

Community



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Jordan Remien, fourth from left, has been accepted to attend the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

REMIEN

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The school has two campuses: a conservatory in New York City, and a College of Performing Arts in Los Angeles. Remien will focus on musical theatre, but he said the school requires a wide variety of performing classes, such as musical theory and dance.

“Ballet is the one I’m worried about,” he said.

Remien first heard about the Academy when he noticed a poster outside the BHS choir room. He looked it up and discovered the school holds auditions throughout the United States.

“I thought, ‘It can’t hurt to sign up,’” he said. “Then I forgot about it.”

Months later, though, Remien remembered the Academy. He went online to sign up for auditions and discovered his name was already entered.

The auditions and interviews were in Portland on Aug. 18. He prepared a one-to-two-minute monologue from a play (he chose “I Hate Hamlet”) and a two-minute

“I just want to be happy doing something I enjoy.”

— **Jordan Remien, Baker High School senior who will be attending the American Musical and Dramatic Academy starting in 2020**

song from a published musical.

His song selection was from “Sunset Boulevard,” which he’d already started rehearsing with his voice teacher, Allison Mitchell.

“I was really nervous beforehand — I’d never done a full audition like this, and the stakes were high,” he said.

Then he just had to wait. “It was a week and a half before I found out anything. It was stressful,” he said.

Although it’s still early, right now he’s planning to complete an associate’s at the conservatory in New York, then finish with a bachelor’s at the campus in L.A. He would like to get a degree in education, too.

“I just want to be happy doing something I enjoy,” he said.

Both cities, he said, offer unique experiences in the performing arts — New York

is famous for Broadway and off-Broadway plays, while L.A. is more tuned to television and movies.

For now, he must finish his senior year. He’s made it to the state choir competition two years in a row in solo and ensemble.

“Choir is the class I look forward to,” he said.

He’ll continue working with Mitchell.

“She’s incredible. She has so much experience,” he said. “I’ve reached different points in singing that I didn’t know existed.”

This year will also be filled with scholarship applications.

But that’s OK because he knows where he’s going.

“It’s nice to have it out of the way,” he said. “It takes a huge weight off my shoulders.”

New York City is a far cry from Baker City — a difference he discovered in the spring of 2018 when the BHS choir raised money for a trip to the Big Apple.

“It was incredible. It felt like somewhere I was meant to be,” he said. “I’m ready to step outside my comfort zone.”



U.S. Forest Service photo

The Granite Gulch fire burned over about 5,555 acres. Fire managers say the lightning-sparked blaze was beneficial to the Eagle Cap Wilderness, reducing the amount of fuel on the ground.

FIZZLE

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Livingston attributes this year’s success during the initial attack phase to a few factors in addition to firefighters’ prowess.

For one, the relative lack of large fires across much of the West meant firefighting resources, including helicopters and retardant planes that can be vital during initial attack, were readily available this summer.

“There was not much competition for resources,” Livingston said.

The situation was similar over much of Oregon, although there were a few larger blazes, including the 9,700-acre 204 Cow Fire on the Malheur National Forest about 17 miles southwest of Unity. It was sparked by lightning on Aug. 9.

Fire danger was lower this summer than last as well, Livingston said.

During the summer of 2018, when the Baker City Airport set all-time high temperature records on consecutive August days at 108 and 109 degrees, fuel moistures and other measurements of fire danger also reached record highs, Livingston said.

But because lightning was relatively rare, as reflected in the record-low number of fires, the region avoided what could have been a catastrophic fire season.

This summer, by contrast, a damp spring and comparatively cool temperatures kept fire danger indexes near or below average for most of the season, Livingston said.

And the lightning storms, of which there were several, also spawned rain showers that both prevented fuels from turning into tinder and gave firefighters an assist.

“Almost without exception the lightning storms came through with moisture,” Livingston said.

One of Livingston’s colleagues, Steve Meyer, agrees that the combination — relatively moist fuels and rain — contributed greatly to placid behavior of most fires this summer.

“We were fairly busy off and on with lightning fires but there was enough rain with the storms that came through that they all stayed small for us,” said Meyer, who is the wildland fire supervisor for the Oregon Department of Forestry in Baker County.

Meyer said this is the only summer he can remember during his 23-year career in which the fire danger never reached the “extreme” level.

The Forestry Department’s Baker unit has reported six lightning fires and one human-caused fire this season. The agency’s

“There was enough rain with the storms that came through that (the fires) all stayed small for us.”

— **Steve Meyer, wildland fire supervisor, Oregon Department of Forestry**

La Grande unit handled 12 lightning and four human-caused blazes, and the Wallowa unit 22 lightning and six human fires.

The lack of human-caused fires in the Baker unit — only one this year — was welcome, Meyer said.

Al Crouch, fire mitigation/education specialist for the BLM’s Vale District, echoed that sentiment.

There have been nine human-caused fires on the Vale District this year, which burned 535 acres.

That’s below the District’s 10-year average of 13 human fires, and it ends a three-year stretch with more of those blazes than average, including 18 in both 2017 and 2018, Crouch said.

Fire managers fear human-caused fires because they’re so unpredictable, Meyer said.

Officials can track lightning strikes by computer almost in real time, and divert fire crews relatively quickly to new blazes, he said.

But a fire started by a person, whether intentionally or by accident, can show up without any warning.

“You just have no way of knowing when something like that’s going to happen,” Meyer said.

Crouch said that despite a couple of intense lightning storms, the number of downstrikes on the Vale District was below the 10-year average.

So was the number of lightning fires, although the difference was not large — 30 blazes this year compared with a 10-year average (2009-18) of 35.

This year’s fires didn’t burn nearly as many acres as in many years in the past decade, however.

The 2019 total of 4,435 acres burned by lightning fires compares with the 10-year average of 158,000 acres.

“It’s been a different kind of summer,” Crouch said. “We had a couple of events with lightning and fires, but when you’ve got rain with those cells it helps knock those fires down.”

Crouch said he expects that there were a number of what fire managers call “natural out” blazes — ones ignited by lightning but are doused by rain before anyone reports them.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Baker County Democrats have guest speaker on Thursday

Eileen Kiely, secretary of the Democratic Party of Oregon and former candidate for the state legislature, will be the guest speaker at the Baker County Democrats’ monthly meeting on Thursday, Sept. 19 at Roger Fellowship Hall, 1995 Fourth St., between the Courthouse and Baker Middle School.

Pizza, coffee and tea will be served at 5:30 p.m., with the meeting starting at 6 p.m. All are welcome.

Baker City Public Art Commission seeking art for public display

The Baker City Public Art Commission is taking applications for its Art on Loan program. Artists are invited to lend their work to the city for one year for display at a public location. More information is available by calling Robin Nudd at 541-524-2036, and applications are available at bakercity.com. First review of applications will take place Oct. 9.

— Send briefs to news@bakercityherald.com

PLANE

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A search was launched at that time, one coordinated with the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center.

Civil Air Patrol radar data was compiled and a forensic examination of its radar track was conducted. The radar track appeared to terminate at or near Elk Willow Springs in the Limber Jim Ridge area. Life Flight flew into the early morning hours of Wednesday and attempted to locate the crash site using night vision equipment, according to the UCSO news release.

A ground search was started Sept. 11 at 8 a.m. by the Union County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue unit. Two and a half hours later the Oregon Air National

Guard, using a Chinook helicopter, initiated a search in the general area.

At 2 p.m. the Civil Air Patrol arrived to search the air using a fixed wing aircraft. At 2:19 p.m. the Civil Air Patrol crew spotted plane wreckage. Moments later the Chinook helicopter was overhead and its crew verified the plane wreckage.

The Chinook helicopter hovered and maintained its position over the wreckage and sent GPS coordinates to ground search units. At 2:26 p.m., ground search units arrived at the wreckage site.

The US Forest Service was then contacted and five people from it then created an access route to the wreckage site.

The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Adminis-

tration will be investigating the crash.

The type of plane Koepfen was flying has not been released but according to a preliminary FAA report the pilot Koepfen had a 1968 PA-32-300 fixed wing single-engine Piper aircraft registered in his name.

Radar data indicates that Koepfen’s plane crashed after making a rapid descent from an altitude of 6,600 feet.

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