

## RAINBOW

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has been swamped,” he said. “And the locals end up paying for it all. It comes out of our local tax base.”

Palmer said two people died at the event: George Ernest Rogers III, 43, of Dumas, Texas, and William Pasko, 74, of Takoma Park, Maryland. Pasko died of natural causes from a heart attack July 3.

Rogers collapsed near a makeshift medical station at the gathering July 2. Palmer spent several days trying to identify the man and track down his family.

Stabbings and beatings also occurred at the event, Palmer said.

As of Monday, 15 arrests were made, and 117 violation notices were issued, according to the Forest Service.

Kevin Sonoff, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney’s Office, said about a quarter of the arrests were felonies. About half of the violations were related to traffic or vehicle offenses, he said, and about a quarter were related to drugs. Other violations were related to alcohol, officer interference, fires and forest roads and trails.

The Department of Justice and the U.S. Forest Service Office of General Council conducted three mobile court sessions near the event



Contributed photo/Richard Benson

### An aerial view of the Rainbow Gathering.

site, and most of the people showed up to address their federal tickets. The mobile courts help alleviate the load on the local court system.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said his office was not inundated with cases as he was told to expect. Law enforcement officers were very busy, he said, but most cases were resolved without criminal charges. The DA’s office has had fewer than 15 cases related to the Rainbow Gathering, primarily for intoxicated driving, disorderly conduct and shoplifting.

“The sheer magnitude and volume at such a gathering will attract a certain percentage of people that cause problems,” he said. “For the most part, the Rainbow Family has been good at self-policing and taking care of their own. ... My primary objectives for the event

were community safety and law enforcement safety, and we’ve been pretty successful at accomplishing both.”

Carpenter said he is considering accepting one juvenile case from Forest Service law enforcement, and he has accepted two cases from them involving the possession of controlled substances.

Palmer said a large amount of drugs — LSD, heroin, cocaine, marijuana — were confiscated at the event. He said he was particularly surprised by the amount of LSD, a hallucinogenic.

“From what I saw from the Forest Service law enforcement, I don’t ever want to experience another Rainbow,” Palmer said. “I would never wish this on anybody. I don’t think this is the Rainbow the founders envisioned.”

## LAWS

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themselves an amateur detective will have to forgo the old “Tracking device on the car” trick. Senate Bill 483 makes it illegal to attach a GPS device to a person’s vehicle without their knowledge. The misdemeanor offense becomes a felony if the perpetrator has previously been convicted of stalking or has a restraining order against them. It does not apply to law enforcement.

### At school

• Students in Oregon will be learning more about the historical contributions of social and ethnic minorities — including women, people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities and the LGBTQ community — during social studies after House Bill 2845, which directs the Department of Education to write statewide “ethnic studies standards” for K-12 social studies curriculum, with the help of a diverse advisory group. The department will also develop more financial literacy curriculum thanks to the passage of House Bill 2229.

• Juniors and seniors in high school will be able to register to vote thanks to Senate Bill 802, which lowered the voter registration age to 16 starting in January. The actual voting age, how-

ever, remains at 18.

• If you forget to pay your child’s lunch bill, don’t worry about “lunch shaming.” House Bill 3454 bans schools from making students do extra chores, throwing away their lunch or otherwise publicly identifying them as having an overdue balance on their lunch accounts. Instead, schools are directed to work directly with parents on settling the bill.

• Worried about police interviewing your child while they are at school? House Bill 3242 requires law enforcement to record interviews with minors when investigating a felony.

• School volunteers with direct and unsupervised contact with students will also have to undergo a background check first thanks to House Bill 2992.

### Everywhere else

• Hermiston can finally move forward on building a new skate park after Senate Bill 327 restored recreational immunity to cities and other property owners who offer up their property for free recreational use by the public. The law removes the threat of lawsuits that has been hanging over cities since the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that a jogger injured in a hole in a city park could sue the worker who left it unattended.

• 20-year-old smokers will have trouble getting

their cigarettes after Senate Bill 754, which raises the minimum age for smoking and buying tobacco products from 18 to 21 starting in January.

• Planning a wedding but not the religious type? House Bill 2113 allows a secular institution “that occupies a place in the lives of the organization’s members parallel to that filled by a church or particular religious authority” to perform marriages starting Jan. 1.

• Cans and bottles have been worth a 10 cent deposit — twice what they used to be — since House Bill 2746 passed in April.

• Teens and young adults who have hesitated to report a sexual assault because there was under-aged drinking involved are now being given immunity from being prosecuted for drinking if the drinking only came to light because someone contacted law enforcement or emergency medical services to report a sexual assault. The victim will also be protected from such prosecution, even if they were not the one to report the assault.

• If you’ve decided the time has come for a vasectomy, you no longer have to wait for a physician. House Bill 2103 permits nurse practitioners to perform vasectomies starting Jan. 1, making Oregon the third state in the country to do so.

## PALMER

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had been short-staffed for a variety of reasons, and he was unable to provide immediate access to the records. Palmer’s attorney argued The Oregonian submitted many requests for records, which were confusing. The attorney said ensuring the

records were not exempt from disclosure and that certain information was redacted required time. He said Palmer was complying with the requests.

Cramer agreed, in part, with both parties.

“Plaintiff made numerous requests, which given their breadth, were confusing and voluminous. Given the cost and effort to

respond, it was reasonable for defendant to seek clarification,” Cramer said in the opinion. “... But while all this is occurring, Sheriff Palmer did not give all the requests sufficient priority. I find he was frustrated and failed to choose to address all the requests in a timely manner as required.”

Palmer declined to comment for this story.

## HEADACHE

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from across the country.

This year’s event south of John Day in Oregon drew 13,120 campers — almost double the entire population of Grant County — much to the dismay of the Forest Service.

The agency and the gatherers are in a perennial tug of war over what campers can and can’t do on public lands. Every year, the gathering blooms to such huge numbers that officials can do little to stop it.

It’s Not Lit delivered the box of raw meat to the outdoor kitchen, surrounded by a hodgepodge of colorful tents among ponderosa pines. A tarp propped up by tall, dead branches covered a campfire where a few people talked intensely or strummed mandolins. Similar camps were dotted across the 3 1/2-mile radius of the gathering.

All kinds of people flock to the gathering each year, from elderly hippies to idealistic college students. It’s Not Lit goes, in part, to mother the many homeless teens who end up there.

“They’re castaways,” she said. “You can see their wounds. They look like zombie movies. I’ve lost my own son, and these are all my children. My heart pours out to them.”

At the camp, someone drew attention to sunset festivities that were supposedly about to begin in the main meadow.

“Are you going to the wedding?” asked one woman.

“Of course,” said It’s Not Lit. “I always cry at weddings.”

She hurried through the crowd toward a small wedding party that stood waiting for the bride and groom. One person held a wildflower wreath and a bride’s dress stitched together just that day, from extemporaneous lace and fabric. A young man clutched handfuls of wrapped candy to toss at the couple like wedding rice.

The bride and groom were not in sight.

“Misty!” shouted the man holding the wreath, over a cacophony of drums and chatter from the crowd. “Dirtbag! Time to get married!”

While she waited, It’s Not Lit fished into her pocket for a condom. “Time for some Grandma Magic,” she said, blowing into it and then tapping it above her head like a balloon. A tall, thin man strode by, swinging a six-foot hula hoop around his neck. A young woman crumpled to the ground mysteriously. Almost immediately, she was loaded into a wagon and toted to “Calm,” the first-aid area.

For regular Rainbow attendees like It’s Not Lit, the gathering fulfills a deep spiritual and emotional need. For many, it’s an escape from otherwise difficult lives. Rainbow gatherers say they accept and welcome everyone — social misfits, homeless teens, recovering drug addicts, emergency room surgeons and aging hippies. “Welcome home” they say to one another, strangers and friends alike.

Each camper has a different personal reason why they come, but the larger focus of the gathering is an ideal that dates back to the first gathering in 1972: world peace.

Still with no-shows for bride and groom, the would-be wedding spectators eventually wandered away, including It’s Not Lit. In the fading light, she meandered toward her camp to prepare for the

next day. July 4 is the pinnacle of every Rainbow Gathering. From dawn till dusk, everyone is silent. There’s no drum circles, no slam poetry, no flutes, no verbal communication. Gatherers break the silence at high noon, after a communal prayer circle.

This was It’s Not Lit’s ninth gathering in about 20 years. In the small Southern California community where she works as a landscaper, she’s known as the town hippie. People laugh at her when she calls them “brother” or “sister.”

“They laugh at love,” she said. “I think they see it as silly. It hurts. We just need to accept each other.”

### An annual headache

The Rainbow Gatherers weren’t the only ones looking forward to the morning of silence. The day would also be a welcome, quiet one for the dozens of Forest Service law enforcement officers who put in long hours trying to manage the unwieldy and unauthorized event.

The Forest Service knows to expect the gathering every year from July 1-7, but the Rainbow Family doesn’t settle on an exact location for their event until a few days before it starts. That’s in part because they don’t want the government to try and stop it.

“They’re very secretive, or I’d call them sneaky, about their site,” said Malheur National Forest Deputy Supervisor Ryan Nehl. After a Rainbow council announces the location on Facebook, thousands of campers immediately head that way. “It just doesn’t give us a chance to put protections in place, and so we’re constantly in a reactive mode,” Nehl said.

The Forest Service typically requires groups of 75 or more to get a special-use permit. An organized gathering as large as Rainbow requires an environmental analysis that might take two years. But the Rainbow gatherers buck those requirements by pointing out that they have no official leaders. They ask the Forest Service to treat them like thousands of dispersed campers who simply happened upon the same site.

Much to the agency’s frustration, there’s little the Forest Service can do to block the event. Instead, they go into high gear the moment they know the site location, flagging off sensitive wildlife habitat and giving the campers instructions for where to dig latrines for human waste.

“We’re treating this like a wildfire, a social wildfire if you will,” said Dave Halemeier, a Blue Mountain District Ranger for the Malheur National Forest. He worried about the gathering’s impact on wildlife, like nesting woodpeckers and baby redband trout in the stream that cuts through the main meadow.

This year’s 13,120 campers were fewer than the Forest Service predicted.

Approximately 50 Forest Service workers are diverted from their regular jobs to monitor the gathering. Each year the agency spends about \$500,000 on law enforcement for the event, and the Malheur National Forest expected to spend at least an additional \$250,000 on it, pulled from an already strapped budget.

Rainbow gatherers argue that these are public lands, and they have a constitutional right to assemble.

“You can’t go into a city and feel the same welcoming that you do here,” said Dylan Forester, a dreadlocked

musician from Kentucky. “It doesn’t matter if you have a thousand dollars in your pocket or not a thing except a five-day old cigarette butt. You’re welcome here.”

But many in conservative Grant County don’t join in that sense of welcome.

Rancher Justin Galbreath has a permit to graze his cows in the exact area where the gathering took place. The Forest Service let him move his cattle to an alternate meadow, but he worried about the future impacts of thousands of campers, in particular human waste.

Even though the gatherers typically abide by the Forest Service’s request to dig bathroom trenches far from water sources, the combined waste from thousands of campers over seven days would weigh about as much as four African elephants. That waste is now decomposing in dirt latrines across the site.

“If that stuff leaches into those creeks, that is going to affect us for a long time,” Galbreath said. He’s worried that if the water quality declines, the Forest Service could limit the number of cows he can graze in the future.

Galbreath visited the gathering and was dismayed to see the lush meadows where he normally turns out his cattle become trampled grass. He viewed the Forest Service’s dealing with the gathering as a double standard. A few years ago, he pointed out, he had to rehabilitate one of the meadows that was within the area of the gathering. His cows ate down the grass more than they were supposed to.

“We electric-fenced it the next year and let it come back,” he said.

This year, that area served as a parking lot for the gathering. “Now, that same meadow that we worked on so hard is full of cars and it’s just dust.”

The Rainbow Family does have a good reputation for packing out trash and helping repair the site once the crowds leave. Hundreds of campers stay behind to rehabilitate meadows and plant new vegetation. Some even return to the site the next year, to check for any lasting impacts.

But deputy Forest Supervisor Ryan Nehl said that repair work is more about the visible impact. “There are going to be subsurface and water impacts that are hard to see,” he said. “We won’t know the full effect of this gathering for years.”

### Prayer for peace

On the morning of July 4, the gathering site was already hot and dusty. Campers trickled into the main meadow all morning, some wearing special sparkly costumes or colorful face paint, others completely nude. Many sat cross-legged in the sun, eyes closed, in meditation.

With the sun beating down directly overhead, the thousands of people silently joined hands. Somewhere, someone — or probably several people — began chanting a low, humming “om.”

When a parade of children entered the center of the circle, as they do every year of the gathering, the chanting erupted into a blissful cheer, punctuated by coyote calls and drums.

For It’s Not Lit, that was the moment she was waiting for.

“I come for the prayer,” she said. “Home is the people, home moves around. Welcome home,” she said, out loud in the meadow, shouting into the crowd.

She was speaking to both everyone, and no one, at the gathering.

**Robbins Farm Equipment**

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62302 Pierce Rd. La Grande 541-963-6577

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05370

### HOME SCHOOL PARENTS

Home school students are required by law to be tested by a qualified neutral person following grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. [OAR581-021-0026 (5) (A)] However, students who participate in interscholastic activities are required by OSAA rules to be tested every year and must score in the 23rd percentile to be eligible to participate in interscholastic activities.

Grant ESD will offer assessment testing for home school students finishing grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. Cost \$20.00 per student. Payment is due at the time of testing. Register your student for assessment testing by calling Grant ESD, 541-575-1349 on or before, July 17, 2017.

Testing Dates: July 19, 2017 – 8:00am to 2:00pm  
July 20, 2017 – 8:00am to 2:00pm

If you have any questions you may contact:  
Robert Waltenburg or Jo Sproul  
Grant County ESD  
541-575-1349