

# MALTING

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But when he heard his name called not once but three times, he was, he admits, “just stunned.”

“It was way more than I expected,” Hutchison said on Tuesday, Feb. 16. “It’s the first time I’ve entered.”

He was the first malter to win two gold medals in a single competition, according to the Craft Maltsters Guild.

Hutchison competed against 27 other malters from seven countries, 17 states and one Canadian province.

Each of the 46 samples of malted barley was evaluated in multiple ways.

Researchers at Montana State University’s Barley, Malt & Brewing Quality Lab tested each sample.

Then, judges at 17 sites around the U.S. and Canada compared the entries’ aroma and flavor, including nibbling on the kernels.

Finally, in the last round, additional judges reviewed the lab results and the other judges’ findings to pick the winners.

In all, 83 judges participated, according to the Craft Maltsters Guild.

Hutchison said he was pleased not only with the recognition from his industry, but because the awards validated his efforts to improve every batch of malted barley based on the feedback he gets from the brewers and distillers who buy his product.

“I’m always tweaking the process to make a better quality malt,” he said.

Hutchison buys his barley from Cornerstone Farms, operated by the Melville family in Wallowa County between Enterprise and Joseph.



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald File

Tom Hutchison, shown here in 2018, fills a sack with malted barley at his business, Gold Rush Malt, in Baker City.

*“I’m always tweaking the process to make a better quality malt.”*

— Tom Hutchison, owner, Gold Rush Malt in Baker City

“It’s a variety of barley that does really well in these high mountain valleys,” Hutchison said. “That’s the key.”

He said he’s a small-scale malter, processing 55 to 60 tons of barley per year. That equates to about 20 acres of the grain, Hutchison said.

He has about 10 regular customers, including Barley Brown’s brewery in Baker City, which uses Hutchison’s malted barley in its Pallet

Jack India pale ale.

Hutchison usually produces two or three batches per month, each batch yielding about 2 1/2 tons of malted barley.

The bulk of his business are the two types for which he won gold medals — pilsner and pale malts.

He said those are a chief ingredient in many types of beers, both lagers and ales, the latter being more popular among the hundreds of craft

brewers that have proliferated in the U.S. over the past few decades.

(The nomenclature is potentially confusing, since pilsner, in addition to being a type of malt, is also a style of lager beer.)

Hutchison said the prevalence of India pale ales (IPA) such as Pallet Jack in the Northwest has cast attention on the role that hops plays in flavoring beer.

Most beer aficionados, he said, are at least somewhat familiar with hops.

Malt, by contrast, is something of a forgotten ingredient, Hutchison said.

He chuckles as he notes that people, on learning what he does for a living, ask him “how’s the hop business?”

Hutchison has to explain gently that “that’s not what I do.”

Although the type of malt has a direct effect on the color of beer — the shorter the drying period, the lighter-colored the kernels and the resulting brew — Hutchison said the malting process can also affect the flavor of the beer.

That’s particularly so with beer styles such as pilsners, he said, which have relatively small amounts of hops, meaning the malt contributes much more to the beer’s flavor palette.

Hutchison said he can’t predict whether his awards will bring new customers for Gold Rush Malt.

For now, the pandemic remains a major factor.

With restaurants and bars closed or severely restricted for much of the past year, demand for his malted barley has dropped by 60% to 70%.

“I can produce more if the demand is there,” Hutchison said. “We’ll wait and see, I guess.”

# LAWSUIT

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The lawsuit alleges that Saint Alphonsus should have known that prior to Sandefur’s treatment of Mark Brown, Sandefur “had a history of surgical outcomes that resulted in the development of infections.”

The lawsuit claims that the hospital should have performed “reasonable credentialing and ongoing peer review” of Sandefur to ensure the safety of its patients.

(A \$5.2 million lawsuit filed Sept. 8, 2020, in Baker County Circuit Court accuses Sandefur, Veronica Crowder, a physician assistant who worked with Sandefur, and Saint Alphonsus Medical Center of negligence in connection with treating a fracture to 6-year-old Avery Martin’s right arm after she was injured on May 5, 2018.)

As part of the Browns’ lawsuit, Lynne Brown also is seeking \$2 million for what she claims is the loss of her husband’s “society, companionship, consortium, services and support” as a result of the defendants’ negligence and violations.

In a fourth claim for relief, Lynne Brown seeks an additional \$2 million in noneconomic damages. She alleges that as a result of Mark Brown’s injuries caused by the defendants’ negligence and violations, she has suffered “severe emotional distress and anxiety with depression.”

The Browns are represented by Brian C. Dretke of the Dretke Law Firm of Bend.

Sandefur is represented by Connie Elkins McKelvey, of Lindsay Hart LLP, a Portland law firm. As of press time Wednesday afternoon, Feb. 17, McKelvey had not responded to a voicemail message and an email seeking comment on the lawsuit.

Saint Alphonsus Health System declined to comment.

“Saint Alphonsus cannot comment on pending litigation,” Mark Snider, Saint Alphonsus Health System spokesman, stated in an email to the Herald.

In a letter to his patients dated Dec. 21, 2020, Sandefur announced that “after 23 years of dedicated service with Saint Alphonsus, I have decided to explore new opportunities in health-care.”

The letter stated that Sandefur’s last day of seeing patients would be Dec. 31, 2020.

In closing, he wrote: “I truly appreciate the trust you have placed in me to partner in your care and wish you the very best in health going forward.”

# Charges dropped in Grant County arson, murder case

■ District Attorney says charges against mother and son were dismissed after judge ruled confession can’t be used at trial

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Murder charges related to the missing couple whose house burned in Grant County are being dismissed because the confession was not properly obtained.

Charges of first-degree murder and arson against Isaac Connelly, 23, and his mother, Gabrielle Connelly, 47, will be dismissed without prejudice — meaning the state could file the charges again if further evidence is discovered — according to a Feb. 12 press release from Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter.

The charges are in connection with the deaths of Terry and Sharon Smith, whose house on Nans Rock Road near Mount Vernon burned to the ground in the early morning hours of July 17-18, 2018. “This is heartbreaking on many levels,” Carpenter said. “Through Isaac Connelly’s confession, we know who did it and how it was done. The mystery is gone but the accountability is, at least for now, out of reach.”

Judge Daina Vitolins ruled on Feb. 10 that the confession by Isaac Connelly obtained by Grant County Undersheriff Zach Mobley could not be used at trial because state prosecutors could not prove



Contributed Photo

Terry and Sharon Smith went missing following a fire at their remote cabin in Grant County in July 2018.

the confession was knowing, intelligent and voluntary because of Miranda violations.

Vitolins said Mobley never asked whether Isaac Connelly understood his Miranda rights — the right to remain silent and have an attorney present during questioning. She also said, after Isaac Connelly invoked his right to defense counsel, Mobley continued talking to him in violation of the law.

“Once an individual invokes their right to counsel, law enforcement must scrupulously honor that request and stop questioning,” she said.

Vitolins said Mobley’s testimony at the Feb. 10 hearing was “not helpful” because he did not review the interview tapes before the

hearing and often said on the witness stand he was unsure and would have to review the tapes. She also said a face mask blocked the camera in one of the recordings, and a

bag of chips blocked the view in another.

Without the confession, Carpenter said in the release the state had only “limited circumstantial evidence that does not prove beyond a reasonable doubt” the Connerys murdered the Smiths.

“Rather than push forward and risk jeopardy attaching, the State will dismiss the murder and arson cases without prejudice,” Carpenter said. “Investigation of the case will continue and possibly other evidence will come to light that will allow the State to proceed.”

### The crime

Isaac Connelly admitted in an interview that he took a handgun from Terry Smith and shot him during an altercation at the Smith residence and then shot Sharon Smith, according to Carpenter’s release.

“He used gasoline to start the Smith residence on fire, then took the (Smiths’) pickup and left,” Carpenter

said. “He drove to the Boise area where he parked the pickup, removed the plates and rejoined his family on their travels.”

Carpenter said Isaac Connelly later disassembled the gun and put it in the trash.

The fire destroyed the home, but former Sheriff Glenn Palmer later discovered the remains of two people at the site, Carpenter said.

“Death certificates were issued for Terry Smith, based on DNA analysis of human remains, and Sharon Smith, based on her disappearance and the second set of human remains,” he said. “Sharon Smith’s remains were burnt so thoroughly no DNA remained.”

Carpenter said the Connerys “almost immediately” became suspects.

The Oregon State Police, Grant County Sheriff’s Office and Federal Bureau of Investigation jointly investigated.

### The interview

Mobley said he and FBI Special Agent Ben Jones first interviewed the Connerys in Arizona in July 2019, and they invoked their right to remain silent.

Isaac Connelly was indicted on June 23, 2020, for unlawful use of a motor vehicle, and a nationwide warrant was issued for his arrest, according to a previous release from Carpenter.

Mobley, Jones and Grant County Sgt. Danny Komning traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in July 2020 to interview Isaac Connelly after he was arrested.

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