during the "Sagebrush Rebellion," Nevada and other states pushed for local control over federal land. Supporters of that idea want to open more land available for cattle grazing, mining and timber harvesting.

Opponents say the federal government should administer lands for the widest possible uses, including environmental and recreational.

Bundy said the group plans to stay at the refuge as long as it takes.

Keith Landon, a longtime resident of Burns who works at the Reid Country Store, said he sympathizes with the Bundys' frustrations. Landon was a logger until the federal government declared the spotted owl a protected species in the 1980s — a decision that hurt the local logging industry.

"It's hard to discredit what they're trying to do out there," he said. "But I don't want anybody hurt."

William K. Reece
March 10, 1922 to Dec. 14, 2015



William K. Reece, 93, a former resident of Enterprise, passed away Dec. 14. He will be sorely missed by his wife of 25 years, Polly Reece, his three children William Reece, Rita Reece Law and Rick Reece of Florida, his brother Wade Reece of Terrebonne, Ore., along with his eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife Ruth Reece and three children.

Bill, as he was known, was born on a houseboat in Idaho and grew up in Enterprise with his four brothers and four sisters. He graduated from Enterprise High School in 1940 and worked at Safeway before enlisting in the Army Air Corps during WWII. While proudly serving, he was stationed in Florida where he met his first wife Ruth, to whom he was happily married for 42 years before she passed away in 1987. They raised their family in Florida, but made numerous visits to the Wallowa Mountains, attending reunions at Wallowa Lake and making sure his children also experienced the charm and beauty of the area.

After retiring following a 30-year career at Mercy Hospital in Miami, the mountains beckoned once again. He moved to a beautiful mountain home in North Carolina in the early 1980s and used his woodworking skills to finish the inside. When that was finished, he used those talents to build steps and a deck at the church where he and his wife Polly Reece were devoted members. Always willing to give of his time help others, he volunteered to help many friends and neighbors build staircases, railings, decks and more.

His woodworking hobby wasn't limited to structures. He had a knack for looking at a piece of wood and envisioning a table, a wine rack, Christmas ornaments or a bookshelf. His specialty, however, was crafting beautiful wooden bowls out of a single block of wood. He even taught all his children and grandchildren how to make their own bowl.

A man with many talents, he leaves behind a legacy of responsibility, perseverance, loyalty and love to his family.

Josephine (Jo) Case
March 19, 1925 to Dec. 19, 2015

Josephine (Jo) Case passed away Dec. 19 at her home in Joseph, where she lived with her daughter Michele and her family. Jo was born March 25, 1925 in Omaha, Neb., to William Hostetter and Margaret (Fox) Hostetter. She was raised in Omaha and graduated from North High School in 1942.

Jo had many interesting jobs after graduating high school. Her first job was running the transmitters for a radio station in Hannibal, Mo. She later moved with her family to Portland, where she worked as a welder at the shipyard. The family moved to Joseph in 1972.

Jo retired from First Interstate Bank in 1988. She enjoyed gardening, crafts, knit-

ting, crocheting and playing the lottery.

Jo is survived by three children: Thomas Turner, Jr. and his wife Linda of Tibbie, Ala., Donna Johnson of Portland, and Michele (Micki) Jarman and husband Greg of Joseph, as well as 13 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband Dave Case and son Gary Turner of Portland.

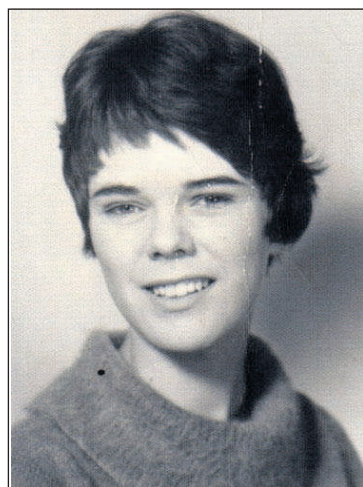
A celebration of life will be held at 11 a.m. Jan. 9 at Prairie Creek Cemetery in Joseph.

Thank You

The Van Doozer family would like to thank everyone who participated in giving our children a great Christmas.

Thank you!

Barbara McClure Weaver Baxter
Oct. 11, 1944 to Dec. 31, 2015



Barbara Mary McClure was born in La Grande to James McClure and Margaret Ragsdale on Oct. 11, 1944. She grew up on the family ranch on Indian Creek near Elgin with her six siblings — Robert, Patricia, Steve, Virginia, Bill and Kathleen.

She was a skilled horse rider and was elected queen of the Elgin Stampede in 1963. She married Wendell Weaver later that same year and moved to Wallowa. Together they had three sons — Dirk, David and Darren. They divorced in 1980 and Barbara supported her boys by working at Boise Cascade Mill in Elgin until she retired in 2004 after 28 years.

She married her second husband, David Baxter, in 2008. David retired soon after and they enjoyed traveling and spending time with their family. He supported and cared for her during her long battle with cancer.

She loved camping on the Snake River with her family. She loved the water, swimming and soaking in hot springs, riding horses and spending time outdoors.

Above all else, she loved spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren Stephanie, Samantha, Aleck, Danielle and Bryce. Besides her own children and grandchildren, she was a mother to many others who she cared for and loved as if they were her own.

Barbara was well known for her beauty, and especially for the kindness and love that she shared with so many. And although she was not religious, she was a very spiritual person. She had a special quality of non-judgment and acceptance that made anyone who was around her feel comfortable and loved. She was the center of her family and her home was always open.

She is survived by her husband David, her brothers and sisters, her sons and her grandchildren Samantha, Aleck, Danielle and Bryce Weaver. She was preceded in death by her dear granddaughter Stephanie Weaver.

Her absence will be deeply felt by many. A celebration of Barbara's life will be held at the Elgin Community center at 1 p.m. Jan. 9. Donations in her name may be made to Grande Ronde Hospital Home Care and Hospice Services.

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COMMUNITY CONNECTION OF WALLOWA COUNTY

We would like to honor the founder of Bennett Insurance, Leroy Bennett, who would have celebrated his birthday January 10th. Not only was he an incredible husband, father and friend but he impacted the lives of so many in Wallowa County with his dedication, passion and love of helping others. Through mentoring and sharing his wisdom he earned the well deserved respect of not only his clients but everyone who crossed his path.

Leroy is greatly missed and we will continue to honor him by providing the same legendary service he so passionately believed in.

— Kathleen, Heather, Hailie & Jessica

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