

Local

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO

from the Democrat-Herald

June 11, 1972

Vandals chalked up nearly \$11,000 worth of damage to recreational facilities on ranger districts of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest last year, according to Stuart Hanna, in charge of recreation, fire and lands.

25 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

June 11, 1997

(Photo caption): Phillips Reservoir, southwest of Baker City, was near a record level Tuesday due to snowmelt from the Elkhorn Mountains and surrounding areas. The reservoir is holding 84,000 acre-feet of water. Water begins running over the spillway when the level reaches 90,050 acre-feet. Phillips has held more water just once since it was built in 1968, said Jim Colton, manager of the Baker Valley Irrigation District. In 1983 the reservoir level exceeded 86,000 acre-feet. The reservoir will begin dropping slowly later this month, Colton said. He recently reduced the outflow from Mason Dam to prevent flooding of pasture lands downstream from Baker City.

10 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

June 11, 2012

Baker City Police were out in full force over the weekend, prepared to respond to any problems that might arise in association with the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally. And while officers were kept busy Friday through Sunday, most of the incidents they were called to did not involve any of the thousands of visitors in town for the annual rally, Police Chief Wyn Lohner said today.

ONE YEAR AGO

from the Baker City Herald

June 12, 2021

Joel McCraw needed to find someone willing to spend the summer atop a mountain that has a three-state view but is far out of sight of any coffee shop or grocery store.

His task wasn't as daunting as it might sound, thanks in part to Facebook.

The job is fire lookout on Mount Ireland. The 8,346-foot peak is the apex of a granitic shoulder that extends several miles west from the spine of the Elkhorn Mountains and forms the divide between the Powder River and North Fork John Day River basins as well as the boundary between Baker and Grant counties.

Mount Ireland is one of more than a dozen prominences in Northeastern Oregon where the traditional method of finding wildfires — a person working inside a tiny building on a high point, looking for the telltale tendrils of smoke — persists.

Several decades ago there were more than 50 lookouts in the region that were staffed each summer.

But over time, with surveillance by airplane more feasible, and a proliferation of roads making it easier for fire crews to access remote areas, most lookouts were closed, and many removed.

Mount Ireland remains a valuable cog in the fire-detection system in part because of its elevation — if you head west from the peak you won't hit a higher summit until you get to the Cascades.

But its location is also ideal, said McCraw, the fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Whitman District.

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, JUNE 8

6-12-31-38-44-48

Next jackpot: \$1.9 million

POWERBALL, JUNE 8

22-39-43-62-64 PB 7

Next jackpot: \$229 million

MEGA MILLIONS, JUNE 7

4-34-40-41-53 Mega 3

Next jackpot: \$226 million

WIN FOR LIFE, JUNE 8

17-36-71-76

PICK 4, JUNE 9

• 1 p.m.: 1-8-5-0

• 4 p.m.: 7-9-4-7

• 7 p.m.: 6-4-3-8

• 10 p.m.: 5-6-1-6

LUCKY LINES, JUNE 9

2-6-9-14-17-21-25-30

Next jackpot: \$59,000

SENIOR MENUS

MONDAY (June 13): Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes

with gravy, mixed vegetables, rolls, green salad, pudding

TUESDAY (June 14): Roasted turkey with gravy, stuffing,

carrots, rolls, macaroni salad, cookies

WEDNESDAY (June 15): Taco salad, sour cream and salsa,

tortilla chips, carrot-raisin salad, brownies

THURSDAY (June 16): Chicken and gravy over biscuits, corn,

cottage cheese with fruit, cheesecake

FRIDAY (June 17): Breaded pork loin, au gratin potatoes,

broccoli, rolls, green salad, cookies

Public luncheon at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$5 donation (60 and older), \$7.50 for those under 60.

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Jobless rate plummets, workers still needed

BY MARK BOGART

For the Baker City Herald

The Baker County YMCA needs lifeguards in order to teach swimming lessons.

The hospital, clinics, and care centers need nurses to care for patients.

Schools need teachers and support staff to educate, supervise and support students.

Industries need workers to produce the products people need and want.

The list goes on to nearly every segment of the economy, from construction and manufacturing to child care and customer service. And the shortages are evident across Oregon and the United States.

So, where have all the workers gone?

The short answer is that most have gone back to work. In fact, the Oregon Employment Department recently reported that Baker County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for April was 4% — the lowest level ever recorded.

The rate for Oregon dropped to 3.7%, and the national rate is at 3.6%. Those numbers are based on a statistical analysis of data reflecting the size of the workforce and the number of employed people, said Chris Rich, an economist with the Employment Department who works in Eastern Oregon. Rich emphasized that the unemployment rate is different from the number of people receiving unemployment benefits, which has also dropped significantly.

A corresponding growth in employment adds some clarity to the situation. The number of people employed in Baker County grew from 7,028 a year ago to 7,411 in April 2022. Across Oregon, employment rose from 2,020,483 to 2,122,538.

The predicament is more complicated than many peo-



Mark Bogart/Contributed Photo

Signs advertising jobs available are common in Baker City.

ple believe. Much of the explanation begins, but doesn't end, with the COVID-19 pandemic. Baker County's unemployment rate hit a peak of 10.9% in April 2020 as many people left their jobs or were laid off due to outbreaks, business closures, and fear of exposure to the virus. Some found it impossible to work while caring for and homeschooling their children. Daycare, which was expensive and hard to find, also became less reliable due to the virus.

Now, with over 70% of the country fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and many people with natural immunity from prior exposure, workers are again in demand. Businesses, schools and events have returned to levels not seen since 2020. "Help Wanted" and "Now Hiring" signs and ads seem to be everywhere. To compete for

workers, many employers have raised wages and benefits, offered signing bonuses, and increased recruiting efforts. Some have offered more flexible schedules or working arrangements. Others have changed business models to reduce their payrolls (reduced business hours, more self-service, etc.)

Rich points out that many of the worker shortages existed before the pandemic hit. In early 2020, unemployment rates were also hitting record lows. Now, after a two-year break, the trend in employment growth has resumed.

One complication of the economic shifts was the so-called "Great Resignation," which applied to the unprecedented numbers of workers who voluntarily left their jobs during the past two years. A large percentage of those resigned in order to move into

better jobs with better pay and working conditions. Others decided to open their own businesses or to retire. Because their departure from the work force was voluntary, they were not part of the unemployment numbers, but employers have still had to address the turnover issues in a tight labor market.

Since there is no large pool of potential workers on the sidelines, Baker County is again facing shortages that were developing before the pandemic. In addition to the pay and benefit incentives offered by employers, communities need to address other related shortages in order to attract the employees they need. Several entities have begun to do just that in Baker County with new daycare options, housing for workers and families, and training opportunities.

Portland man arrested in Baker with stolen car

Suspect had a seizure during the arrest, checked at the hospital

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

A Portland man who was arrested in Baker City while driving a stolen car on June 3 had a seizure during the arrest and was taken to the Baker County Jail after being checked at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City.

Robert John Wagner, 33, is charged with possession of a stolen vehicle and unauthorized use of a vehicle, both Class C felonies, and giving false information to a police officer, a Class A misdemeanor.

Wagner was arraigned on Monday, June 6, in Baker County Circuit Court. He is scheduled to enter a plea on June 27. Judge Matt Shirtcliff set Wagner's bail at \$40,000. He could be released from the jail by posting 10% of the bail.

The incident started about 9:30 p.m. June 3 when Baker City Police officer Justin Prevo saw a grey Subaru Impreza run a red light on Main Street at Campbell Street.

In his report, Prevo wrote that he followed the car, with his overhead lights and eventually his siren activated. The Subaru pulled over on D Street near the Powder River. Wagner had one female passenger.

Mark Powell, another Baker City Police officer, arrived soon after.

Prevo wrote in his report that after dispatch reported that the Subaru had been reported stolen in Portland, he put Wagner in handcuffs.

Oregon State Police Sr. Trooper Tim Schuette also arrived at the scene.

Prevo wrote in his report that he asked Wagner if he had a driver's license. Wagner said he did not, and that his license had been suspended. Prevo asked Wagner for his name and date of birth, and Wagner said his name was Josh Lee Waters and that he was born on Aug. 9, 1995.

Prevo gave the name to dispatch, but no records under that name and date of birth showed up.

Prevo said he talked with Wagner again, and this time Wagner repeated the name and said he was from Montana. The dispatcher found a DMV photo for a person with that name,

but Prevo wrote that the photo did not match Wagner.

While Prevo was talking with Powell and the female passenger, Wagner called Prevo back. This time Wagner said his name was Billy Lundy and that he had "given so many different dates of birth that he was unsure of his actual date of birth."

Prevo reported the new name to dispatch, and the dispatcher found another DMV photo. This, too, was a different person.

Prevo said he told Wagner that he was going to jail regardless, and that a palm scan would identify him. This time Wagner gave his actual name, date of birth and Social Security number.

The dispatcher sent Prevo a DMV photo, and this one matched Wagner.

Prevo also learned that the Oregon State Parole Board had issued an arrest warrant for Wagner, who had absconded from parole.

According to Prevo's report, Wagner said he bought the Subaru three or four days earlier for \$600 from a man named Bryce, whose last name he didn't know. Wagner said he had come to Baker City a few days earlier.

Prevo wrote that while searching the Subaru he found mail addressed to Duncan Holmes, who is the registered owner of the car, as well as Holmes' checkbook.

While Prevo was searching the car, Wagner had a seizure. Prevo removed the handcuffs and brought Wagner out of the patrol car and onto the sidewalk. Prevo wrote that Wagner said he has epilepsy but was OK.

An ambulance took Wagner to the hospital, where he was treated and released, and taken to the jail.

In 2012, Wagner was convicted of three counts of third-degree rape and one count of contributing to the sexual delinquency of a minor in Marion County.

In 2017 he was convicted of second-degree escape, from a transition facility in Marion County, and sentenced to state prison for 15 months.

In September 2020 he pleaded guilty to attempt to commit a Class B felony (second-degree assault) and to fourth-degree assault in Multnomah County and was sentenced to 11 months in state prison and 364 days in the Multnomah County jail.

News of Record

DEATH NOTICE

Judith "Judy" Lee Folkman: Judith "Judy" Lee Folkman, 79, of Baker City, died June 7, 2022. A celebration of her life will be held Saturday, June 25, at 11 a.m. at the First Lutheran Church, 1734 Third St. in Baker City with Pastor Ian Wolfe officiating. A reception will follow in the church fellowship hall. Memorial contributions may be made to the First Lutheran Church through Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel, 1500 Dewey Ave., Baker City, OR 97814. Light a candle in Judy's honor or offer online condolences to her family at www.grayswestco.com.

FUNERALS PENDING

Eugene "Gene" Sutton: A traditional funeral service will be held Thursday, June 16, 2022, at 11 a.m. at Harvest Church in Baker City. An interment will follow at Mt. Hope Cemetery with military honors. Friends are invited to join the family for a reception to be held immediately following the interment at Harvest Church. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Online condolences can be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com.

POLICE LOG

Baker County Sheriff's Office
Arrests, citations

CONTEMPT OF COURT: (Baker County Justice Court warrant): Jason Richard Harris, 49, Baker City, 10:50 a.m. Thursday, June 9, in the 3400 block of K Street; jailed.

CONTEMPT OF COURT: (Baker County Justice Court warrant): Andrew Jay Culley, 33, Baker City, 1:18 p.m. Thursday, June 9, in the 3400 block of K Street; jailed.

THIRD-DEGREE THEFT, FIRST-DEGREE TRESPASS: David Samuel Cutshall, 40, Baker City, 3:33 p.m. Thursday, June 9, in the 1900 block of Resort Street; cited and released.

DUII, FAILURE TO ABIDE BY TERMS OF DIVERSION: (Baker County Circuit Court warrant): Kevin Paul May, 40, Richland, Oregon, 8:03 p.m. Thursday, June 9, in the 80 block of Main Street; arrested and released.

Oregon State Police

Accident report

According to a report by Trooper Timothy Schuette, a Harley Davidson motorcycle towing a small trailer was traveling eastbound on Interstate

84 near milepost 305 at 4:21 p.m. Thursday, June 9, when the rear tire experienced a blow out. This caused the rider, Thomas Michael Vance, 67, of Evansville, Indiana, to lose control. He and his passenger, Bonnie Lou Vance, 69, of Evansville, Indiana, were thrown from the motorcycle.

Thomas Vance sustained critical injuries and was flown from the scene via air ambulance. Bonnie Vance was transported by ground ambulance with serious injuries. The OSP was assisted on scene by ODOT, Baker City Fire, AMR Ambulance and Baker City Police Department.

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