

COVID-19 in Oregon

Hundreds fall ill, 2 die amid surge at prison

BY BRYCE DOLE

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Brandon Baker was already feeling symptoms when officials at Two Rivers Correctional Institution carried out a sick inmate from two cells down.

Another inmate, four cells away, said he saw the same inmate lying on his bed ill for nearly two weeks, receiving little care.

"He looked like death," the inmate, who asked for anonymity out of fear of retaliation, said. "I walked by and told him, 'Get better bro' and he didn't even move. Like, comatose on his bed."

The sick inmate, who was between 50 and 60 years old and was serving his sentence at TRCI, reportedly died Jan. 2, after testing positive for COVID-19, according to a press release that did not identify him by name. He's one of two inmates who have recently died as the institution endures the largest surge in COVID-19 cases among prisons in Oregon, with 235 active cases as of Wednesday, according to data from the Oregon Department of Corrections.

"They aren't actually doing anything," Baker, who said he tested positive for COVID-19 around the first of the year, said of prison staff. "Right now, somebody could be in their cell dying and they wouldn't know anything about it because they're locked in their cell, not being monitored, not being anything. They're just locked in their cell."

Baker is one of 393 inmates at TRCI who have reportedly tested positive for COVID-19 since Dec. 10, according to data from the department of corrections. Since the beginning of December, 50 TRCI staff have also tested positive.

Interviews with four inmates, eight people with loved ones in the prison, and two attorneys with more than 20 clients at TRCI, illuminate the conditions adults in custody are facing as the prison is rocked by the case spike. They described to the East Oregonian inconsistent mask wear-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Two Rivers Correctional Institution is bathed in the afternoon sun.

ing among prison staff, failures to both maintain social distancing and to separate quarantined and non-quarantined inmates, meager and expired food supplies, and an environment that has put inmates and prison staff at risk of infection since a power outage left the east side of the institution largely in the dark on Dec. 16. The power was restored on Dec. 24, according to officials. But since then, infection has surged rapidly, with 281 additional inmates and 40 staff reportedly testing positive.

"Just because they're an inmate doesn't mean they don't have people out there who love them," said Erika Sjolander, whose husband, an inmate at TRCI, was rushed to the hospital on Thursday, four days after testing positive in the outbreak.

Sjolander's husband, who she said was to be released from the prison in 27 days, has asthma, diabetes and has gone through chemotherapy for cancer. She's worried he won't make it.

"He called me (on Wednesday), and he could barely talk," she said, crying. "And he says, 'Tell my kids I love them. I might not make it home.' And hearing that is breaking my heart."

Baker and the anonymous inmate each said that since the virus began to spread through the prison in mid-December, infecting hundreds and forcing their unit into quarantine, prison staff had only conducted brief daily checks for temperature and symptoms.

ing to the DOC.

"It seems like the (department of corrections) is just really reactive," Tara Herivel, a Portland-based attorney with more than 20 clients at TRCI, said. "They wait until the problem has taken over, no matter how predictable it is or not. Then when pressures are hard enough, they take action, whether adequate or not. They wait in a reactive kind of position, and it is just fatal in these circumstances."

Some inmates at TRCI say they believe infection is stemming from prison work-places, like the laundry unit or kitchen, where they say inmates from quarantined units are mixing with those who aren't quarantined.

"Don't get me wrong, I like my job, I like working," said Troy Marin, an inmate at TRCI who works in the laundry unit. "But I don't want my life being in jeopardy either."

Inmates say that if they refuse to go to work, they will face retaliation by being placed in "the hole" — a segregated unit where inmates are sent when they misbehave.

Officials from the DOC said, "It is impossible to definitively say what may have caused or exacerbated the outbreak at TRCI." They said that health and safety measures like sanitization, mask wearing and social distancing are taking place to their "best ability."

When it began

On Dec. 10, after two prison staff tested positive a week before, corrections staff transferred 10 COVID-19-positive inmates from Deer Ridge Correctional Institution in Madras to the medical isolation unit at Two Rivers, as first reported by Oregon Public Broadcasting. At the time of the transfer, Deer Ridge had more than 130 adults in custody with active cases.

Between Dec. 10 and Dec.

18, 47 additional inmates and six staff at TRCI tested positive.

Herivel said there are department of corrections policies against transferring inmates in and out of Tier-4 prisons — the highest level of quarantine based on cases at an individual prison. She said she believes the transfers are done when prisons run out of space for medical treatment and the institution is overcome by the spread of disease, "and this appears to have happened at TRCI," she said.

"If you transfer people from a Tier-4 prison to another prison, and those people haven't been tested but it turns out they're positive, you are opening up a whole bunch of people to pain, suffering and possibly death," Herivel said.

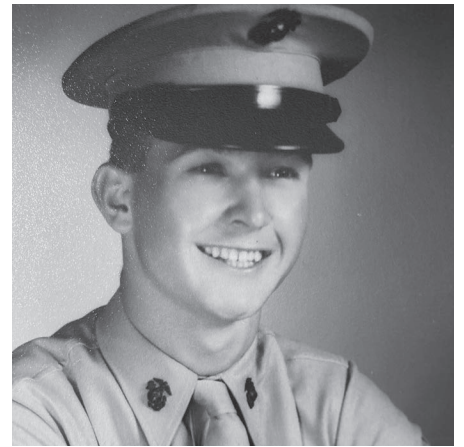
Officials said in the email that they were following transfer protocol.

On Dec. 16, a power outage caused by two wires shorting

and exploding in a conduit underground after 20 years of degradation left an area where more than 600 inmates reside in the pitch black, according to officials and sources. Several days later, inmates were provided small, battery-powered lights to illuminate their cells, just as infection was ramping up in the prison.

For more than a week, inmates were released from their cells for about an hour a day to use the phone and shower. Aside from that — darkness.

"It's weird, because you lose your sense of what's going on," said Frank Roof, an inmate, who added he considered causing trouble and getting himself put into "the hole" just to be in a cell with light. "You can't read or you can't do anything. You're just laying there. Our cells aren't big enough for two people to get up and move around at the same time."



CARL ANTHONY BAILEY, a retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant and 20-year resident of Yuma, AZ, died December 26, 2020 at the age of 81 at the Yuma Regional Medical Center in Yuma Arizona. Carl is survived by his wife of 64 years, Betty and his children Kathleen Bailey, Carl Bailey, Jr. (Carrie), Karen Nelson (Lloyd) and Laura Slater (Danny), 9 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Carl was born in San Diego, CA on August 1, 1939 to Charles A. Bailey and Gertrude H. Leibundgut. He attended schools in Yuba City CA, Winnemucca NV and Reno NV. He earned two degrees simultaneously from Central Oregon Community College in Bend, OR., where he also taught in the Automotive Department for four years.

Carl joined the Marine Corps in 1956. He was a proud 20-year Marine, first stationed in Japan from 1957 through 1958 then proudly served two tours in Vietnam, first during 1966 through 1968 and again in 1972. During this time, he earned Rifle Expert, Pistol Expert, Commendation and Achievement Medals, was a member of The Flying Tigers, Death Rattlers, USMC Aviation, Marine Aircraft Group, Armed Forces Expeditionary Service, Vietnam Pop A Smoke and Veterans of Underage Military Service among others.

Carl and his family lived in many different cities during his time serving his country. Upon retiring from the USMC Carl and family resided for many years in Bend, OR. Carl worked in the automotive industry after retiring from the USMC. He owned an auto repair shop and was a master mechanic. He also owned and operated both a car sales and automotive transport business. Carl completely retired in 2001 at which time he and his wife Betty traveled for many years in their motorhome, visiting almost every state within the U.S. finally relocating to Yuma, Arizona.

Carl enjoyed many hobbies, his chief hobby being an avid gun enthusiast. He belonged to the High Power Rifle and Pistol Club of Yuma where he shot 400, 600 and 1,000 yards. He taught a Women's Self Defense class in Yuma, AZ and Hunter Safety courses for children in Bend, OR. He has left behind many friends and valued each and every one.

Services for Carl will be held in Fernley, NV at a date to be determined and he will be interred at the Veterans Cemetery in Fernley, NV. A Celebration of Life for Carl will also be held in Yuma, AZ, depending on safety and restrictions, at a date to be determined.

In lieu of flowers please make a donation in Carl's name to St. Jude's or the Christian Children's Fund or any other charity for children of your choice. He loved the little children.

Our Glorious Hero in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, you can rest peacefully now, your tour is over. Semper Fi Marine.



**Maria Stenkamp
Crawford Vosburg**
04/29/1928 - 11/17/2019

Maria was born in Bend, Oregon on April 29, 1928 to Henry J. and Hubertine E. Stenkamp. She grew up on Stenkamp Road and attended Rock School and Bend High School.

Maria married Wallace Crawford in 1946 and divorced in 1978. Maria and Wallace operated a dairy farm east of Bend for many years. Maria was the chief milker of the herd of cows and she always said it was a good life but a lot of work. Maria always grew a large garden and shared the bounty of fruits and vegetables to all the neighbors. She was kind and a friend to all that knew her.

In 1986 Maria married Milford Vosburg and they resided in Prineville, Oregon. Maria continued to reside in Prineville until 2016 at which time she moved to Milwaukie to be in the care of her daughter, Sandra.

Maria is survived by her children, Dale Crawford (Liz) and Sandra Crawford Senger. Grandchildren, Jason Smith, (Melody), Jennifer Smith, Ellen Crawford and Courtney Crawford.

Maria was preceded in death by her son, George W. Crawford (Vicky), her parents, brothers, Henry and Hubert and sister, Hubertine Stenkamp.

A special thank you to Maria's caregivers, Kristal Bird, Melody Souther and Dona Reid. And, thank you to Bristol Hospice, especially Taney and Abner.

A gathering of friends and family will be held at a later date.

Norma Jean (Chasse Donovan) Horak

age 74, died November 16, 2020, at Ojai Valley Community Hospital following a stroke complicating chronic ARVD cardiomyopathy.

Norma was born March 13, 1946 in Greenfield, MA. She grew up in nearby Hawley in a large family on a potato farm in the Berkshire Mountains. She was a life-long lover of animals, especially horses which she raised and trained. She was an accomplished horse rider and instructor. She had special expertise with gaited horses, particularly Missouri Fox Trotters. Both children and animals were drawn to her. She was an avid seamstress and an award-winning quilter. She loved gardening and loved to plant and grow flowers, especially daffodils. She enjoyed travel and adventure.

She was a registered nurse, earning her nursing degree from Greenfield Community College. She worked in many hospitals including the North Adams and Greenfield hospitals in Massachusetts, and Valley Regional Hospital in Claremont, New Hampshire. She worked in the Emergency Department at St. Thomas More Hospital in Canon City, Colorado, as well as in a small family medicine clinic in Moffat, Colorado in the San Luis Valley.

She was preceded in death by her parents Rilda and Roland Chasse and her brother Roger Chasse. She is survived by her husband of 25 years, James Hank Horak, her son Patrick and daughter Amy, her sisters Donna, Serra, and Paula, her brothers Maurice and Richard, as well as numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. She had many friends in the horse community of Central Oregon where she lived prior to moving to Ojai, California this last summer. She was beloved and will be terribly missed.

Memorial gatherings will be held in the coming year after the Covid pandemic has subsided, in the many places Norma loved and was loved, including Oregon, Colorado, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

