



THREE minutes with ...



ERL MCLAUGHLIN

Farmer

Erl McLaughlin was born in Steamboat Springs, Colo., to Hope and Harold McLaughlin in 1950. His folks were cattle ranchers during a time when Steamboat Springs was a rural community.

"We lived next to the Continental Divide, and it was pretty hard to raise much other than grass and cattle at that elevation," McLaughlin said. "People ask me what we raised in Steamboat Springs and I say, 'A good crop of snow.'"

He went to Steamboat Springs High, graduating in 1969, and then on to Western State College of Colorado, graduating in 1973 with two undergraduate degrees, one in business administration and one in economics along with almost a minor in psychology and sociology.

His family had moved to Enterprise in 1972 after LTV Aerospace Corp. moved to Steamboat Springs and the population boom began. The landscape in Steamboat Springs allowed for almost unlimited development.

Erl followed his parents to Enterprise. Wallowa County reminded the family of the beauty of Steamboat Springs and they began farming there. Erl turned his attention to learning how to farm.

He now farms 550 acres of dark northern spring wheat. He met Maryann Blankenship in 1979 and the couple married in 1981 and had two children, Tyson and Tonya Castilleja, both of whom still live in Wallowa County.

Maryann passed away in 2016 at 55. Since his wife's death, Erl has been relying on and providing support for the family as they deal with the sudden loss. She was an integral part of running the farm that Erl said he is still struggling to manage on his own. His 92 year-old mother, Hope, has picked up much of the bookkeeping and domestic chores, he said, and although he is grateful, he wants to remedy that situation given his mother's age.

Erl is best known in the county for his hobby of collecting old agriculture-related equipment at Sunrise Iron, where he holds an open house each year. He also "hunts new iron," enjoys artwork, church activities and "figuring out what the good Lord wants me to do in my personal life."

Q. Why did you stay in Wallowa County?

A. I can make a living farming, and I really enjoy my farming, and my kids are right here, living in Enterprise. It's a friendly place and a good place to raise a family. And it's a beautiful area. God has blessed this place with the mountains and the scenery around here — people would give their eyeteeth for the view that we have. Just because you live in a place for 45 years, you shouldn't take it for granted. You should wake up every day and praise God.

Q. What has Wallowa County taught you?

A. I guess it's taught me to be considerate of other people. When people go through some adversity then it's up to somebody to go alongside and encourage them. We've all got some adversity in our lives and some days things are really well and the next day things aren't not so well, and you've got to supply emotional support for people that are going through some kind of tragedy or a life-changing event.

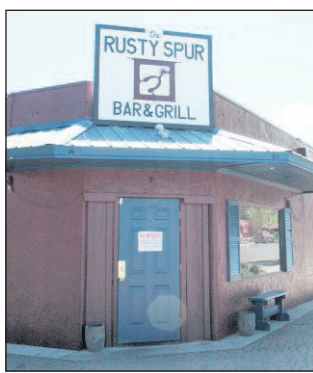
Q. Can you remember an early book that meant a lot to you and can you recommend a book you've read recently?

A. When I started school I went to school in a one-room schoolhouse with one teacher for all eight grades and we didn't have a library. My dad used to read me lots of books. He used to read "Old McDonald's Farm" and he used to tease me a little bit and read something else into that and I'd say "that doesn't say that," because he'd read it to me so many times. A book I've read recently that I can recommend is the "Encyclopedia of American Farm Tractors." You'd have to be fairly narrow-minded to get into that kind of literature; Tom Butterfield, Reed Kooch and Dennis Hendersen and me would enjoy that kind of reading material.

Wallowa County's food scene in for some changes



BIZ BUZZ
Kathleen Eilyn



Kathleen Eilyn/Chieftain

The transformation of The Hydrant is nearing completion as new owners remodel and apply fresh paint.

As many of you know, the landmark Hydrant Restaurant and Bar at 100 S. Main in Joseph has been for sale for some time.

Alejandra Zamudio, cousin of La Laguna owner **Angelica Zurita**, purchased the business in conjunction with her in-laws and partner, **Wade Moore**. Zamudio worked at La Laguna for five years and is experienced in the restaurant industry and can also rely on the advice and assistance of La Laguna owners. Moore, who has a background in construction, has been shadowing to learn the ins and outs of the business

and has taken on the remodeling chores.

In addition to applying new exterior paint on the old landmark Hydrant, the extended family has been busy giv-

ing the place a deep clean. The goal is a Memorial Day opening.

Visitors can expect to see a modernized tavern, new furniture and a level of cleanliness in keeping with what visitors to the La Laguna restaurants in Joseph and Enterprise have come to expect.

"If you're going to change things, change them right," said Zurita.

Some things will remain the same: Expect to see a "regular American bar with good drinks and fattening food," Zurita said.

The old Hydrant signs will be raffled off when the new Rusty Spur opens.

We received a great update on another food business recently when Hatch Oregon

released the great news that **Judy Goodman** of Joseph is the first Oregon business to provide a return to investors under the Community Public Offering program, which allowed ordinary folks to invest in Oregon products.

Goodman, who created "BGoodBars" (Artisan Chocolate Energy Bars), recently delivered interest checks to the 23 Oregonian investors who invested a total of \$20,000 during her CPO campaign 2016-2017.

Goodman put that investment money to work and it has paid off for investors and BGoodBars.

"I've doubled or increased sales by 30 percent every

year," she said. "These last couple weeks have been off the charts for me. We went to the Good Food Merchant's Guild trade show last week (Arrowhead Chocolates is a member of the Guild as well) and representatives from retail businesses came through and sampled products."

As a result, Goodman said, her bars will be sold in Market of Choice by next fall. They are already sold in New Seasons Market Slabtown (the Pearl District of Portland) and the bars will be featured in more New Seasons Markets soon.

Goodman continues to receive great press and her bars will be one of several featured

in Seattle Magazine in June.

"I'm getting orders every day, it's exciting," Goodman said.

She owes much of her success to her networking abilities and her courage to be among the first Oregonians to take advantage of the CPO program — using the money raised to modernize her business and develop her advertising strategy.

She will be attending the Regards 2 Rural Conference this month with North East Oregon Economic Development District representatives Lisa Dawson and Sara Miller, who will be speaking about the process of raising community capital in rural communities.

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