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KJDY radio station set to change hands

Longtime owner/operator Phil Gray looking forward to retirement

By Dave Fisher
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – A radio and TV career that started at KBAR radio in Burley, Idaho in the fall of 1960 is coming to an end as early as Sept. 1 for KJDY station owner Phil Gray.

“I was 15 when I started in October 1960 working weekends on the air,” said Gray, who recently sold his John Day AM-FM station to Elkhorn Media Group, which has three radio sta-

tions and offices in La Grande and Baker City.

Gray says he got the radio bug at an early age, pestering his father to take him to TV and radio stations wherever they lived at the time. The fact that his father moved about a lot with his job throughout Idaho and Eastern Washington worked out well for the younger Gray, because it meant more opportunities for station visits.

Throughout his career, Gray bounced around from

station to station in Idaho and Eastern Oregon ending up in John Day, where he finally put down roots. He took over ownership of KJDY on Dec. 1, 1988. Three years later it would become an FM station, as well, and eventually employ up to six people, full- and part-time.

Working at stations in smaller markets, Gray got used to a varied work diet, and he thrived on it.

“We did everything ... writing copy, production,

news; whatever had to be done,” he said of his early days in radio. “No day was ever the same, so the days just flew by.”

“It was a lot of fun, and it’s still fast-paced now, but the tools have changed over the years.”

Gray “guesstimates” that he spent a good 60 percent of his broadcasting career in radio. His last job in television was with KMVT in Twin Falls, Idaho, prior to moving to the John Day area.

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The Eagle/Dave Fisher
KJDY owner Phil Gray, on the set of the radio station he has owned since 1988, thinks he'll have no problem getting used to being retired.

Heat takes toll on Chinook salmon

By Dave Fisher
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – In his 17 years with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Brent Smith has seen worse salmon die-offs in the John Day River, but, with the month of August still to go, 2015 could potentially be the worst yet.

An estimated 109 wild spring Chinook salmon in the upper section of the Middle Fork John Day River died during a heat wave early in July, apparently due to low river flows and warm temperatures, according to Smith, ODFW fish biologist in John Day. Smith, who has been keeping tabs on the situation, attended the July 29 County Court meeting to update county officials on this summer’s die-off.

The spring Chinook die-off was first discovered by ODFW staff July 7 near Windlass Creek. The following two days, more dead fish were observed during a survey conducted over a 17-mile reach downstream of Highway 7.

Like many rivers across Oregon, stream flows in the Middle Fork John Day have been extremely low this summer. Warmer water temperatures in the mid-70s, combined with low stream flows, likely led to the deaths of these fish.

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GRANT COUNTY FAIR

New features include bigger carnival, talent show, on-site parking

By Nancy McCarthy
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – At 106 years old, the Grant County Fair and Rodeo may be the longest running annual county fair in Oregon, but this year, several new features are being added.

They include:

- On-site parking: Parking will cost \$3 daily for spaces that have not already been reserved. Parking permits can be paid for in advance for the fair, which runs from Aug. 5 through 8, or they can be purchased on the day of arrival, if a space is available.

- Survivor game: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, on the lawn by the tennis and basketball courts: Participants will test their ability to run with buckets of water, find their way out of a maze while blindfolded and climb a structure while hooked to a rope. The free activity is sponsored by the Grant County Safe Communities Coalition.

- Talent Show: 6 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 5, grandstand. Free.

- Mysterious Black Hole: No description available, except that it is “mysterious.”

- Curly fries, elephant ears and funnel cakes sold by vendors.

- Blue Mountain Hospital will operate a new information booth.

- Saddle Boyz: New this year, the Saddle Boyz brings country music to the fair. Appearances are scheduled on the main stage from 1 to 2:30 p.m., 5 to 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. to midnight Aug. 8.

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The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
Assistant superintendent Julia Davis, left, and superintendent Donna Adams get a start checking in ceramic items at the Grant County Fairgrounds pavilion. Adams, who has volunteered as ceramics superintendent since 2000, owns Dixie Creek Ceramics in Prairie City.



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
Volunteers Luke Claughton of John Day, Braden Spencer of Canyon City and Antonio Smith of John Day set up shelving for the 4-H displays at the pavilion.



Blue Mountain Hospital staff members Sherry Joslin (outpatient registration) and Mindy Stinnett (clinical informatics specialist) set up their Grant County fair booth on Monday, following the “Blue Jeans and Country Dreams” theme.

Scenic Bikeways contribute \$12.4M in economic activity statewide

Oregon is only state with an official, scenic bikeways program

By Amanda Peacher
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY – On an early June morning, a group of spandex-clad tourists pedaled down the highway out of the tiny town of Prairie City.

“All right! Take a left here, and don’t take off until you see the ghost town!” said Brad Gordon, a guide for Bicycle Adventures and leader of the nine-day cycling trip. Gordon leads trips all over the Northwest, but he



said he loves the roads in Oregon.

“When you get out on the rural roads in Oregon, people are very respectful,” Gordon said.

Part of the group’s route follows the Old West Scenic Bikeway in Eastern Oregon. Most U.S. states have scenic byways for vehicles, to draw motorists

Oregon is the only state with an official, state scenic bikeways program.

Contributed photo

to attractions and special places.

But in Oregon, there are also scenic bikeways: state-designated routes designed for cyclists. Oregon’s Scenic Bikeways program is unique in the nation, according to state officials. The bikeways are signed routes along some of Oregon’s most beautiful, bi-

cycle-friendly roadways. Some bikeways are short and easy. Others are epic rides designed for three- or four-day tours.

They’re all designed to draw cyclists — and their dollars — to different parts of the state, especially to rural communities.

Official scenic bikeways in Oregon are marked with signs. The program is funded by state lottery dollars.

“The bicycle scenic portion of the ride, that was beautiful,” said Larry DiVito, one of 11 riders on the Bicycle Adventures trip. “A lot of flowing creeks, a lot of farms, a lot of ranches. Oh, we saw the cows on the road. There was a cowboy that was sort of”

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