

Joe Town spent half his life in Wallowa

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Joe Town has spent most of his 90 years in Wallowa, and most of those years serving the city in one fashion or another.

He recently retired as a longtime city councilor and, most recently, as City Council president.

He said Wednesday, Jan. 5, that a stroke he had in April is causing him troubles.

“I’m not doing too bad for an old man,” he said. “It’s limiting my total abilities.”

Born in North Dakota, Town served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. He was an electronics technician aboard a destroyer, but didn’t get close to Korea.

“I spent most of my time in the Mediterranean monitoring Russian radar,” he said.

He and his wife, Maxine, both were teachers. They moved here from Alaska in 1975. She taught first and second grades for 20 years at Wallowa Elementary School, while he taught all math, physics and chemistry at Imbler High School, some 34 miles away.

Those may have been tough subjects for many, but Town was pleased with his students.

“You’ve got good kids to work with,” he recalls.

The Towns had two children. A daughter now lives in Hawaii with their two granddaughters. A son died of cerebral palsy in his 40s, Town said.

The couple retired in the mid-1990s and decided to stay in their home.

“I built an A-frame house here,” he said. “We decided to not move after we retired and just stay here.”

Town began his service to the city with his first term on the council in 1977.

“I got involved and chaired a lot of Senior Center projects for many years,” he said.

His first stint in office lasted until 1985. He returned seven years ago.



Holly Goebel/Contributed Photo
Longtime Wallowa City Councilman Joe Town receives a plaque in appreciation of his decades of service to the city alongside Mayor Gary Hulse in the council chambers at City Hall during the last council meeting, Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021. Town, who recently turned 90, retired from the council.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Retired City Council President Joe Town, left, stands with longtime Senior Center cook Tammy Odegaard in 2015. Town, who was a member of the Wallowa Senior Center Advisory Board, was instrumental in getting the center built.

Between that time, he continued working on the city’s budget committee.

“The most important thing was starting the Wallowa

Senior Center Endowment Fund with the Oregon Community Foundation,” Town said. “It has grown to over \$140,000 and returns about

\$6,000 a year for operation of the center.”

Helping start the entree program to support nutritious meals countywide was another long-range endeavor, he said.

Although he’s never served as mayor, being council president is the same thing when the mayor is unavailable.

City Recorder Carolyn Harshfield said Town will be hard to replace.

“The city is truly going to miss him,” she said in an email. “He used to be a math teacher and was amazing helping with the city budget.”

Mayor Gary Hulse agreed. “He has been a super big help with the city of Wallowa,” Hulse said. “He’s volunteered with many things.”

At the council’s last meeting Dec. 21 — which also happened to be Town’s 90th birthday — the councilors presented him with a cake and a plaque honoring his service to Wallowa.

“That was my birthday. They said you have to come to the council meeting,” Town said. “We just talked a bit about some of the things that have happened since I’ve been here.”

During that time, he recalled that the City Hall was moved to its current location from its former site across from the Post Office, the Wallowa Senior Center was built in 1995, the new fire hall was put in after 9/11 and Kevin’s Tire Shop that was faced with being forced to close down at its old location moved to a building that he now leases from the city on the truck route.

“We saved those jobs,” Town said of the tire shop move.

Hulse and others will truly miss working with Town.

“He’s been super good to work with,” the mayor said. “He’s a great guy and will be greatly missed on helping out with the City Council.”

But for Town, it’s been enough.

“It’s 45 years,” he said.

IN BRIEF

‘Nature in the Abstract: Rocks!’ focus of Brown Bag

JOSEPH — Geologist and photographer Ellen Morris Bishop will be featured in one of the weekly “Brown Bag” sessions put on by the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture on Tuesday, Jan. 18, from noon to 1 p.m., according to a press release.

Bishop is one of many artists exhibiting in the current show at the center called “Nature In the Abstract.”

“At all scales, the patterns of a landscape, whether fence lines that have mellowed with age, patterns woven in reeds and grasses, the stacked symmetry of basalt columns, and so much more, reveal much about its history and can help define its composition,” Bishop said. “Capturing those patterns in images helps engage the viewer in the landscape’s story and mysteries.”

The exhibit is up until Feb. 22.

Bishop is well-known locally as a writer and photographer, and is highly regarded across the region for her work and her books on Northwest geology. Her latest book is “Living With Thunder.”

The Brown Bag will be by Zoom. Those interested can go to the website at josephy.org, or email rich.wandschneider@gmail.com to get a link to this free event.

COVID-19 cases on the rise again

SALEM — COVID-19 cases are moving upwards again during the first full week of 2022.

The Oregon Health

Authority reported 35 cases of COVID-19 in Wallowa County during reports from Jan. 4-10, including 10 over the weekend in the Jan. 10 report. The surge has the county total during the pandemic up to 829.

The last week saw the highest one-day total of COVID-19 cases reported to date in Oregon, with 10,451 reported on Jan. 7. The Jan. 10 report, which had three days of data, showed 18,538 cases and 18 deaths.

Hospitalizations due to COVID have been increasing in Oregon, and in Region 9, with the OHA on Jan. 10 reporting 14 hospitalizations due to the virus in the region.

NEOEDD seeks website redesign proposals

ENTERPRISE — The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District is seeking proposals to redesign its website, according to a press release.

A copy of the detailed request for proposals can be found on the NEOEDD website, www.neoedd.org (see the Upcoming Events page).

Questions from contractors will be accepted until Jan. 21. Proposals must be submitted by Jan. 28.

The RFP includes the district’s background, website redesign goals and scope of work, RFP process and project timeline, proposal submission instructions and contractor selection process. The RFP also includes examples of website components we like and a site map draft.

For more information, contact Lisa Dawson, district executive director, at 541-426-3598 ext. 1 or by email at lisadawson@neoedd.org.

— Chieftain staff

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www.Wallowa.com

Power outage still under investigation

Lights out for entire county all day Sunday

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The cause of Sunday’s widespread power outage in Wallowa County is still under investigation — and likely will remain so for days or weeks, according to a spokesman for Pacific Power & Light on Monday, Jan. 10.

The lights went out just after 9 a.m. and were restored just before 4 p.m.

According to a PP&L post on Twitter on Jan. 9, the meters of 5,318 customers were affected, hitting virtually all of Wallowa County. Posts and emails began assuring a restoration of power in late morning, ultimately saying it would be

restored by 5 p.m.

Drew Hanson, a spokesman for PP&L, said Jan. 10 that service was restored to about 900 customers in the Wallowa area by about 1 p.m. and the remainder of the county had its power restored by just before 4 p.m.

“Crews were dispatched at the first reports of an outage, but weather-related driving conditions slowed our response time,” Hanson said.

He said crews were out on

the ground and by air looking for possible causes. There was no single cause, such as a vehicle hitting a power pole.

“The actual cause of the interruption is under investigation,” he said, adding that it could take some time.

“We understand the impact being without power in such weather can have,” Hanson said. “We fully understand the impact and appreciate customers’ understanding while crews are working.”

This week's featured book.

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