



Garrett Andrews/The Bulletin file

Luke Wirkkala greets supporters outside the Deschutes County jail the day of his acquittal in his retrial for a murder charge.

Continued from previous page
Todd didn't return numerous requests for comment.

Wirkkala wishes Todd had taken jury selection more seriously. In the first trial, the process lasted half a day. In the second, it stretched a day and a half, with jurors polled about issues close to the case, like firearm use in home defense and alcohol consumption.

"We just got so much more information about them, and I think we got a much better jury," Wirkkala said.

For his part, Hummel said he reviewed Wirkkala's case after taking office and determined a murder charge was appropriate.

He noted that 14 jurors in Deschutes County voted to convict Wirkkala over his two trials, while 10 supported acquittal.

"People sometimes misunderstand what an acquittal is," Hummel said. "It's an example of the system working."

Wirkkala had a few dates lined up in the coming weeks, but his ex-wife seemed to weigh heavy on his mind. Since his release, they'd texted but hadn't spoken to each other. He'd heard she's dating someone else.

Wirkkala met Rachel Rasmussen in Astoria in 2011. He says he knew in short order it was a special relationship. In 2012, the couple moved from the cloud-shrouded coast to Bend and the promise of sunshine and opportunity.

Shortly after his conviction in 2014, Rasmussen visited him in jail, and he told her, "I was going to ask you to marry me," meaning, had he been acquitted, as he'd expected, he would have proposed to her then and there.

She told him "of course" she would marry him.

"It was pretty devastating to lose my wife while I was inside. She helped me survive this. She hung in there for five years."

— Luke Wirkkala

She moved to be near the prison in Ontario and visited him four days a week, the maximum allowed. But sometime in 2018, she stopped taking his calls. He thinks she finally reached her "breaking point." They divorced that year.

Rasmussen asked to not take part in this story.

As he recounted his experiences in the brewpub he wore a "Free Luke" bracelet and his wedding ring, accessories he wasn't permitted as an inmate of the Deschutes County jail.

"It was pretty devastating to lose my wife while I was inside. She helped me survive this. She hung in there for five years," he said. "Losing her was pretty heartbreaking. That just made it a lot lonelier for me. I'm still trying to figure it out myself."

As his second trial approached, Wirkkala wasn't sure if Rasmussen would testify again. But in March, she traveled to Bend and was called as a witness for the defense. She told jurors she was grateful to her ex-husband for defending their household that fateful night, which Wirkkala thinks was crucial for the jury to hear.

Following her testimony, she passed him at the defense table and they locked eyes for the first time in years.

His head tracked her movement the whole way she retook her seat.

"I'm trying not to think about her too much."

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Zoning

Continued from A1

Property zone changes

That Aceti is close to getting his property zone changed raises the question of what other developments might occur along Highway 97. In another 20 years will the lifeline between Bend and Redmond be lined with businesses, warehouses, homes, and other forms of sprawl?

That is unlikely, said Peter Gutowski, planning manager for Deschutes County Community Development.

"A lot of zoning is Exclusive Farm Use so it limits (most) types of commercial and industrial development. It largely precludes it," said Gutowski. "There has always been an expectation that Bend and Redmond would grow together, but truly the zoning that is in place is going to keep it rural."

Ben Gordon, executive director of Central Oregon LandWatch, a non-profit organization that seeks to protect open space, said his organization is committed to keeping the area out of the hands of developers.

"We advocate for preserving the rural spaces in between for a mix of rural residential and agricultural uses," said Gordon in an email. "Whereas the cities are vibrant hubs of commerce, the rural lands are kept intact for agriculture and as open space."

Pockets of development

While it does remain mostly rural, the nine-mile stretch of High Desert between Bend and Redmond is starting to see increased pockets of development.

There is a solar panel project on 73 acres of land four miles south of Redmond. That project was built on land zoned for Exclusive Farm Use.

There is also an RV storage lot, a pet resort, and a handful of other businesses. Gordon said his organization is kept busy reviewing applications for development and has thwarted attempts at added infrastructure, including a road that was planned to parallel Highway 97 between Deschutes Junction and Redmond.

"LandWatch prevailed at the Land Use Board of Appeals since the project would have violated the state trans-



Bulletin file photo

Looking north toward Redmond, this photo shows traffic in the north and southbound lanes on U.S. Highway 97 on the north side of Bend in 2017.

portation planning rule regulations, and the county plans were dropped," he said.

Closer to Bend, a campground could soon be added to the landscape. The Roadhouse Ranch and Camp, developed by California real estate agent Shawn Kormandy, could be in place a year from now, about a half-mile north of the current Bend urban growth boundary.

The project was discussed Wednesday by the Deschutes County Commission as it moved toward approval. Neighbors living close to the project have already expressed concern that if the project moves ahead it will bring too much noise and evening light to the area.

Deschutes Junction

Then there is Deschutes Junction, where Aceti has his property. An estimated 3,000 to 4,000 people live within two miles of Deschutes Junction, he said, and there are few services for them in the area.

"Deschutes Junction should be master-planned with a boundary around it. This is an area that needs some rural commercial. It needs a store and a gas station," said Aceti. "It needs a place where this rural population can go so they don't have to go to town to get a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk."

Gutowski said the developments that have occurred are rare and there are significant barriers to converting land

use permits from farm use to rural industrial.

"I just don't see those developments as a transformation," said Gutowski. "In large part it's piecemeal stuff that is not going to change the character of Highway 97 between our two largest cities."

County commissioner Phil Chang also remains confident that Oregon's property laws are well-suited to prevent the sprawl seen in states like California, where city limits often collide with no rural space left as a buffer zone.

"Our state land-use system is set up to contain sprawl and encourage compact development pretty well," said Chang.

Maintaining aesthetics

What development does ensue, said Gutowski, has rules surrounding it. Large billboards and out-of-place buildings are unlikely to appear.

"We have a landscape management combing zone that deals with aesthetics when you are visible to Highway 97," said Gutowski. "Any new structures have to be earth-toned, with some screening involved."

Chang said he hopes to see

"large sections" of the highway corridor remain either agricultural or wildland open space including sage steppe and juniper woodlands.

The county can work with existing permit holders to ensure that the development of their land veers toward natural uses, he said.

"If we work strategically to designate some green space corridors along Highway 97, anchored in public land ownerships, then we could preserve some large stretches of the highway as agricultural or wildland open space," said Chang.

Aceti agrees that development along most of the route is improbable due to a lack of safe access points. The overpass at Deschutes Junction made his area unique in that it overturned a patch of rural ground but in doing so it opened up opportunities for business.

"The overpass created a problem for one use but it created an opportunity for rural commercial or rural industrial use," said Aceti. "That is my 59 cents."

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OBITUARY

Lee Wickland

1926 - 2021



Lee died on April 13, 2021 of congestive heart failure. He was 94.

Lee was born Leonard Lee Wickland Jr in 1926 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Leonard and Sylvia Wickland. He was the eldest of four children.

Lee was a veteran of WWII, stationed in Alaska with the Coast Guard. He studied engineering at Multnomah College. He had a long and respected career with the Bonneville Power Administration. Lee was a Line Construction Supervisor for BPA. He worked on most of the high lines in the Pacific Northwest. He and his crews built roads into very rough and hard to reach places, in order to build the high line towers, then they strung the power lines between the towers. He received several commendations for safety.

Lee was a bowler, and an avid golf player, and was still playing several games of bridge per week even into his 90's.

Lee is survived by his sister Pat and his brother Bill, his daughter, Cheryl, stepdaughters, Pam Rice and Judy Goforth, and stepsons, Alan Mortlock and Michael Mortlock. He had 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Lee was preceded in death by his sister Barbara, and his 3 wives, Opal, Joyce and Geri.

The family would like to thank the angels at the Partners in Care Hospice House, and Lee's many friends and caregivers at Aspen Ridge Retirement.

Lee loved a good joke, nature and animals, and especially birds of all kinds. Memorial contributions can be made to the High Desert Museum of Bend, Oregon or the Nature Conservancy.

OBITUARY



DEEGAN DOMION CENIGA

October 16, 2002 - April 7, 2021

Deegan Domion Ceniga, born October 16, 2002 was a soon to be graduate of Ridgeview High School and had lived in Central Oregon for his entire 18 years. On April 06, 2021 while working out at a local gym, Deegan experienced a ruptured brain aneurysm. Despite heroic efforts to save him at the gym and St. Charles Hospital, Deegan passed April 07, 2021.

Deegan was preceded in death by his late grandfather Nick Ceniga and late great grandfather Jim Barret. Deegan is survived by his father and mother, Gabriel Domion Ceniga and Lindsay Beth Ceniga. His siblings include Ashlynn Marie Ceniga and Tyler Domion Ceniga, Tyler's fiancée Brittany Celene Gates along with beloved nephew Axton Domion Ceniga. Grandmothers Jody Turcott and Janet Ceniga also survive him plus many loved aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and a great grandmother.

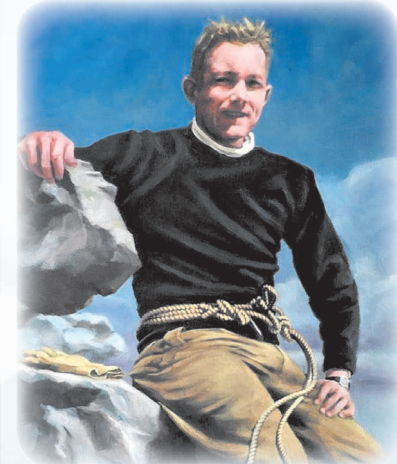
Deegan was deeply loved and will be greatly missed by his family and friends. He was a kind and a compassionate person who loved animals, was quirky, funny and loved spending time with his brother, nephew and best friends Gunner Scheer and Chase Ceniga. Some of Deegan's passions were working out at the gym and power lifting with his best friend Gunner. He grew up riding dirt bikes and continued to ride with his friends and family. He spent about 4 years of his youth wrestling. He excelled at anything he tried. Deegan thoroughly enjoyed camping, swimming and family vacations. Because of Deegan's generous and loving spirit, he gave the gift of life to many people through his organ donations.

A memorial service will be held in the future.

OBITUARY

George Thomas Crisp

January 10, 1932 - April 26, 2021



George Thomas Crisp died peacefully after a brief illness on April 26, 2021, surrounded by loving family and friends, at his home in Bend, Oregon.

Born on January 10, 1932 in Teaneck, New Jersey, to George Thomas Crisp

Sr. and Edith Catherine Crisp (née Lindquist), George graduated from Lehigh University in 1953, where he was a member of Theta Xi. After college, he attended the Naval Officer Candidate School and served as a lieutenant on the USS Tidewater, protecting our country's Caribbean front in the Korean War. After his service in the Navy, he began a career with Armstrong Building Materials sales and in the late 1950s they sent him to Oregon as his territory. He fell in love with the natural beauty and recreation, and settled in the Portland area, where he was active for many years as a member of Wy'East Climbers, Mt. Hood Ski Patrol and Portland Mountain Rescue.

In 1963, he married Nancy Dawn Williams in Portland. Soon thereafter, George obtained his master's degree in education and began his career as an AP English and Humanities teacher at Clackamas High School, where he enriched many students' lives until his retirement in 1990. He founded and led that school's Alpine Club, which introduced many students to climbing and mountaineering.

George raised his family in a house he built himself in Eagle Creek, where he enjoyed farming and raising livestock. After retirement, George and Dawn traveled extensively in the British Isles and throughout Western Europe. In the late 1990s, they moved to Bend, where they lived happily the remainder of their days. He had many passions, including skiing, mountaineering, golfing, literature, and family.

George was predeceased by his wife, Dawn. He is survived by his children, Timothy S. Crisp (Laura O'Brien) of Santa Fe, NM, and Megan M. Paquin (Joseph) of Stafford, OR, and by grandchildren Reece Paquin, Amy Paquin, Britta Crisp, Anders Crisp, Jacqueline O'Brien and Jacob O'Brien. A reception for friends and family will be held in his memory this summer. In lieu of flowers, those who wish may make contributions to the Kids' Center in Bend Oregon.