

MILESTONE

Continued from Page 1A

That beaming smile reappears several times as Patrick peruses a scrapbook that chronicles highlights from the nearly three decades he and Beth owned a cattle ranch in Keating Valley, about 15 miles northeast of Baker City.

He pauses to read a letter from the Oregon State University Extension Service dating from the early 1970s, thanking him for his work to find ways to reduce scours, a type of diarrhea that can afflict newborn calves.

He points to a photo of a Limousin calf just born, lying beneath its mother.

Patrick helped his mother and stepfather, Margaret and Robert Steward, start the Steward & Morrissey ranch just after World War II.

They began by raising Herefords, but in 1969 they added purebred Limousin cattle. The ranch eventually had one of the nation's biggest Limousin herds in the U.S.

Patrick was active for decades in the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, a role that required him to travel frequently to the Willamette Valley for meetings and other events.

As he comes across a newspaper clipping in the scrapbook, a brief item about a cattle meeting, that smile shines again.

"That's the way I met Beth," Patrick said.

Both had earlier marriages that ended in divorce.

Patrick said he met Beth at a gathering of singles in Portland.

They didn't really fit in, being somewhat older than the other people at the event, he said.

"So we got in my pickup and we went and had dinner on the waterfront," Patrick said.

After their marriage, the couple moved to the ranch in Keating Valley. Beth worked at Western Bank in Baker City for about eight years in addition to helping operate the ranch, said her daughter, Betty Palmer, who was in high school when Beth and Patrick were married.

Betty, retired assistant superintendent for the Baker School District, visits Patrick, her stepfather, most days around lunchtime.

She said some of her siblings and stepsiblings will celebrate the anniversary with their parents today.

Beth has four children — Betty, Eric, Paul and Ronn.



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald File, 2015

Patrick and Beth Morrissey enjoy the music played by grandson Ryan Johnson of Brookings in June 2015.

"So we got in my pickup and we went and had dinner on the waterfront."

— Patrick Morrissey, recalling his first dinner date with his wife, Beth, in Portland

Patrick has a daughter, Sara Lee, and a son, Mike, who ranches in Keating Valley.

The journey to Baker County, by way of Grass Valley and Germany

Patrick was born in 1925 in Grass Valley, in the Columbia Basin wheat country southwest of The Dalles.

When he was 2 his parents moved to Seattle.

Patrick's father died of pneumonia when he was 5.

"They didn't have ways to stop pneumonia in those days," he said.

Patrick and his mother, Margaret, moved to Vancouver, Washington, where she married Robert Steward. The family later returned to Seattle.

Patrick was drafted into the military in the spring of 1943, not long after his 18th birthday, and while he was still in high school.

Patrick had planned to go to college, and after basic training the Army sent him to Louisiana State University to study engineering.

Having lived his entire life in the Northwest, he didn't much cotton to the bayou country.

Among other things, he recalled having to sleep beneath the bleachers in the university's basketball arena.

"It was just a mess," Patrick said.

He said he decided to postpone his studies and join a regular Army infantry unit.

He didn't have to wait long. After D-Day, the June 6, 1944, Allied invasion of Nazi-controlled France, the Army needed tens of thousands of fresh troops.

Patrick, a private first class, sailed to France as a member of the 99th Infantry Division in September 1944.

He said neither he nor the other members of his company had any combat experience. They were, in military parlance, "green" troops.

Not long before Christmas, Patrick was on a section of front near the border between Belgium and Germany.

He said he was told to dig his fox hole — a shallow trench that offered meager shelter and protection against Germany artillery — near the top of a steep rise of ground.

Then the Germans, in one final effort to drive the Allies back to the English Channel, launched the massive counterattack that came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge, for the bulge in the Allied lines the attack created.

"Two divisions just plowed right through our green team," Patrick said.

But he said the advancing Germans — all veterans of

the intense fighting against the Soviets' Red Army on the Eastern Front — in effect went around his position, avoiding the steep ground below his fox hole. About 50 other American soldiers were also bypassed.

"Before I knew it I was 25 miles behind enemy lines," Patrick said.

After staying put for three days, he and his comrades, under cover of night, managed to creep back to the Allied lines.

They evaded the Germans — "They didn't know we were there," he said — but they ran into danger as they approached the safety of their own troops.

In a 1998 interview with Gary Dielman, a Baker County historian, Patrick recalled that American soldiers, fearing more counterattacks, mistook his group for Germans and called in an artillery barrage.

Patrick said most of his company of about 220 men had either been killed, wounded or captured. He was promoted to staff sergeant.

In early March 1945, around his 20th birthday, Patrick and his division advanced into Germany and crossed the Rhine River via the notorious Ludendorff Bridge, which the retreating Germans had tried, but failed, to blow up.

Patrick remembers crossing the railroad bridge, frightened both by the heavy fire from the Germans but also by the prospect of tumbling off the span into the river.

It was quite a long way to the water.

Patrick said the Rhine reminded him of the familiar Columbia River back in Oregon.

Historical accounts note that some of the explosives the Germans placed at the bridge failed to detonate.

But Patrick said there might have been another factor.

He recalls seeing a German soldier, passed out drunk, beside a detonator.

By that point, Patrick said, "I had become a real soldier."

Two months later, Germany surrendered, ending World War II in Europe.

Patrick and his unit had meanwhile crossed Germany and entered Austria. That's where he was when he learned about the surrender.

"That was a long time ago," he said.

Patrick, lacking much seniority, had to spend the next

eight months there before being sent home.

He remembers relaxing in the sunshine aboard a ship plying the North Atlantic, singing to himself about "what a wonderful thing it is to come home."

Patrick didn't have definite plans for the post-war period. Until he got a phone call from his mother.

She told him that she and Steward, who was a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Air Corps during the war, had bought a ranch in a place Patrick had never heard of — Keating Valley, near Baker.

Margaret told her son to catch a train to Baker, and then call a real estate agent who would drive him to the ranch.

Not long after, Patrick saw for the first time the view that would become as familiar as his own face in the mirror — the Powder River cutting its sinuous course through the fields of the fertile Keating Valley, the ramparts of the Wallowa Mountains dominating the northeast skyline, their peaks white most of the year.

"There I was," Patrick said. "I'd never been on a ranch like that before."

He knew horses.

His mother and stepfather had previously owned a riding school in Washington.

"But I knew nothing about ranching," Patrick said. "But they needed help. And it worked out."

Before he settled into his long career raising cattle, though, Patrick was dedicated to finishing the education that the war had interrupted.

He enrolled at Washington State University — "where I always wanted to go," he said — and earned a degree in animal science.

After graduating, Patrick returned to Keating Valley and helped his mother and stepfather operate what became one of Baker County's notable cattle ranches.

Robert Steward was appointed in 1957 as director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Active together in the community

After their marriage, Patrick and Beth joined the

Nazarene Church in Baker City, Patrick serving on the church's board "more often than not" over the decades.

When they began attending the church, services took place in a building near Baker High School on E Street.

The Morrisseys played a key role in the construction of the current Nazarene Church, which is within sight of their home's front yard.

Patrick said it's disappointing to see so few cars parked in the church's lot on Sunday mornings, with attendance limited due to the pandemic.

"Things are so messed up with churches right now," he said. "That parking lot used to be full."

The couple also was instrumental in starting the Baker County YMCA in the early 1970s and, about a decade later, the construction of Sam-O Swim Center.

In 2015, Heidi Dalton, then the YMCA director, said the legacy of the Morrisseys' efforts continued over the decades.

"They are impacting lives every single day because they had this vision 43 years ago," Dalton said then. "There's no way to quantify how many people they've served over the years."

Whether they were caring for newborn calves on frigid February nights, or putting up hay on scorching summer afternoons, Patrick and Beth remained a team over the decades.

About 15 years ago, when Patrick was diagnosed with prostate cancer, the couple decided to make the 160-mile round trip every weekday to Mountain States Tumor Institute in Fruitland, Idaho, rather than staying there during the week.

Patrick would drive to Fruitland.

But Beth would take the wheel for the return trip so Patrick, who usually didn't feel well, could rest.

After half a century of closeness, a virus has occasionally interfered with Patrick and Beth's relationship.

But today they will be as they have been so often and for so long. Together.

Law decriminalizing drugs in effect

By Andrew Selsky

Associated Press

SALEM — Police in Oregon can no longer arrest someone for possession of small amounts of heroin, methamphetamine, LSD, oxycodone and other drugs as a ballot measure that decriminalized them took effect on Monday, Feb. 1.

Instead, those found in possession would face a \$100 fine or a health assessment that could lead to addiction counseling. Backers of the ballot measure, which Oregon voters passed by a wide margin in November, hailed it as a revolutionary move for the United States.

"Today, the first domino of our cruel and inhumane war on drugs has fallen, setting off what we expect to be a cascade of other efforts centering health over criminalization," said Cassandra Frederique, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, which spearheaded the ballot initiative.

Ballot Measure 110's backers said treatment needs to be the priority and that criminalizing drug possession was not working. Besides facing the prospect of being locked up, having a criminal record makes it difficult to find housing and jobs and can haunt a person for a lifetime.

Two dozen district attorneys

DRUG LAW

Continued from Page 2A

"It will still be illegal and will still be a felony to distribute narcotics," Duman said. "Drugs are still going to be here in the community and there are still going to be crimes associated with drug addiction."

Baxter adds his skepticism to that of others in wondering how helpful the new law will be.

"I understand that these people need help and that they're battling addictions," Baxter said. "But at the same time, how many people are they hurting while they're knee

deep in addiction? It's a lot."

Baxter said he has seen those struggling with addiction not only hurt their spouses, their children, and other family members, but also victimize residents with burglaries and thefts.

"I do know the drug task force is still going to be hopping as far as drug delivery," he said.

And he expects officers to be responding to an increase in property crimes, domestic violence and child abuse and neglect as a result of the new law.

"Other types of crimes are going to hit us hard," Baxter said.

had opposed the measure, saying it was reckless and would lead to an increase in the acceptability of dangerous drugs.

Instead of facing arrest, those found by law enforcement with personal-use amounts of drugs would face a civil citation, "like a traffic ticket," and not a criminal citation, said Matt Sutton, spokesman for the Drug Policy Alliance.

Under the new system, addiction recovery centers will be tasked with "triaging the acute needs of people who use drugs and assessing and addressing any on-going needs through intensive case management and linkage to care and services."

The addiction recovery centers will be funded by millions of dollars of tax revenue from

Oregon's legalized marijuana industry. That diverts some funds from other programs and entities that already receive it, like schools.

The ballot measure capped the amount of pot tax revenue that schools; mental health alcoholism and drug services; the state police; and cities and counties receive at \$45 million annually, with the rest going to a "Drug Treatment and Recovery Services Fund."

The fund will be awash in money if the sales trend for marijuana continues as expected.

In the 2020 fiscal year, marijuana tax revenues peaked at \$133 million, a 30% increase over the previous year, and a 545% increase over 2016,

when pot taxes began being collected from legal, registered recreational marijuana enterprises around the state.

State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, chair of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation, said he expects Oregon's cannabis tax revenues to increase exponentially if recreational marijuana in the United States is legalized. He expects that to happen within four years.

That would make the Drug Treatment and Recovery Services Fund "oversaturated with revenue" as out-of-state consumers legally buy Oregon's potent marijuana, Prozanski said in a telephone interview.

Baker County Veteran Services

Until further notice Veterans will not be seen in person. If you need assistance, call Rick's work number 541-523-8223 and he will call you back to help you over the phone. This is a measure that is being implemented to minimize the spread of COVID-19.