



Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

A Baker City man, David Krieger, was critically injured Tuesday afternoon, July 20, on Old Trail Road near Baker City when his motorcycle crashed into an irrigation wheel line that fell from a dolly.

2 Baker City men critically hurt in separate motorcycle crashes

By Jayson Jacoby
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Two Baker City men riding motorcycles were critically injured in separate crashes over a one-hour period Tuesday afternoon, July 20.

The first was reported at 3:13 p.m. on Old Trail Road near Lake Bob, about two miles north of the Baker City limits.

David Krieger, 60, was riding north on the road, behind a pickup hauling an irrigation wheel line on a dolly, when

the line fell off the dolly, said Ashley McClay, public information officer for the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Krieger, who was riding alone, crashed into the wheel line, McClay said.

He was taken by LifeFlight to Saint Alphonsus Hospital in Boise, where he was in critical condition Wednesday morning.

The second crash happened at about 4:20 p.m. on Campbell Street near Cedar Street. Michael Stephen Blount,

48, was riding west on Campbell Street when his motorcycle collided with a Toyota pickup truck driven by Terris Blain Webb, 49, of Baker City, according to a report from Oregon State Police, which handled the accident because the Baker City Police Department was involved with another call.

Webb, who was driving east on Campbell Street, was turning into the Maverik parking lot from the center turn lane when the collision

happened, according to the report.

Blount was taken by ambulance to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City, and then flown from there to Saint Alphonsus in Boise.

Blount was in critical condition Wednesday morning, according to a hospital spokesman.

Webb sustained minor injuries.

Campbell Street was closed to traffic for about an hour after the crash.

WATER

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The city asked residents to voluntarily limit lawn and garden watering to between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., which reduces evaporation.

The city went to Phase 1 — the alert stage — on June 28.

The city's water use during June totaled 129.9 million gallons, a 45% increase over June 2020 and a daily average of 4.3 million gallons.

In early July, with the heat wave that started the last week of June continuing, the city was averaging about 5 million gallons per day.

At the same time, the city's main water source — springs and streams in its 10,000-acre watershed on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains — was declining due to the drought.

Owen said the daily production from the watershed has dropped from about 4.5 million gallons per day in June to around 3.5 million gallons now.

And that volume will continue to dwindle as summer progresses, she said. "We cannot run all summer at 5 mil-

"I think we have some compliance, and that's great, if we can continue to encourage that."

— Michelle Owen, Baker City public works director

lion gallons a day," Owen said on July 8. "That's what it comes down to."

The city started tapping one of its two supplementary sources — a well fortified with water diverted from the watershed during winter and early spring — earlier than usual.

And Owen said she'll probably need to start using water from the other source — Goodrich Lake — next week.

The city typically waits until August to start using water from the lake, which holds about 200 million gallons.

Owen's fear was based on simple math. Assuming a daily average of 5 million gallons persisting through the summer, she said the city would have little margin for error — a broken pipeline, for instance, or a problem with the pump at the well, could put the city into a crisis situation.

For the first few days after the city

enacted Phase 2 of the water curtailment plan, residents were in general complying with the recommendation of shifting outdoor watering to the 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. period.

But daily use continued to remain at about 5 million gallons.

On July 16-18, however, the daily average dipped to just under 4.6 million gallons.

"I think we have some compliance, and that's great, if we can continue to encourage that," Owen said. "It makes me feel that people are at least cognitive of the fact that there is a region-wide drought."

She also urges residents to water lawns only every other evening.

The city has also reduced irrigation at city parks, Mount Hope Cemetery and the city-owned Quail Ridge Golf Course.

Owen said she hopes to avoid having to move to Phase 3 — something the city has never done. At that phase the city bans all outdoor watering, and, unlike in phase 2, the city would enforce the restriction and potentially levy fines of up to \$500 to violators.

Jayson Jacoby contributed to this story.

Morgan Lake closed

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Fire Department has closed Morgan Lake because dry conditions are creating extremely high fire danger.

La Grande Fire Chief Emmitt Cornford said the closure was prompted in part by someone recently lighting a fire at the lake,

just west of La Grande, even though fires have been prohibited there because of high fire danger.

This is the second straight year Morgan Lake has been closed because of extreme fire danger. It was also closed from Sept. 11, 2020, through Oct. 4, 2020.

CHARGES

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In addition to the murder and assault counts, Greenwood is charged with solicitation for allegedly trying to hire someone to kill Brown.

Greenwood was initially scheduled to stand trial in late January 2021, but Schaeffer in December 2020 requested a delay due in part to forensic evidence that was forthcoming, as well as surging numbers of COVID-19 cases.

Judge Matt Shirtcliff of Baker County Circuit Court on Dec. 23, 2020, granted Schaeffer's motion to postpone the trial.

In a June 25 document supporting his motion to dismiss the charges against Greenwood, Schaeffer wrote that in November 2020, at Greenwood's request, he asked officials at the Baker County Jail, where Greenwood has been incarcerated since his arrest in January 2020, whether any of Greenwood's phone conversations with Schaeffer had been recorded.

Schaeffer wrote that a jail deputy told him that four calls, one each in June, July, August and September 2020, had been recorded.

Schaeffer wrote that jail officials gave him copies of the recording, and told him that law enforcement had not accessed or listened to any of the calls, and that Schaeffer's cellphone number, which Greenwood had called, had been "blocked" and that future calls from Greenwood to that number would not be recorded.

But then, in June 2021, Schaeffer wrote, after "further investigation and inquiry," he learned that several of the phone conversations had been accessed and heard by at least one law enforcement officer.

Schaeffer wrote that a jail official gave him a computer disk with the recorded calls and a "printout outlining when and who accessed the calls."

Those calls, Schaeffer wrote, "contain conversations of a substantive nature about the current case and would clearly prejudice my client and be a breach of the attorney/client relationship that was not waived."

Schaeffer describes the conduct of law enforcement as "outrageous."

In a document that Baxter, the Baker County district attorney, wrote on July 16 in response to Schaeffer's motion to dismiss the charges, Baxter wrote that he had spoken to jail staff about Schaeffer's allegations regarding the phone calls.

Baxter wrote that staff told him the phone numbers for Schaeffer's office and cellphone were blocked, and that calls to either number were not recorded.

But Greenwood had called a different cellphone number that was not blocked, so those calls — five, rather than four — were recorded.

Baxter wrote that he has enlisted help from the Oregon Department of Justice to investigate.

"These are serious allegations," Baxter wrote. "A thorough investigation needs to happen by an outside agency."

MCPHERON

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The competitions also raised about \$750,000 for a variety of local charities, Shane said, including the Coats for Kids program, the Baker Community Literacy Coalition and many others.

"Neither Ken nor my mom ever made a dime," Shane said. "Thank you was enough, and that's why he did it."

Or, rather, why they did it. Shane said Ken and Shirley were a team from the start.

"It couldn't have happened without her," he said of his mother, who lives in Baker City.

Although Ken made his first visit to Baker County when he was about 50, he was a horseman almost his entire life.

He was born in Greeley, Colorado, the youngest of six children, and his father was a cattle buyer, Shane said.

As a boy, Ken spent many days at the Denver stockyards with his dad — probably, without knowing it, seeing some Baker County ranchers who also attended the big annual stock show there, Shane said.

When Ken was a teenager his family moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, and he started competing in a variety of rodeo events, including bareback riding, bull riding and saddle bronc.

He was talented enough to win a rodeo scholarship to Colorado State University, Shane said.

Ken's goal was to become a veterinarian.

"In my mind, what he accomplished was amazing."

— Ken Helgerson, talking about Ken McPheron, who started the Baker City bull and bronc riding competitions

But after being drafted into the U.S. Army in the early 1960s and serving in Vietnam, Ken's career path veered in multiple directions.

He worked as the cowboy boss for a couple of dude ranches in Wyoming, guiding guests on rides and hunting and fishing trips in the Teton National Forest, Shane said.

Some of the cowboys he supervised later became corporate executives, but their ties to Ken were such that they attended most of the bronc and bull riding events in Baker City, Shane said.

"He built bonds with people that are spectacular," Shane said.

Ken's skills in the saddle also brought him work connected to Hollywood. In the late 1970s he managed a Southern California ranch where he helped teach actors such as Dean Martin and Mel Tillis how to sit a horse without looking as though they had never been in a saddle.

Around that time Ken also became acquainted with Darrell Winfield, the original "Marlboro Man" featured in TV ads for the cigarette brand.

That led to Ken being one of a group of six cowboys who worked on Marlboro ads for about a decade, Shane said.

And it was that job which is responsible, in no small way, for so much that came later — Ken and Shirley's fortuitous meeting, and the bull and bronc riding competitions

among them.

What happened is that in 1989, Ken traveled to the Bar C Bar ranch, in the Sumpter Valley north of Phillips Reservoir, for a photo shoot for Marlboro.

During that visit he met Shirley.

And from that moment, Shane said, Ken's future was forever linked to Baker County.

Shane, who had just graduated from high school when his mother met Ken, said he recognized immediately the strength of the couple's bond.

But the connection wasn't limited to just Ken and Shirley.

Shane said their children from previous marriages — Shirley's two sons, Shane and Wayne, and her daughter, Lisa, and Ken's two daughters, Kimm and Rayne — also became a family "from day one."

Shane said Ken remained friendly with his first wife, Lana, his high school sweetheart.

"I think that's a rare commodity," Shane said. "Ken brought people together."

A few years later, Ken had an idea to bring a lot of people together.

He saw a way not only to resurrect the rather moribund rodeo arena at the fairgrounds in Baker City, but also to invigorate the local economy.

"He had the right connections in the rodeo industry to bring an event to Baker that

could be successful," Shane said. "He had a vision that it would work."

The first two years, 1995 and 1996, Saturday's bull riding competition was followed by pig mud wrestling on Sunday.

But after People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals objected, Ken and Shirley replaced that event with a bronc riding competition on Friday evening.

This was something of a gamble at the time because bronc riding events weren't as common as they are now, said Ken Helgerson, who lives near Baker City and has been friends with Ken and Shirley for more than 20 years.

But Ken was able to bring in some of the top brons, and bronc riders, in the country to a small town that wasn't on the main rodeo circuit.

"It's one of the highlight bronc riding events in the nation," Helgerson said.

Helgerson, the retired Baker County roadmaster, became acquainted with Ken and Shirley through his artwork.

Helgerson drew a picture of a bull, using a photograph from the Baker City bull riding event as inspiration.

Randy Daugherty of Baker City gave the drawing as a gift to Ken.

That led to a conversation, which soon became a lasting friendship.

"We became good friends," Helgerson said. "Ken was a mentor of mine."

Helgerson, who later became a member of the board of directors for the bull

and bronc riding events, said he learned much from Ken, including the importance of striving to do your best at whatever task you take on.

"He demanded perfection," Helgerson said. "He wanted everything just so, and the event had to run a certain way. He wasn't afraid of a challenge by any means. I learned from Ken that I wanted to do absolutely the best as I could."

That emphasis included the official posters that Helgerson drew for more than two decades for the Baker City rodeo events.

But Helgerson said he cherishes even more a portrait of Ken that he drew, and that Shirley still has.

Over the years, Helgerson said, his family became "very close" with Ken and Shirley, sharing birthdays, weddings and other special occasions.

Helgerson said he had a final visit with Ken in his hospital room last week.

That was just a few days before the bull and bronc riding events, now part of the

Challenge of Champions tour of rodeo competitions across the West, returned to the fairgrounds after a one-year hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic.

"We did talk about the event, and what it meant," Helgerson said. "In my mind, what he accomplished was amazing."

He said Ken was also a "very, very talented" sheet rock contractor.

Ken was named Baker County Man of the Year for 2003.

Yet for all that he accomplished both in his professional life, and as the promoter of events that have contributed much to the Baker County's economy and its philanthropic efforts, Ken's greatest legacy, from Shane's perspective, is decidedly personal.

"Ken and I had disagreements — but we could have them and still have a civil conversation," Shane said.

"He taught me those things I needed to be a successful adult. He didn't have to. But

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