

## Nuisance

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“We’re trying to attack it from several angles,” DUBY said. “What we’ve been doing in the past is just not working. It’s been frustrating.”

Cannon said city officials, as they pursue a possible declaration of Gwin’s home as unsafe, will proceed without “preconceived notions” about the condition of the home.

In other cases when the city sought to declare a building unsafe it was following a fire that damaged the structure, Cannon said.

The situation with Gwin’s home is different since it hasn’t burned.

If the city decides to block entry into the home because it’s considered unsafe, “we’d better be right,” Cannon said.

Under the city’s property maintenance ordinance, conditions that could warrant the building official declaring a building unsafe include “whenever the structure ... has become dilapidated or deteriorated as to become an attractive nuisance or a harbor for transients or criminals.”

The 950-square-foot home, built in 1900, has a market value of \$3,740, according to the Baker County Assessor’s Office, which last appraised the property in 2019. The lot, which covers almost 5,000 square feet, has a market value of \$31,330, according to the Assessor’s Office.

### Neighbors frustrated by situation

Joel Richardson, who lives on Birch Street near Gwin’s property, said that although he respects property rights, he believes the situation at 1975 Birch St. needs to be addressed because it is directly affecting neighboring properties.

Richardson said he and his wife, Gere, had mice in their home, which he attributes to the rodents being attracted to refuse on Gwin’s property. Richardson said other neighbors have also reported mice infestations.

“To me, it’s just about wanting a clean neighborhood that’s safe for everyone,” Joel Richardson said. “It’s been a long time with that property just slowly going downhill.”

Angie Stewart, who with her husband, John, lives at the corner of Plum Street and Washington Avenue, just west of Gwin’s home, said the recurrent accumulations of trash, and associated problems, have left them and some of their neighbors as “basically hostages to the inside of our homes.”

Angie Stewart said unpleasant odors emanate from Gwin’s property, and she has seen people urinating in the yard.

“We can’t go out and use our decks and backyards in the summer,” Stewart said. “It’s just awful.”

Stewart said she and her husband have talked with Gwin about the problem, but to no avail.



Samantha O’Conner/Baker City Herald

### Baker City officials are exploring the possibility of having the home at 1975 Birch St. declared unsafe to inhabit.

“It’s not getting resolved,” she said. Although both Stewart and Richardson said they don’t believe anyone is living permanently in the home this winter, they believe the situation will change when the weather warms.

“We’ll see people hanging out there come warmer weather, I guarantee that,” Richardson said.

Kerns, in his Jan. 11 order designating Gwin’s property as a chronic neighborhood nuisance, wrote that “the home is currently empty.”

Stewart said the property “attracts a lot of homeless and their friends, and that adds to the problem.”

She’s also concerned about a tree house that has been built on Gwin’s property, and in particular that its ladder is potentially dangerous and could attract people.

Stewart said she’s told teenagers who were in the alley behind Gwin’s home to stay away from the property.

Stewart said she and her husband are “ecstatic” that city officials are trying to do something to improve the situation.

Richardson said he thinks the city should try to designate the home as uninhabitable.

Although he said he’s never been inside the home or on the property, he has watched people enter the house not through a door but rather by climbing through a window.

Richardson said that suggests that the inside of the home is as “inundated” with items as the yard has been several times.

He said it also appeared last summer that people were living in a pickup truck parked on the property.

“It’s a condemned area as far as I’m concerned,” Richardson said. “Is it a place where I think people should be living? No.”

### Property owner’s history of violations

According to city and court records, a city code enforcement officer

cited Gwin for violating the property maintenance ordinance in May 2015, August 2015 and October 2016.

On June 17, 2017, the city paid a contractor \$2,000 to clean up the property.

The city cited Gwin for violating the property maintenance order on Dec. 27, 2017, and four more times in 2018, according to court records.

On Oct. 29, 2018, the Baker County Justice Court issued an order allowing the city to clean up the property and then bill the owner for the cost.

The city had a \$5,600 bid from a contractor to do the work, but city officials decided to have a public works employee use a loader to gather the refuse.

The city also removed material from the property in October 2020.

The city sets aside about \$6,000 each year to clean up properties that violate the maintenance ordinance.

Stewart said that although she, like Richardson, believes people should be allowed to use their property as they see fit, there must be a limit to what’s acceptable.

“You don’t like to stomp on anybody’s rights, but he’s had so many chances to fix the place,” she said. “It’s just a continual problem, for at least the past five years. We want to use our properties. There have been tears shed in this neighborhood over that property. It’s just so sad.”

## School

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They are also slated to meet with residents during a public event on Thursday, Feb. 24, from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the library at Baker High School, 2500 E St.

“We are thankful to have three strong candidates, and we look forward to getting to know them better next week to find the best fit for Baker School District,” 5J Board Chairman Chris Hawkins said in a press release. “We hope that our local community will join us for the meet and greet at Baker High School next Thursday to be introduced to the candidates and provide their feedback, as well.”

The school board plans to choose the new superintendent during the regular board meeting on Thursday, March 10, at 6 p.m. It hasn’t been determined whether that meeting will be by Zoom or in person.

Witty announced in June 2021 that he intended to retire through the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System on July 1 of that year, but that he would continue to work as superintendent for up to two years.

In November 2021, the school board set a timeline for its super-

intendent search. The closing date for the job announcement was Jan. 28, 2022.

The tentative plan calls for the new superintendent to start work at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, said Lindsey McDowell, the school district’s public information and communications coordinator.

Witty would work with the new superintendent to start, and then transition later in the school year to an enterprise director role at a time agreed on by the new superintendent and the school board.

Information about the three finalists:

### Erin Lair

Lair graduated from Baker High School and is the director of school improvement for the Intermountain Education Service District.

She worked previously as director of curriculum, instruction and technology for the Sherwood School District, and before that she was



Lair



Marshall



Schildbach

assistant charter administrator for Vision Charter School in Caldwell.

### David Marshall

Marshall is superintendent of Brookings-Harbor School District on the southern Oregon Coast.

Previously, Marshall was assistant superintendent for the Hermiston and Milton-Freewater school districts, following more than 20 years of classroom teaching experience.

### William Schildbach

Schildbach is principal of Tikigaq School, a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school in Point Hope, Alaska.

He earlier served as superintendent of the Nome Public Schools in Nome, Alaska, and also worked as principal of Mt. Spurr Elementary and Emmonak School, both in Alaska.

## Chase

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The incident that led to Snell’s arrest happened on the evening of April 28, 2021.

After Snell refused to pull over for a traffic stop on Interstate 84 east of Baker City, OSP Sr. Trooper Andrew McClay pursued the 2020 Ford Expedition westbound on the freeway toward Baker City.

McClay notified other officers that the driver exited the freeway at Campbell Street but became stuck in traffic. The driver then returned to the freeway, still heading westbound.

Baker City Police officer Zach Thatcher saw the Expedition take the next freeway exit near Milepost 302, and then drive

east on Highway 86 toward Richland, according to a report from Deputy Gabe Maldonado of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office.

Thatcher followed the vehicle to about Milepost 7 on Highway 86, where the vehicle turned around and started driving west on the highway, toward the freeway. Meanwhile Rand Weaver, a Baker City Police officer, had deployed spike strips across Highway 86.

With Maldonado in pursuit, Snell crashed at the intersection of Highway 86 and Lindley Lane.

Snell got out of the vehicle and ran north on Lind-

ley Lane, then through an open gate and toward a cattle truck. Maldonado wrote in his report that the officer with him, Baker County deputy Kyle Ebeling, opened the door of the cattle truck and told Snell to stop. Snell did so, and the deputies arrested him.

Maldonado wrote that he “could detect a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from Snell’s person. Snell would not give me his name, so when I went to the crashed vehicle to look for a wallet, I saw multiple empty cans of beer on the floor and there was alcohol spilled in the vehicle.”

## Raimundo Andres Uriarte

February 4, 1952 - February 10, 2022

Please join family and friends for the “Going Away Party” of Raimundo Uriarte on Sunday, February 20, 2022, at 1 p.m. Mountain Time in the gymnasium of Adrian High School, 301 Owyhee Street, Adrian, Oregon, 97913.

Raimundo was born in Guernica, Bizkaia, in the Basque Country where he grew up with his mother Teresa, sister Maria and his half brother Faustino Landa. In 1962, at the age of 10, his father Resu, who he had only met a few times, brought his family over to the United States. Resu herded sheep on the south side of the Steens Mountain in Oregon with Raimundo’s Uncles John and Ben Madariaga. When Raimundo came to the U.S. he did not know English. He and his sister started to learn by watching television.

Sports were always a part of his life. He participated in football, track, and wrestling throughout high school, where he set many records in Burns, Oregon. He played football for Boise State in 1971.

He married Judy Renwick in 1973 and was blessed with a son, Ramey. He returned to Burns to be with his new family, worked in the Edward Hines Lumber Company and joined the Army National Guard. He also began what would become a lifetime of coaching.

In 1979, he married Teresa Stearns and they had 3 children - Joshua, Amber and Marissa. In 1986, he moved to Baker City, Oregon, where he worked at Ellingson Lumber Company and continued his coaching career. Throughout the years, he coached football, track, wrestling, YMCA volleyball and basketball. He loved coaching so much that it was part of who he was. To many, Coach Ray or Coach U was not only a coach, but a mentor and a friend. Being a coach in Baker City did not limit his influence. Throughout the years at different track meets he would offer a helping hand and show a few pointers to neighboring athletes.

He was devoted to the community, the kids and their future. He went back to school in the late 1990s and received an Associate’s Degree from Eastern Oregon University. In the 2000s, Raimundo and his third wife, Tamara, moved to Ontario, Oregon. Even with the move, Raimundo continued to give back to the Baker Bulldogs’ sports program. He would travel back and forth from Ontario to Baker City to give what he could and instill in each and every athlete his daily mantra: Have fun, strive for a PR (personal record) and make a new friend. He believed in these life goals as well as his family and his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even a 2005 cancer diagnosis could not deter his faith or determination and he overcame it.

In 2017, he moved to Adrian, Oregon, where he continued coaching football, track, wrestling and recently started coaching basketball again. He was able to enjoy time with family who mostly resided in Boise. Family, friends, his athletes, his animals and Jesus were the most important things to Raimundo. These were his reasons for living. He worked hard and played hard, he loved card games and making up songs, listening to The Beatles, helping his family with projects or spending time at Basque dinners.

He is preceded in death by his parents. As he journeys to heaven he leaves behind his half brother Faustino (Mari), his sister Maria, his children Ramey (Paula), Joshua (Itxaso), Amber (Jesse), Marissa (AJ); grandchildren Morgan, (Jake), Tucker and Melia; his niece Deshaunna, nephew Ryan, and his many athletes and friends. Have fun, strive for a PR and make a new friend, while enjoying a Kalimotxa in heaven.

Guk gure zeuri asko (His way of “I love you” in Basque). A Go Fund Me has been set up at <https://go-fund.me/957902aa>

## Wanda Joyce Lowe

October 23, 1935 - December 18, 2021

Wanda Joyce Lowe passed away peacefully and went to be with Jesus on Dec. 18, 2021, due to pancreatic cancer. Wanda was born Oct. 23, 1935, in Baker City, Oregon. A memorial celebration will be held on Saturday, Feb. 19, at 1 p.m. at Mountain Life Church, 10700 South Walton Rd., La Grande, Oregon 97850.

Wanda was raised in the Burnt River Valley in Herford, Oregon, where she met and married her high school sweetheart Dell Lowe. They settled in La Grande, Oregon, and raised their children, where Wanda was a devoted wife, mother and devout Christian. She was also very involved with, and loved her church family. Wanda loved horseback riding and the outdoors; hunting with her family; long walks in the woods; searching for wild huckleberries; gardening and canning; sewing and making wedding and prom dresses for her relatives; reading and oil painting. Early on, Wanda was active in the lives of her nieces and nephews, and was instrumental in their spiritual upbringing. She diligently shared with them the love of Jesus, and often transported them to church and VBS where she nurtured them and other young people with the word of God as a Sunday school teacher. When her own children were in their teens, she became the youth pastor at their church where she was dedicated to reaching young people for Christ while making it exciting and adventurous. Her grandchildren experienced the same devotion, as Wanda attended nearly every major event in their lives, including every sporting event possible.

Wanda and Dell freely offered their home to anyone in need - family, friends and strangers giving them food, clothing, money, or place to sleep. They would often tow travelers whose cars had broken down, to their home where Wanda would feed and entertain them (and share the Gospel) while Dell repaired their car. After Dell passed away in 1985, Wanda graduated from La Grande College of Business and started her career as a medical receptionist. She worked for Dr. James Kopp for many years before retiring in 2002. She always considered the people she worked with her family. She continued spreading the Gospel to people in need and began a Bible study for widows and divorced single women which she eventually opened to all women in need. She made many lifelong friends through this ministry.

Wanda was preceded in death by her husband, Dell G. Lowe, parents, John R. and Rosemary L. Mitchell; sisters, Anna Munsell, Myrnie Koontz, Nedra Scott and granddaughter, Marisa Dell Lowe.

Wanda waits in heaven for her children, Darrell Lowe (wife Darla), Wendy (Lowe) Ball (husband Reed), and Brent Lowe; six grandchildren, Ben, Miah (wife Katie) and David Lowe; Marri (Ball) Dahir (husband Adam), Derek Ball (wife Willow), Felishia (Lowe) Alexander (husband Eric). Wanda had seven great-grandchildren: Aiden, Asher, Emerson (David Lowe), Logan, Mika, Nash (Miah Lowe) and Sterling (Felishia Alexander).

## Janet Blodgett

June 16, 1943 - February 11, 2022

Janet was called to heaven to be with the Lord on February 11, 2022.

She was an amazing daughter, wife, sister and aunt. An incredibly strong woman with a beautiful heart. In her younger years she loved to cook and host holidays for her family and friends in Poulsbo, Washington. Family was always the most important to Janet.

More recently, Janet had to be a very strong woman to be able to fight cancer and battle lupus.

Her fight is now over. Janet is now home and at peace, no more pain and suffering. She will always be dearly loved and forever in our hearts.

Janet was preceded in death by husband, Lee Blodgett, father and mother, Lloyd and Evelyn Page, and brother Jerry Page.

Funeral arrangements are still to come.



## Walter (Brad) Wirth

September 24, 1956 - January 26, 2022

Fisherman, hunter and jokester Walter Bradley Wirth’s love of life didn’t come to an end with his death. On Jan. 26, 2022, Brad passed away at home in Portland, Oregon, at the age of 65, after a courageous battle with cancer. Comforted and surrounded by his wife, Jill, and all his children, who will continue to honor his legacy by living their lives with laughter.

His belly laugh entered this world on Sept. 24, 1956. Brad graduated from Albany High, class of 1975. Following graduation, he served with the U.S. Air Force. He married Joannie (Houston) and they had four children. Brad began a career with Pacific Power and Light, coached many Little League teams and dug a few clams. Next up in life ushered in a joining of families when Brad and Jill married in 2005. Together, they enjoyed celebrating all their kids and grandkids. Brad loved spending time outdoors by hunting, hiking, fishing, and camping. His other joys included watching his children and grandchildren play their favorite sports, pickling everything from cucumbers to eggs with his wife Jill, and of course, raiding every huckleberry bush he could find.

Brad is survived by his parents, Deloris and Albert Wirth. He left behind all four of his children: Jennifer, Lyndsey, Kimberly, Mitchell and their families. Brad left his beloved wife, Jill and his three stepchildren. He preceded his brothers Bryan and Greg and their families. Brad wasn’t shy in sharing his jokes and immense love for his 11 grandchildren. The fishermen tales will live on through all those that have crossed paths at some point with Brad, but when you tell the story, don’t forget the infamous belly laugh.

A short graveside ceremony will be held on Friday, March 11 at 1:30 p.m. at Willamette National Cemetery, followed by a reception.

