



Photo by Kendall Hayes

Smoke pours out of the Joseph Charter School gym after students and staff safely evacuated on Thursday.

JOSEPH

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School fire drills had paid off. Within five minutes, and closer to three, every student was out of the school and harm's way. Many left their jackets, backpacks and other possessions in their classrooms.

The school has about 260 students. Classes are canceled this week, but students will return Jan. 27, at sites yet to be determined, according to the district.

A post on the district's Facebook page said that the part of the school that houses students from kindergarten through fourth grade could be usable within about two weeks. That area was farthest

from the fire, and sprinklers did not activate so there was no water damage.

Other parts of the school sustained damage from smoke and water.

No injuries were reported, and investigators have not determined the cause of the blaze.

After gathering outside in groups on Thursday, older children walked and younger children were bused to the Joseph Community Center, which city employees opened up for the refugees.

Joseph Fire Department responded within minutes as well as Enterprise Fire, Wallowa County and Oregon State Police not long afterward to the Sather Court blaze, a particularly difficult

one to fight because of the size of the building, its inherent darkness and smoke.

The fire started in the mechanical room and quickly climbed to the ceiling, where it spread rapidly.

Wrestling practice is held in the balcony and the petroleum based material of the mats emitted a viscous smoke that hampered firefighters in their search for the fire's origin.

Firefighters from both departments filtered into the building with hoses and emerged blackened with soot from the smoke.

Two blackened firefighters emerged from the building. One said, "It's hot as hell in there." The other replied that he could barely see in the

smoke filled gym.

On the outside, as smoke billowed from open gym doors and an exhaust vent, other firefighters labored to tend hoses and hold a ladder as another firefighter climbed to knock out balcony windows to vent heated gases that could spread to other areas of the school.

The gases had earlier caused a flash fire when they ignited, according to Wallowa County Emergency Services Manager, Paul Karvoski.

"Luckily, no one was in there at the time," he said. Hard work by the firefighters allowed them to get the upper hand on the blaze after 45 minutes. This kept the fire from spreading out of the gym and into classrooms.

SNOWPACK

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But then the jet stream started propelling Pacific storms directly into Northeast Oregon.

A sampling of the dramatic changes

these snowy systems made:

- Schneider Meadows, in the Wallowa Mountains north of Halfway, went from 8.4 inches of water content on Jan. 1 (68% of average) to 16.4 inches now, which is exactly average for this time of the winter.
- Bourne, north of Sumpter, more

than doubled the water content, from 4.3 inches on Jan. 1 (63% of average) to 9.1 inches now, 95% of average.

- Moss Springs, in the Wallows above Cove, went from a water content of 8.6 inches on Jan. 1 (84% of average) to 14.9 inches, which is 8% above average.

NEWS OF RECORD

DEATHS

Rupert Dykstra: 62, of Baker City, died Jan. 17, 2020, at his home surrounded by family. There will be a celebration of his life at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 25, at Harvest Christian Church, 3720 Birch St., in Baker City. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

FUNERAL PENDING

Dan Peters: Graveside service with military honors will

be Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 1 p.m. at Mount Hope Cemetery. Friends are invited to join the family for a reception afterward at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 42171 Chico Road, in Baker City. A memorial service and celebration of Dan's life will take place in the spring at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, date and time to be announced later. The family suggests memorial contributions to the Baker Adventist Christian School through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

Alan King: His memorial service will take place at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1, at the Baker City Church of the Nazarene, 1250 Hughes Lane. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police
CRIMINAL TRESPASSING: Jamie Joseph Weiss, 54, Baker City transient, 9:30 p.m. Sunday, in the 1900 block of Second Street; jailed.

DRIVING WHILE OPERATOR'S LICENSE SUSPENDED and three out-of-county warrants, DRIVING WHILE OPERATOR'S LICENSE SUSPENDED (Multnomah County), UNAUTHORIZED USE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE (Clatsop County) and THIRD-DEGREE ASSAULT, two counts, and SUPPLYING CONTRABAND (Clatsop County): Stephen Michael Scott Harris, 32, of Warrenton, 10:45 p.m. Saturday, at Resort and Broadway streets; jailed.

CONTEMPT OF COURT (Baker County warrant): Justin Michael Shelton, 29, of Baker City, 10:20 a.m. Friday, at the police department; jailed.

OBITUARIES

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Walt Forsea

Richland 1924-2020

After graduation, Walt went back to the Snake River and worked on the family ranch and neighboring ranches for \$1 to \$1.50 per day. He preferred working for the Basche Ranch as they paid the best wages.

Walt was drafted into the military and served from 1944 to 1946. He was in the F Company 19th Infantry 24th Division. He served one year in Japan during the occupation and 6 months in combat at Mindanao, Philippines. Walt was first scout and his platoon took the island back for the Philippines from the Japanese. After two years he was honorably discharged as a First Sergeant. Walt returned to the family ranch in August 1946.

Walt, his brother Bob, and their dad did all the work on their ranch except for haying. It was a community of helping, whether it is haying, or if there was a house or rangeland fire, everyone pitched in. Everything in that time was done with a team, wagon or sleigh.

During the Depression when times were so tough and people in town were really struggling, the Forseas barely noticed, as they were living off the land and did quite well. They had pigs and

chickens to eat. They milked their cows and sold cream and shipped it out to Portland. Those monies paid for what groceries they needed. They sold bumper calves and picked local fruit and walnuts to sell, and raised a big garden.

Walt's favorite hobby not work related while living on the river, was to come to town and visit with people. No one was a stranger. There were family potlucks and dances on the river. Everyone brought their kids and would put their coats in a big pile. When the kids got tired they slept effortlessly on the coat piles.

In about 1964, Idaho Power bought out the Forsea property on the Snake River. They used the monies as a down payment for several family ranches in Richland. Many improvements were made in the valley including tree removal and land leveling, spring development, fencing and improving cropland and water troughs. Since there were no government regulations it was much easier to make the needed improvements. Walt's biggest accomplishment on the ranch was seeing the ranch being built up from nothing to what it is today. It took five years to get productive farm ground in the valley when they moved to Richland. The ranch truly

has something to show for the countless hours the family endured.

Looking back on the history of the ranch, would Walt do anything different? The answer is "no."

In 1949 Walt met and married Donna Jackson. They lived on the Snake River at the "home place," one of the four family residences. After the river property was sold, they moved to the Richland valley. In 1959 they built a house for \$16,000 and Walt helped the contractor a great deal. Walt and Donna had three children: Dan, Pat and Jane. They later divorced, but remained great friends.

On Nov. 2, 1974, Walt married Norma Tureman. He and Norma never missed a dance, enjoyed working on the ranch and loved to travel when time allowed. Countries they traveled were Romania, Switzerland, Italy, France, Spain, Japan (three trips), China, Hong Kong; states included Washington, D.C., (representing the "Freedom Flight") veterans, Colorado Springs, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and attend the National Finals Rodeo for 18 years.

Walt's work was his hobby but in his spare time when he wasn't out visiting with people, he did leather work. He repaired saddles and tack and also made chaps for his kids and grandkids and reveled in seeing the little ones getting their first pair of

handmade chaps.

Being able to help in his community or people in need was not a chore for Walt, he did it gladly. Some of the community programs Walt has served on: Board member for several ditch companies; 9 years as school board member; Lions club charter member; Scout Master for over 50 years, helping 18 scouts get their Eagle Scout status — Walt received the District Award of Merit and the Silver Beaver from Boy Scouts of America; Grange member on the Snake River and for the Eagle Valley Grange serving as their Grange Master for 20 years; Episcopal Church Board member; Northwest Rodeo Producers founder and

board member; Halfway Fair Board member; Elks Club member (Weiser, Idaho).

A steady and true Waltism and exactly how he lived his life shared — "Be the best you can.....EVERYDAY!!" or hearing him say, "Ah the heck." Or when he shared that fabulous smile of his.

Walt is survived by his children, Patricia Pickard and her husband, Clair, of Keating Valley, Jane Leatherman and her husband, Doug, of Sumpter, Dan Forsea and his wife, Renee, of Richland, Lana LaZott and her husband, Chuck, of Rainier, Connie Forsea and Toni Corning of Richland, and Niki Hutchinson of Crouch, Idaho; 12 grandchildren; 21 great-

grandchildren; his sister, Pearl DuMars; and many nieces, nephews and extended family.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 45 years, Norma; his parents; his sister, Margret; his brothers, Harold Forsea and Robert Forsea; and his grandson, Jacob Corning.

For those who would like to make a donation in memory of Walt, the family suggests the Eagle Valley Grange, Eagle Valley Ambulance or the charity of your choice through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

LOCAL BRIEFING

Jackson Rohner named to dean's list at Montana State University

BOZEMAN, Mont. — Jackson Rohner of Baker City was named to the dean's list for the fall 2019 semester at Montana State University.

To be eligible, students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5.

Baker County Board of Commissioners to meet Wednesday morning

The Baker County Board of Commissioners will meet Wednesday at 9 a.m. at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

The agenda includes department updates from Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash and from Rick Gloria, the county's veterans services officer, and a continuation of the discussion about a request for proposals to manage the county's Hewitt and Holcomb parks near Richland.

Northeast Oregon Compassion Center fundraising banquet scheduled Feb. 1

The Northeast Oregon Compassion Center's 15th-annual fundraising banquet is set for Saturday, Feb. 1 at 5 p.m. at the Church of the Nazarene Family Life Center, 1250 Hughes Lane.

The Compassion Center provides a variety of free services to people in need in the community.

Tickets are being sold for the tri-tip dinner, which includes four side dishes and dessert. There will also be donation forms and live and silent auctions.

Tickets are \$15 per person, and must be bought in advance at the Family Life Center, the Church of the Nazarene office, or the Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St. A donation of \$200 to the Compassion Center includes two free tickets. Tickets are limited, so people are encouraged to buy early to reserve a seat.

Items available in the silent and live auctions include waterfowl hunting packages from Pre-Dawn Adventures, unique artwork by local artisan Tom Clement, Sweet Wife Baking pies, gift baskets, coupons from local merchants and more.

The guest speaker for the banquet is Karen Bergstrom from the Safe Families For Children movement.

More information is available at [Facebook.com/NortheastOregonCompassionCenter](https://www.facebook.com/NortheastOregonCompassionCenter) and at www.neoregoncompassioncenter.org

Haines Elementary School chili feed and raffle fundraiser set for Feb. 7

The annual Haines Elementary School Chili Feed and Raffle is scheduled Friday, Feb. 7.

The event, billed as the largest fundraiser of the year, will be from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the school.

Money raised at the event is used to help pay for technology in classrooms and to support assemblies and field trips that enhance the students' educational experiences, a news release stated.

Items raffled during the evening are donated by local businesses and community partners. To donate, call Chelsea Blatchford, PTCO president, at 541-519-2017.

Tickets are pre-sold by Haines students and also will be available at the door. The cost is \$2 per ticket, three for \$5, seven for \$10, or \$20 for 15 tickets. Winners do not have to be present to collect their prizes.

Dinner tickets are \$5 for adults (11 and older), \$4 for children (ages 4-10), and free to children younger than 3. The all-you-can-eat meal includes homemade chili, cornbread, baked potato and lemonade.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call Haines Elementary School at 541-524-2400.

— Send local briefing to news@bakercityherald.com

JANUARY 17-23

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JUST MERCY PG-13

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