

Niece still hasn't paid back loan for legal bill



DEAR ABBY
ADVICE

DEAR ABBY: Several years ago, my adult niece, with whom I am very close, found herself in some legal difficulties and needed an attorney. At the time, due to some medical issues, she wasn't working and could not afford the attorney's retainer, so I offered to lend her the money. I told her she could repay me once she began working again.

Nine months later she sent me a check for \$500 and, two months

after that, another one for \$500. The retainer was \$2,600. My niece has been steadily employed for the last two years, yet I have received no further payment. I regret that I didn't set up a formal repayment plan, but I never dreamed she'd default on the loan.

Her mother told me she is saving up to buy a house and, apparently, she has money to spend on friends and others. I never told her parents that I loaned her the money, and I have no idea if she ever did, although I assume she hasn't. I'm torn between approaching my niece to remind her that the loan has not yet been repaid and risk damaging

the relationship we have, or suck it up and accept that I'll never see the money.

Because of the pandemic, my husband has been out of work for many months. While we are not desperate, the money she owes me could be put to good use. Please advise. — **GOOD DEED IN THE MIDWEST**

DEAR GOOD DEED: Meet with or contact your niece to ask her for the money she still owes you and, when you do, explain that your husband hasn't worked in many months and you need it. Agree upon a repayment plan. However, if she reneges again, DO discuss it with her parents.

Perhaps they can "encourage" their daughter to do the right thing. There must be a reason they didn't front her the money for her legal problem. Let's hope it wasn't because she stiffed them, too.

DEAR ABBY: A female relative wants to have a child. She is 30. However, her significant other of six years hasn't proposed. She feels her biological clock is ticking — loudly. What would you suggest family advise her to do?

I feel that a woman who wants a child should have one if she can afford to, regardless of whether or not she's married. But I understand her preferring to be mar-

ried first. Time is running out on the likelihood of developing a new relationship this late in the process. What's a girl to do? — **WONDERING IN OHIO**

DEAR WONDERING: The "girl" should ask her boyfriend of six years if he wants to be married to her. If the answer is yes, and he wants to be a father, her problem will be solved. However, if the answer is no — and she can afford it — she should proceed on her path to motherhood without him. Someone may come into her life later who would love to be a husband and a dad. And, if not, she will have fulfilled her biological imperative.

Walla Walla hunter remembers the era of the hunting hound

By **EMRY DINMAN**
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — On a cold January morning, the snow from a recent storm largely melted, Brian Hergert sat inside the living room of his cozy Walla Walla home, surrounded by houseplants in every corner and furnishings he's fashioned out of antlers and animal hides.

In a few hours, he would be headed to his property out in the country, ready to be back in nature after staying home for a few days. Outside, two coon-hounds, Maisie and Tracker, howl at newcomers and passing cats before curling up again for a nap inside their chain-link kennel.

An avid hunter, Hergert has been running hounds since the early '80s. Before the practice was largely banned by voters more than a decade later, his hounds often helped him hunt big game predators, including cougars, in the Blue Mountains.

"We used to take, in a good year, I'd kill six, seven cats," Hergert said. "It was nothing to take out 40, 50 cats out of the Blues from here to Dayton between me and my friends."

In 1996, however, Washington state joined Oregon in outlawing the use of hounds to hunt or pursue black bear, cougars or bobcats, with some exceptions. That initiative, which also largely criminalized the use of bait to attract black bears, was approved by Washington voters by a comfortable margin, marking what many saw as a sea change for hunters in the state.

Management of large



Greg Lehman, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Brian Hergert on Jan. 13, 2022, talks about a huge cougar skin on his living room wall in Walla Walla that scored highly with Boone and Crockett.

predators has remained politically contentious in the decades since, often flared by increased human-cougar interactions, live-stock predation and rare but high-profile fatal attacks.

But recently, debate over what to do with cougars in the Blue Mountains in particular has increased for a different reason: dwindling elk populations.

The Blue Mountain elk herd is estimated to consist of around 3,500 animals, according to reporting by the Lewiston Tribune, well below the population objective of 5,500 currently set by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife.

The herd's calves also often are not surviving to maturity.

A 2021 study by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife monitored 125 elk calves with radio collars — by mid-November, only 11 still were known to be alive. While a number of factors such as a recent harsh winter and drought have contributed to

the high mortality rate, cougars are believed to have accounted for 54 of those deaths.

While some have called for reducing elk hunting in the area to protect the herd, the study's findings have prompted calls to extend cougar-hunting season in the Blue Mountains as well as for the Fish & Wildlife to use hounds to hunt the big cats for management purposes, which is allowed under the 1996 law.

For Hergert, calls to increase cougar hunting are long overdue.

Hergert's hounds

While the veteran hunter has owned as many as six hunting dogs at one time, these days he just keeps the two: a redtick-treecing walker mix named Maisie, and a redtick-bluetick mix named Tracker.

Hergert grew up hunting birds with his dad and brother, and when he began using hounds, he started with small game. He had permission to run his dogs

through the ditches alongside farm ground out near Waitsburg and elsewhere, chasing down raccoons.

"But they're just kind of greasy, stinky deals," Hergert said. "But big cats, they're good eating."

It wasn't long before Hergert began training hounds to chase bobcats and cougars. And if friends who hunted big cats were only interested in the pelt, he'd take the meat and trim it down with the help of a butcher his father worked with as a high schooler.

When Hergert first started hunting cougars, anyone could buy the hunting license and tag and could use hounds during the hunt, he said. Later, the state used a lottery system to allocate cougar tags, and Hergert's name had to be drawn for him to be able to harvest a cougar.

Or, as often as not, another hunter whose name was drawn that year would reach out to Hergert, knowing that he had trained hunting hounds that needed



Brian Hergert/Contributed Photo

Brian Hergert with his hunting hounds Tracker and Maisie, in the Blue Mountains recently.

to keep their skills sharp.

Once his hounds found a cougar's trail and chased it, the cougar would typically climb a tree to try to escape, unable to maintain fast speeds at long distances. While Hergert caught up with his dogs, their baying at the bottom of the tree kept the cougar from being able to flee again.

While the 1996 initiative to ban the use of hounds for hunting cougars and other large predators ended the recreational sport, it didn't end the hunt altogether.

The law provided for a number of exceptions, including for population management or to kill an animal that had attacked livestock or threatened public safety, though hunters generally need

authorization from the state.

And in recent years, the elk that he hunts have become more inaccessible.

"There were 28 rifle-hunting permits available for bull elk in 2018," Hergert said.

"Now there's one permit for rifle and one permit for archery, for the whole area. It's really that bad," he said.

Now, to save the elk populations and to increase opportunities for area hunters, Hergert argues, restrictions on hunting cougars need to be relaxed.

But while Hergert and other individual hunters are not the only ones calling for cougar hunting guidelines to be relaxed in the face of high elk calf predation, it is not a proposal without political challenges and controversy.

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weather

TONIGHT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED
Mainly clear	Cloudy and chilly	Sunny to partly cloudy	Low clouds and chilly	Cloudy and chilly
Baker City 13 Comfort Index™ 1	29 20 0	33 17 3	31 16 0	29 14 0
La Grande 24 Comfort Index™ 0	35 29 0	37 29 3	34 20 1	32 20 0
Enterprise 19 Comfort Index™ 4	38 28 3	35 22 3	31 18 1	29 21 1

Comfort Index takes into account how the weather will feel based on a combination of factors. A rating of 10 feels very comfortable while a rating of 0 feels very uncomfortable.

ALMANAC

TEMPERATURE	Baker City	La Grande	Elgin
High Thursday	27°	31°	33°
Low Thursday	12°	18°	18°
PRECIPITATION (inches)			
Thursday	0.00	0.00	0.00
Month to date	0.38	1.24	3.73
Normal month to date	0.62	1.48	2.92
Year to date	0.38	1.24	3.73
Normal year to date	0.62	1.48	2.92

AGRICULTURAL INFO.

HAY INFORMATION SUNDAY

Lowest relative humidity	45%
Afternoon wind	S at 8 to 16 mph
Hours of sunshine	6.7
Evapotranspiration	0.05

RESERVOIR STORAGE (through midnight Friday)

Reservoir	% of capacity
Phillips Reservoir	2%
Unity Reservoir	27%
Owyhee Reservoir	20%
McKay Reservoir	36%
Wallowa Lake	21%
Thief Valley Reservoir	33%

STREAM FLOWS (through midnight Thursday)

Location	Flow (cfs)
Grande Ronde at Troy	1530
Thief Valley Reservoir near North Powder	1
Burnt River near Unity	15
Umatilla River near Gibbon	277
Minam River at Minam	138
Powder River near Richland	51

THURSDAY EXTREMES

NATION (for the 48 contiguous states)	
High: 83°	Tamiami, Fla.
Low: -38°	Clayton Lake, Maine
Wettest: 0.82" NASA Shuttle Facility, Maine	
OREGON	
High: 63°	Tillamook
Low: 3°	Meacham
Wettest: none	

WEATHER HISTORY

On Jan. 29, 1966, the "Blizzard of '66" dumped 12 to 20 inches of wind-whipped snow from central Virginia through Pennsylvania into southern New England. The storm caused more than 50 deaths.

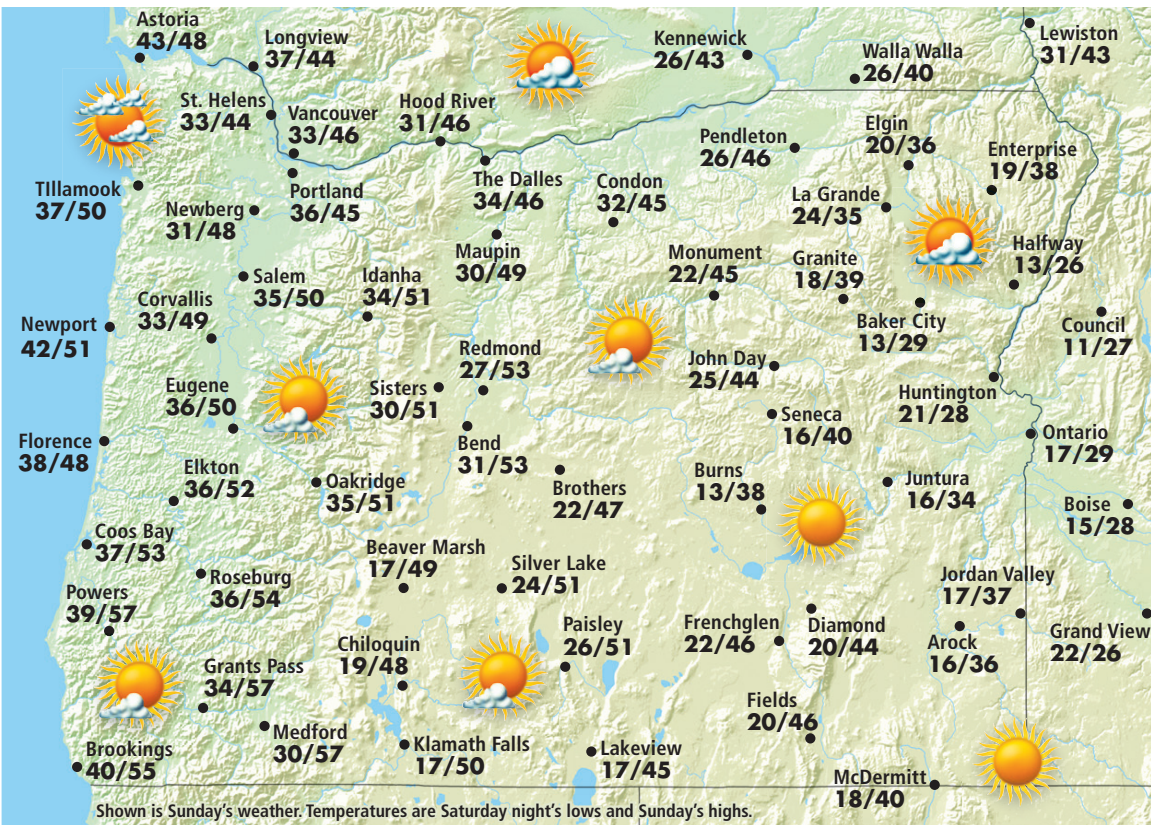
SUN & MOON

	SAT.	SUN.
Sunrise	7:17 a.m.	7:15 a.m.
Sunset	4:55 p.m.	4:56 p.m.
Moonrise	5:30 a.m.	6:34 a.m.
Moonset	1:50 p.m.	3:00 p.m.

MOON PHASES

Phase	Date
New	Jan 31
First	Feb 8
Full	Feb 16
Last	Feb 23

AROUND OREGON AND THE REGION



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REGIONAL CITIES

City	SUN. HI/Lo/W	MON. HI/Lo/W	City	SUN. HI/Lo/W	MON. HI/Lo/W
Astoria	48/39/r	46/39/r	Lewiston	43/35/sn	47/34/c
Bend	53/35/c	46/25/pc	Longview	44/37/r	44/38/r
Boise	28/23/pc	33/23/pc	Meacham	35/28/c	36/26/s
Brookings	55/43/c	56/40/c	Medford	57/37/c	55/28/c
Burns	38/25/c	42/16/pc	Newport	51/41/r	47/38/c
Coos Bay	53/40/c	48/35/c	Olympia	48/38/r	46/35/c
Corvallis	49/34/r	45/31/r	Ontario	29/23/c	37/21/c
Council	27/18/pc	32/9/c	Pasco	40/31/i	47/31/s
Elgin	36/28/c	35/25/s	Pendleton	46/33/c	41/32/s
Eugene	50/38/r	45/32/c	Portland	45/35/r	44/36/r
Hermiston	43/35/c	45/33/s	Powers	57/44/c	50/33/c
Hood River	46/37/sn	45/36/c	Redmond	53/32/c	45/22/pc
Imnaha	44/32/pc	39/26/pc	Roseburg	54/43/c	47/33/c
John Day	44/36/c	39/24/s	Salem	50/35/r	47/34/c
Joseph	39/27/sn	34/21/pc	Spokane	35/27/sn	35/25/c
Kennewick	43/32/i	46/33/r	The Dalles	46/38/r	48/36/pc
Klamath Falls	50/25/pc	51/16/pc	Ukiah	41/29/c	36/25/s
Lakeview	45/24/pc	46/17/pc	Walla Walla	40/33/c	41/31/s

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice

RECREATION FORECAST SUNDAY

ANTHONY LAKES	PHILLIPS LAKE
Cloudy	Cloudy
27 19	36 31
MT. EMILY REC.	BROWNLEE RES.
A p.m. flurry	Cloudy
32 27	35 27
EAGLE CAP WILD.	EMIGRANT ST. PARK
A little p.m. snow	A p.m. shower
31 19	38 25
WALLOWA LAKE	MCKAY RESERVOIR
P.M. snow, 1-2"	Cloudy
39 27	48 33
THIEF VALLEY RES.	RED BRIDGE ST. PARK
Cloudy and chilly	Cloudy and chilly
29 20	35 29