

Cottage Grove Retrospective

A look back at Sentinel stories from 30 and 60 years ago

Meat cutting school could be slaughtered

By Pete Malliris
Sentinel Staff Writer 1988

A quarter-century ago, when Frank and Joann Shirk opened what stands today as one of the nation's most unique businesses, the Cottage Grove couple pioneered an industry — educating people to become meat cutters.

Over the years, the owners of Oregon Meat Cutting School have rather quietly gone about their job of training meat cutters to work in stores and shops throughout the nation.

The blood, sweat and tears the Shirks put into the school paid off both financially and in the gratitude of its graduates.

Some lead times have fallen on the Shirks recently. And now, like a rare species fighting extinction, the school finds itself in a battle with time and finance to keep its doors open.

More than just the survival of a small business is at stake. The Oregon Meat Cutting School is the only one of its kind in the nation and perhaps the world.

The area's economy, the desire to keep student tuition reasonable and low meat prices have caught up with the Shirks. The school has two locations, one in downtown

Cottage Grove and the other and the other in Eugene on 30th Avenue. The Shirks sold their Springfield outlet five years ago. They had a store in the Bit Y shopping center before the center's owner went bankrupt.

Meat sold through the school subsidized tuition in the past. Low prices have cut into the profitability of those sales, Frank Shirk explained.

Student body size has not been affected by the hard times. Shirk said the school hands 50 to 60 students per year. That number has remained constant.

Tuition currently is \$200 per month, about half what Shirk has been told it needs to be. Until about a year ago, tuition was \$100 per month for a six-month course.

The Shirks have borrowed to their limit at banks and are seeking help wherever they can find it.

District 44 Rep. Peg Jolin joined the Shirks four months ago in their search. Both she and the Shirks agree that the school is running out of time.

"We need some money to stay alive," Shirk told the Legislative Joint Committee on Trade and Economy Friday in Eugene.

The committee was the latest stop in a long trail of visits the Shirks have left in search of a solution.

Conversations with the state department of Vocational Education, the Department of Economic Development and a host of other groups and individuals have brought some sympathy but no funding yet.

Attempts to reach Gov. Neil Goldschmidt have been stymied by a seemingly endless sea of red tape. Jolin expressed frustration that the governor's office hasn't gotten involved. She said his influence could make a big difference.

Shirk said the ideal situation would be to have Lane Community College, or some similar institution, buy the business and allow him and his wife to run the school. Shirk estimated the cost of the business about \$350,000 to \$400,000.

LCC President Richard Turner said his school can't possibly afford to buy the business. He said there would be some difficulties in taking over the meat cutting school even if a state grant bought it for LCC.

Turner added that LCC would like to help and will continue to listen to any suggestions.

This story first appeared in the March 16, 1988 edition of The Sentinel

Cottage Grove Police Department 24-Hour Anonymous Tip Line: 767-0504

POLICE BLOTTER



March 5

A man on Hwy. 99 reported that his son found a small quantity of both heroin and meth.

March 6

Workers at a gas station on Main St. reported two men in their car drinking from open containers while they purchased gas. Officers contacted the subjects in possession of open container and had them pour out the contents on the side of the road.

A woman reported that she let a female acquaintance stay at her house temporarily and when the woman who owned the property returned, she found that the acquaintance had broke a window to gain entry. The acquaintance had been asked to leave but would not go.

March 7

Multiple callers reported that an intoxicated woman was hitting vehicles with a baseball bat in the Walmart parking lot.

Two male subjects broke into Banner Bank and were the same suspects that had shoplifted from Grocery Outlet. The two 15-year-old male subjects were confirmed runaways from Springfield and were transported into custody.

A burglar alarm went off at Riverside Church when parishioners had entered the wrong code on the keypad.

March 8

A backpack at the police station was found containing one hand saw and a bundle of rope during an investigation.

A man with a car lock pick was seen trying to make entry into a vehicle on Pacific Hwy. The man did not appear to make it into the vehicle and the individual who saw him then honked their car horn at him. The man then longboarded away from the area.

A security officer at the Cottage Grove hospital reported that while he was doing his round his backpack was taken from the lobby.

A man on Kalapuya Way reported seeing a "shady looking" door-to-door salesperson in the area offering carpet cleaning.

A neighborhood problem on Daugherty Ave. was reported when an individual requested contact from an officer due to an ongoing problem with juveniles purposely interfering with their walkie-talkie frequency.

March 9

A syringe was found on the running trail across from Cottage Grove High School.

March 10

An individual reported an intoxicated and possibly high friend heading towards Downes Lane. An hour after the call, a man called saying his niece was overdosing on alcohol and unknown other substances with other juveniles at the same location.

National Beat

News from the state and around the nation

Around the state

- January Neatherlin was sentenced to 21 years in prison last week after being found guilty of leaving seven children at her unlicensed day care—drugged—so she could go tanning.
- 20-year-old Airion Grace filed suit against Fred Meyer and BiMart after he was barred from buying ammunition. The retailers have joined a larger movement to limit purchases of firearms and ammunition in their stores by individuals under the age of 21 after the deadly shooting in Parkland, Florida. The shooter, Nikolas Cruz, 19, legally purchased the AR-15 he used to kill 17 people.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon is set to have a below-average stream-flow this summer due to a limited snowpack.
- SafeOregon, a safety tip line for students to report bullying or threats against a school, has reported an increase in reports since the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida. The tip line reported receiving 224 tips between Feb. 15 and March 5.
- At least 17 people have filed to run for governor in Oregon. A primary election will be held in May with ballots due May 15.

Around the nation

- Two people have been killed in the last 10 days by bombs left at their homes in Austin, Texas. On Monday, a 17-year-old boy was killed after encountering an unexpected package at his home. A second explosion occurred hours later, critically injuring a 75-year-old woman. Local authorities reported that the packages were not delivered by the U.S. Post Office and they have not ruled out the possibility of the attacks being classified as hate crimes. The first two victims were African-American.
- Bill Dix, Iowa Senate majority leader, resigned after video of him kissing a lobbyist leaked online. The married father of three said he made the decision to step down in the best interest of his family.
- Five people were killed on March 11 after a helicopter crashed into the East River in New York City. The pilot survived the crash and reportedly told law enforcement that a piece of luggage may have hit the emergency fuel shut-off button.
- The Associated Press has reported that 78 percent of the requests made under the Freedom of Information Act were censored or denied over the last 10 years.
- The woman alleging, she had an affair with President Donald Trump is willing to return the \$130,000 she received from Trump's personal lawyer. Stephanie Clifford also known as Stormi Daniels reportedly announced through her lawyer that she would be willing to return the money in exchange for the freedom to speak openly about the alleged affair.

State Representatives

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6-day weather forecast

THURSDAY March 15

48° | 34°

Mostly Cloudy

FRIDAY March 16

50° | 36°

Showers

SATURDAY March 17

50° | 35°

Showers

SUNDAY March 18

55° | 35°

Showers

MONDAY March 19

56° | 36°

Sunny

TUESDAY March 20

56° | 37°

Showers

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