

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO

from the Democrat-Herald
August 1, 1972

Findings from a preliminary survey have persuaded members of the Tigard-based Oregon Education Association to conduct a full scale investigation beginning this afternoon of teacher complaints in school district 5-J.

25 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald
August 1, 1997

Firefighters put out two single-tree blazes Thursday and this morning were looking for three others apparently sparked by lightning.

Both fires Thursday involved a single dead tree, said Barry Hansen of the U.S. Forest Service's Burnt-Powder Fire Zone. Neither blaze spread.

One fire was just inside the south boundary of the Baker City watershed. The other was on private property near Bowen Valley.

10 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald
August 1, 2012

July got off to a torrid start, but in the end it couldn't keep up the pace.

The month wound up in that meteorological purgatory — pretty much average.

After the temperature topped out at 90 or higher on eight of the first 12 days, it managed that feat on just three of the remaining 19 days.

The result was an average high temperature of 86.8 degrees — just 1.8 degrees warmer than average.

ONE YEAR AGO

from the Baker City Herald
August 3, 2021

August arrived as the anti-July.

Everything July was, in terms of weather, the first day of August was not in Baker County.

This July not only was the hottest on record at the Baker City Airport — it was the hottest month, period.

July's average high temperature was 92.3 degrees, nipping the previous record of 92.0 set in July 1985.

But August started cool, with a high of 79 degrees on the first day of the month. It was the coolest day at the airport since June 16, when the high was 76. The high was also eight degrees below average for the first day of August.

The drought that has plagued Baker County and much of the rest of Oregon deepened during July.

A meager .02 of an inch of rain fell at the airport during the month, scarcely enough to moisten the dust.

August, by contrast, needed but a single day to surpass not only July but also June.

Rainfall at the airport added up to 0.34 of an inch on Aug. 1. That tops the combined total of .23 from July and June. It was the wettest day at the airport since May 25, when 0.38 of an inch fell, and the second-wettest in more than a year.

August's cool, soggy start was caused by an influx of monsoon moisture from the Southwest that brought humidity more typical of the Deep South than of the arid West.

According to the National Weather Service in Boise, the amount of moisture in the atmosphere — measured by a weather balloon released from the Boise Airport — set records over the weekend.

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, JULY 30

3 – 6 – 10 – 25 – 29 – 46

Next jackpot: \$4.1 million

POWERBALL, JULY 30

4 – 17 – 57 – 58 – 68 PB 12

Next jackpot: \$187 million

MEGA MILLIONS, JULY 29

13 – 36 – 45 – 57 – 67

Mega 14

Next jackpot: \$20 million

WIN FOR LIFE, JULY 30

12 – 15 – 17 – 69

PICK 4, JULY 31

• 1 p.m.: 3 – 6 – 3 – 1

• 4 p.m.: 6 – 2 – 0 – 1

• 7 p.m.: 0 – 3 – 3 – 3

• 10 p.m.: 5 – 9 – 5 – 1

LUCKY LINES, JULY 31

2-5-10-16-18-21-27-29

Next jackpot: \$30,000

SENIOR MENUS

WEDNESDAY (August 3): Chicken cordon bleu, hollandaise sauce, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, rolls, fruit cup, sherbet

THURSDAY (August 4): Taco salad, salsa and sour cream, tortilla chips, fruit, cinnamon rolls

FRIDAY (August 5): Baked ham, candied yams, dressing, baby carrots, rolls, broccoli-bacon salad, cookies

MONDAY (August 8): Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, biscuits, green salad, pudding

TUESDAY (August 9): Beef burgundy over fettuccine noodles with mushrooms, carrots, fruit, peach crisp

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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Woman dies in crash with wrong-way driver

The Observer

PENDLETON — A La Grande woman died Friday, July 29, in Umatilla County in a head-on crash on Interstate 84 with a wrong-way driver.

Kari Lindeman, 44, was killed when the Ford Fiesta

she was driving collided with a Dodge 3500 pickup driven by Gabriel Velasquez, 55, of Kennewick, who was traveling in the wrong direction in the eastbound lane near milepost 216, 5 miles east of Pendleton, according to preliminary data

from Oregon State Police.

Lindeman died at the scene, OSP reported. Velasquez suffered serious injuries. An emergency helicopter flew him to Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla.

The westbound lanes were closed for six hours during the investigation. OSP was assisted by the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department, Umatilla Tribal Police Department and Oregon Department of Transportation.

Flames

Continued from A1

On Monday morning McGinnis said he was grateful for the “amazing” response by firefighters, many of them volunteers from local districts.

“You just cannot say enough about these rural volunteer firefighters,” McGinnis said. “They're willing to put everything on the line. We're blessed with a great community. People truly care. It's a great feeling.”

McGinnis said he was home when the storm that sparked the fire passed through.

Terrain blocks his view of the spot where the lightning bolt struck, but McGinnis said a neighbor, John Wirth, saw the lightning and phoned after seeing the smoke rising.

Wirth said he was driving on Blue Mountain Ridge Road, which follows a spine of high ground east of Highway 203, when he saw the thunderstorm approaching.

Wirth said when lightning threatens he usually tries to find an elevated vantage point to watch for downstrokes and the fires that are likely to start as a result. He said he has seen that happen several times.

On Sunday evening, Wirth said he could see flames within just a few seconds of the bolt hitting west of Big Creek.

“It's just about immediate fire,” he said. “There's a lot of fuel, and there was a lot of wind then.”

On Monday morning, McGinnis said he was watching through binoculars as firefighters worked on the blaze, which seemed to be mainly out, although he did see some smoke.

“They're doing a great job,” he said.

Winds caused major concern

Although there are no weather stations close to the fire, the wind gauge at the Baker City Airport recorded a peak gust of 62 mph at 7:38 p.m. on Sunday.

Winds propelled a dust cloud from a fallow field just north of Baker City a little after 7 p.m.

Buzz Harper, chief of the Keating Rural Fire Protection District, estimated winds were gusting between 45 and 50 mph when he arrived Sunday evening.

Colby Thompson, chief of the North Powder Rural Fire Protection District, said the wind direction shifted four times while he was working on the fire Sunday evening.

Three single-engine aircraft dropped retardant ahead of the fire on Sunday evening, said Larisa Bogardus, public affairs officer for the Bureau of Land



Susan Townsend/Contributed Photo

Winds gusting to 62 mph at the Baker City Airport propelled a dust cloud north of Baker City on Sunday evening, July 31, 2022.

July concludes with record-breaking heat wave

Baker County's mild summer turned torrid in the second half of July.

The month concluded with a week-long heat wave that broke one high temperature record and tied another.

July ended up hotter than usual, with an average high temperature of 88.7 degrees — 3.3 degrees above average.

The temperature topped 90 degrees on each of the last seven days of the month, including three straight days in triple digits — 101, 101 and 100.

That run included a new record high for July 29. The previous record was 98 degrees, set in 2003.

The high of 101 on July 30 tied the record set in 2003 and matched in both 2020 and 2021.

Even with the spate of late heat, this July was cooler than its two immediate predecessors.

July 2021 was the hottest on record, with an average high of 92.2 degrees. And July 2020 had an average high of 89.9.

The National Weather Service is forecasting a modicum of relief from the heat during the first week of August.

Predicted high temperatures are near normal, which is about 87 degrees for early August.

Management's Vale District.

Harper served as incident commander for areas along Highway 203, and he assigned fire trucks to protect the McGinnis ranch and several other homes west of the highway, which leads north through Pondosa and Medical Springs to Union.

The trucks were reassigned later on Sunday evening after the threat eased. Ash said.

Highway 203 was closed temporarily except for fire vehicles and local traffic.

“Everybody did really well,” Harper said on Monday morning. “We had a lot of resources.”

He credited the Sheriff's Office and Oregon State Police for helping notify residents about evacuation levels, and the Oregon Department of Transportation for coordinating the highway closure.

Harper said the Sheriff's Office's mobile communications trailer was also a benefit to the multiple agencies that responded.

Fuels have dried during recent rainless stretch

The fire started about half a mile north of the Powder River and about a mile west of Big Creek.

Both the river and the creek

flow through deep, steep canyons.

The fire burned in dense thickets of sagebrush, with lighter fuels on ridgetops, Bogardus said.

Fuels have dried considerably during a lengthy rainless stretch that followed the damp, cool spring.

The Baker City Airport has recorded just 0.08 of an inch of rain — scarcely enough to dampen the ground — since June 4.

Phil Whitley, chief of the Medical Springs Rural Fire Protection District, said rain fell in the area Sunday evening, but amounts were generally meager.

The fire burned on both public and private land, Bogardus said.

The area includes sage grouse habitat, she said.

The fire is within the BLM's 5,880-acre Powder River Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The agency manages the public land to protect raptor and wildlife habitat and scenic qualities, according to a BLM press release.

On Monday morning, six fire engines were working on the fire and two 20-person crews were en route, Bogardus said.

Single-engine tankers and

helicopters were available if needed, she said.

Whitley, who lives near Medical Springs, said he saw several lightning bolts before receiving a page on his radio about the fire.

Whitley said seven volunteers from the Medical Springs district assembled. They tried to reach the fire from a dirt road that leads west from Highway 203, but Whitley said the road, which descends into the Big Creek canyon, crosses the creek and continues west up the Powder River, was too rough to negotiate with a truck laden with water.

Whitley said crews from other agencies were able to get to the fire via that route later.

Thompson, chief of the North Powder Rural Fire Protection District, said volunteers from the department used a bulldozer to make the road passable to fire engines, including four from the North Powder district. A total of 17 volunteers from the district worked on the fire Sunday, Thompson said.

A major focus initially was to protect the McGinnis' ranch, Whitley said.

Their home was closest to the fire, and the powerful winds, which were shifting direction frequently, made it difficult to predict where the fire was moving, Whitley said.

Other agencies that responded to the Big Rattlesnake fire include the Baker Rural Fire Protection District, Look-out-Glasgow Rangeland Fire Protection Association and Eagle Valley Rural Fire Protection District.

Other, smaller fires reported

Lightning from a series of thunderstorms that moved through the region Sunday afternoon and evening sparked at least two other, much smaller, blazes.

One burned a quarter of an acre about 2.5 miles north of Anthony Lakes.

The other burned less than a tenth of an acre near the Kelly Mine, about 2 miles north of Bourne.

The combination of hot temperatures — a record high was set at the Baker City Airport on July 29, and the record tied on July 30 — and lack of rain has resulted in rapidly rising fire danger.

The Energy Release Component, a measurement of how fast a fire would spread, had been below average for most of the summer for each of the six regions that the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center in La Grande monitors.

But over the last week of July that figure, which is updated daily, climbed above average in each region.

News of Record

DEATHS

Gerald Burke Goodwin: 87, of Baker City, died on July 30, 2022. To leave a condolence for Gerald's family, go to www.grayswestco.com.

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police

Arrests, citations

FAILURE TO APPEAR (Malheur County Circuit Court warrant): Gavin Cordell

Miland, 23, Baker City, 12:14 p.m. Friday, July 29 in the 1700 block of Broadway Street; jailed.

Baker County Sheriff's Office

Arrests, citations

MENACING: Brandon Cole Cook, 47, Richland, 6:21 p.m. Saturday, July 30 in Richland; jailed.

PROBATION VIOLATION: Timothy Kelly Slaney, 33, Baker City, 5:09 p.m. Friday, July 29 in Baker City; jailed.

Arrest

Continued from A1

Prevo wrote that while he was trying to convince Mills to leave the property, she hit his left hand and tried to evade him.

Baker City Police Sgt. Mike Regan and an Oregon State Police trooper arrived and helped with the arrest.

According to Prevo's report, Mills hit Regan and either bit, or tried to bite, the OSP trooper.

“She was told to stop, resisting several times,” Prevo wrote.

Prevo handcuffed Mills, and Regan drove her to the jail. In addition to the charges from the July 28 incident, Mills had an arrest warrant for proba-

tion violation from Malheur County, Prevo wrote.

Prevo wrote that he interviewed Sunridge manager Soham Gavankar, who told him that Mills had been yelling and cussing at motel customers.

Another employee, Jesus Lopez, told Prevo that before police arrived, he had told Mills she had to leave the property and that she hit him twice in his upper chest. Lopez told Prevo he was not injured.

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