

Friday Morning Fire Razes Elks Building

HEPPNER

Heppner, Oregon, Thursday, May 17, 1962

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Theater Heavily Damaged In Worst Blaze Since 1949

(Pictures also pages 2 and 6)
Fire, which apparently had considerable head start before being discovered, early Friday morning ravaged the Elks lodge building. It gutted the upper floor and caused extensive smoke and water damage to the Star theater, located on the lower floor of the same structure. Heppner volunteer firemen, led by Chief Charles A. Ruggles and

Bill Farra, were on the spot a few minutes after the alarm sounded shortly after 6 a. m. and stuck with the stubborn blaze until it was brought under control two hours later. Mop-up operations by the volunteers began at 9:30 and work continued through the day.

Dense black smoke billowed over the city, and heat was intense when flames broke through the roof. Chief Ruggles had attempted to gain entry through the south stairway upon arrival at the scene, taking a high pressure booster line with him, but was forced back by the heat. Entry was blocked from the rear of the building by a steel door locked from the inside.

The chief conjectured that there was some possibility that the fire might have been extinguished at once had the men been able to gain access through the rear door.

Estimates of damage ran as high as \$250,000 at first, but later review brings the figure considerably lower, although it will be sometime before adjusters have completed their work. Laverne Van Marter of Turner, Van Marter and Bryant insurance agency expressed the opinion that damage would be placed well under preliminary estimates.

Elks members and volunteer helpers carried much of the equipment and supplies from the lower floor club room, but all equipment in the kitchen and lodge rooms on the upper floor was lost. Fire did not reach the theater, but smoke and water damage was extensive. Mrs. Elaine George, who leases quarters for the theater from the Elks, said that "rust is all over everything." Projectors and metal seat backs show this damage, she said. Ceiling in the theater apparently is ruined and walls are damaged. The screen also suffered severely.

First to turn in the alarm was Mrs. James McCabe who noticed smoke pouring from the building from her home on the hill south of town. Chief Ruggles said the call came exactly at 6 a. m. Within three minutes another call came from Everett Struckmeier, owner of Hotel Heppner.

Ruggles took one truck from the fire barn and Bill and James Farra took the rural pumper. "I could see at the corner of Main and Chase as I approached from the west that the whole top floor of the building was full of dense, black smoke," the chief said. He placed his high pressure pump truck in front of the building and the Farras went to the rear of the building with the rural truck. Other men joined immediately to lay lines from hydrants at the Main and May, May and Chase, Willow and Chase, and Willow and Main intersections.

Hot spot of the fire seemed to be in the kitchen-dining area, some 20 feet back from the front of the building. Firemen approached the fire from the top of the Heppner Auto Sales building on the south, and from the Backum Tavern building on the north. One 1 1/2" line was used at the rear of the building from the ground. Those on the tavern building were forced to wear masks because of the dense smoke blown to the northeast by a slight breeze. Later the wind shifted for a time and drifted across the top of the Auto Sales building, but the fire was controlled soon after.

The fire worked through ceiling and roof in the dining area and progressed to the front and back. Steady streams from the sides held the roaring flames in check but could not extinguish the fire until the tarpaper roof was completely burned and the interior remained a charred and blackened waste.

No one was in the building when the fire started, and no one was injured during the course of the blaze. At no time did the fire break away from the volunteers who kept it well confined. Although businessmen on the street were worried about the possibility of general destruction of the main block, damage was held strictly to the Elks building. Earl Ayres of Heppner Auto Sales said that no loss was suffered in his building, and Elmer Berry, tavern owner, said that if any damage was done to his building it would be on the roof where some slight damage might have been caused by the necessary traffic on it.

Loss appeared to be well covered by insurance. The Elks had invested some \$100,000 in improvements to their hall and club rooms only four years ago, but the building and furnishings were well insured. Mrs. George said that the theater is also well covered.

What the future holds remained a question Thursday. Mrs. George could not say whether she would continue to operate the theater, depending upon actual extent of loss, her arrangement with the Elks, and other matters. Members of the Elks, too, are uncertain. Some stated that they may reconstruct the present quarters, but others feel that they build a new structure in the rear of the present location. Consensus is, however, (Continued on Page 6)

Light Voter Turnout Expected For Friday's Primary Election

After a quiet campaign, a light turnout of voters is expected Friday at the primary election in Morrow county. Polls in the nine precincts will be open from 8 a. m. until 8 p. m., but it is doubtful if more than 50 percent of the total of 2217 registered voters will go to cast ballots in the 12-hour period.

Four separate ballots have been prepared, and most voters will mark preferences on three of them—the one for his party, one for measures and one for

judiciary (non-partisan) offices. However, those who have registered as independents or for parties other than Republican and Democrat will receive only the ballots for measures and judiciary. Only 33 are registered in this category.

Polling places are listed by Mrs. Sadie Parrish as follows: Boardman, Greenfield Grange hall; Hardman, IOOF lodge hall; Ione, city hall; Irrigon, A. C. Houghton school; Lexington, city hall; N. E. Heppner, old library

room in city hall; N. W. Heppner, Tri-County Equipment Co. building; S. E. Heppner, county clerk's office in the courthouse; S. W. Heppner, county judge's office in the courthouse.

On the Republican ballot, principal local interest centers in two county contests, those for assessor and county commissioner. Since neither position has a candidate on the Democratic ballot, choice of the Republican nominee is tantamount to election.

Oliver Creswick, appointed assessor last year to fill the unexpired term vacated by the late Harry Dinges, is opposed by Rodrick S. Thomson, deputy assessor for 4 1/2 years, for the assessor position.

For commissioner, E. O. (Gene) Ferguson, completing his first term in the office, is opposed by Berl Akers of Ione.

On the Democratic ticket, principal local interest will center in the race between Jack L. Smith, former president of the Oregon Wheat League, and Frank M. Weatherford, incumbent, for the nomination as state representative from the 28th district, embracing Gilliam, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla and Wheeler counties. Winner of the contest will go against Gaylord Madison, Republican, in the November general election, since Madison is running unopposed on the Republican ballot.

Except for these three positions, there are no local contests on either ballot. Garland Swanson is running unopposed for another term as port commissioner on the G.O.P. slate and George Wiese, Democrat, also seeks another term for port commissioner on his party ticket. Two are to be elected in the fall.

Some precincts have precinct committeemen and committeewomen running opposed and these will appear on the separate ballots for each precinct.

Some additional interest comes at the national and state levels. Six candidates are in the running for nomination as U. S. Senator on the G.O.P. ticket to oppose Senator Wayne Morse in the general election. Front runners are Sig Unander and Congressman Edwin R. Durno. Also in the race are Harold M. Livingston, Glenn E. Brixey, J. Bacaloff, and R. F. Cook.

On the Democratic side, Sen. Morse has opposition from Charles E. Gilbert.

Two Republicans are vying for the nomination for Representative in Congress from the second district, Robert W. Chandler, Bend publisher, and Everett J. Thoren, Elgin lumberman, are in the race. Thoren has been working actively in this territory and visited in Heppner Monday.

Winner will face present congressman Al Ullman in the general election. Ullman is unopposed on the Democratic ticket in the primary.

For governor, Gov. Mark Hatfield has some opposition on the Republican ticket by H. G. Altwater, but a more interesting race has been developing on the Democratic side between Walter J. Pearson, veteran in politics, and Robert Y. Thornton, state attorney-general for years. Two others are in the running, M. A. (Cap) Yegge and Dan N. Cox.

Norman O. Nilson, present commissioner of labor, has opposition on the Democratic ballot by Vic Davis, and Alfred (Pat) Blair is running unopposed for the nomination on the G.O.P. ticket.

Some interest in the election dissipated early in the week when it was learned that the \$115,000 road tax base proposed by the county court is illegal and could not be placed in effect if it carried. This leaves two state measures on the measures ballot, one to make changes to the 6 percent limitation amendment, and the other on legislators' salaries.

Two contests on the non-partisan ballot find Arno H. Denecke vying with Lyle R. Wolf for position of supreme court, and Judge Peter Gunnar, incumbent, opposed by Raymond L. Jones for judge of the Oregon tax court.

WEATHER

(Leonard Gilliam, observer)

	Hi	Lo	Prec.
Thursday	58	34	.07
Friday	61	33	—
Saturday	57	32	—
Sunday	61	32	—
Monday	63	38	—
Tuesday	59	35	—
Wednesday	70	43	—

Going ...



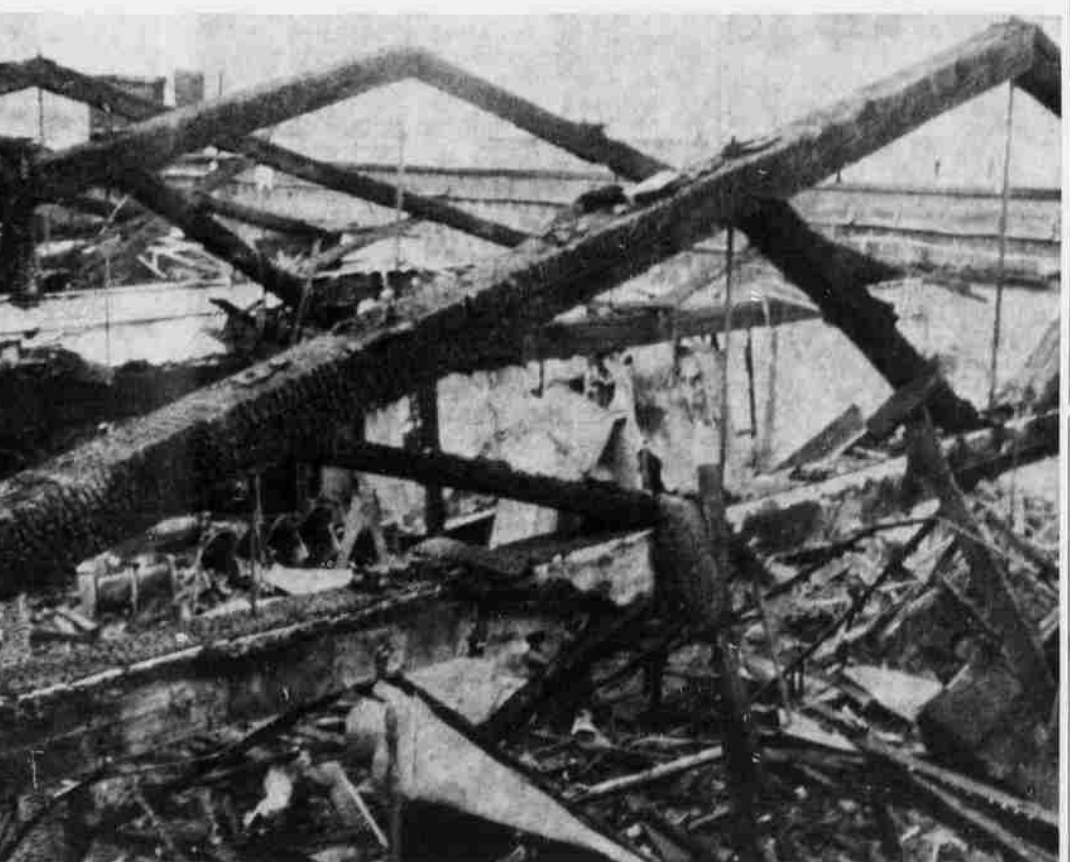
HERE'S HOW smoke was belching from the Elks' building shortly after the alarm was sounded Friday morning. Mrs. James McCabe spotted it from her home on the hill south of town and was first to turn in the alarm.

... Going ...

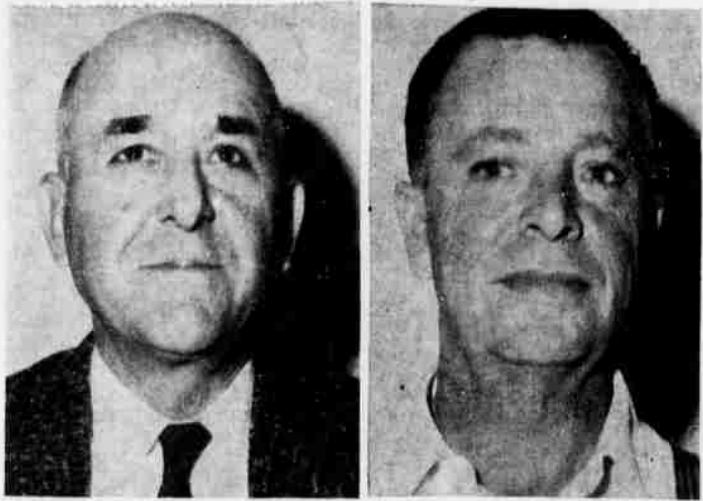


VOLUNTEERS are shown working on the south side of the building when flames broke through the Elks' roof. Heavy thicknesses of tar on the roof caused the dense black smoke. Handling hoses here are Howard Keithley, H. J. Stroober, Mike Crist, and Don Stroober.

... Gone



TWISTED and CHARRED chaos remained after the fire was extinguished. This view looks to the northwest from the back of the building. Burned chairs from the lodge are visible center left. "Hot spot" of the fire centered in the kitchen and dining area. (G-T Photos)



CANDIDATES for Morrow county commissioner on the Republican ballot are E. O. (Gene) Ferguson of Heppner (left) who is competing his first term in the office and Berl Akers of Ione. There are no Democratic candidates for the office. (G-T Photos)

State Tax Board Holds Road Tax Base Plan Illegal

Morrow county's measure asking for voter approval of a \$115,000 road tax base is held to be illegal by the Oregon State Tax Commission. County Judge Oscar Peterson has announced. He made the announcement at the Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce meeting Monday when a discussion of the proposed measure came up.

"I regret very much that I must advise everyone to vote against it," he said. The measure appears on the primary election ballot and will be up for vote Friday.

Since it is too late to remove it or reprint the ballots, it will remain to face decision of the voters, but even if it were approved, the commission holds that it could not be placed in effect. District Attorney Bob Abrams said that the basis for the interpretation is that the county cannot have two tax bases—one for the general fund and one for the road tax.

The proposal was offered to voters when it was discovered several months ago that the current year's serial levy, approved by voters in 1953, is illegal because it has produced revenue in excess of statutory limits. This was due to the increasing of the assessment ratio on property taxes from 22% to 25%, a step required by a new law to make ratios uniform throughout the state. The court turned to the establishment of the road base as an alternative method of raising needed funds.

Judge Peterson said that the only recourse now is for the county to ask voters again to approve a serial levy which will be set up in a different form to conform to requirements of another relatively recent law. This must be done at a special election prior to July 15 in order that the county receive proceeds from the 1962-63 tax levies, but if possible, the election may be set prior to July 1, he said.

State law now prohibits a serial levy in the form that Morrow voters have approved for the past 15 years. It called for a 10-mill levy, but it is no longer legal to ask for a specific millage levy. Rather, a certain sum must be asked for, and the millage levy is determined on the basis of that necessary to raise the sum, spread across the total valuation.

Ed Gonty, a director of Heppner TV, Inc., for five years, was elected president at the annual meeting Tuesday night. Conley Lanham, past president, was re-elected to the board of directors after completing his term.

Other directors are Harry O'Donnell, L. E. Dick and Haskell Sharrard. Carl Spaulding is secretary and Don Wise is technician.

Six thousand feet of new cable has been purchased to replace old cable. In all, the stock corporation now has 13 miles of cable.

College District Election Called

An election on the formation of the Blue Mountain Area Education District has been called by the State Board of Education for Friday, June 8, from 2 to 8 p. m. The district is for the organization of a community college to serve Umatilla and Morrow counties.

While voters ballot on the formation of the district, they will also cast votes for seven directors to be elected at large in the district. Petitions have been circulated for Robert Abrams, Heppner, as one of the directors.

In Morrow county, polling places will be at Heppner elementary school; Irrigon elementary school; Riverside High school; Boardman school cafeteria; Ione; and Lexington Elementary school. Fourteen polling places are also established in Umatilla county.

The state board authorized the election after conducting a public hearing in Pendleton. Most of those appearing at the hearing expressed themselves as in favor of the district.

Ed Gonty Heads Heppner TV, Inc.

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Photo Proofs Due

Those who had pictures taken of children by Woltz Studios under a cooperative arrangement with the Gazette-Times are reminded that Jack Fixter, photographer, will be back with proofs of the pictures Friday from noon until 7 p. m. at the banquet room of Stefani's Fine Food, Ione, and from 9 a. m. until 6 p. m. at Hotel Heppner.

Elks Call Meeting In Odd Fellows Hall

Without a home because of the Friday fire, Heppner Lodge No. 358, B.P.O.E., will meet Thursday night in the Odd Fellows hall at 8 p. m., it is announced.

Temporary club room and lounge for the Elks will be opened in the building just south of MLadies Apparel, formerly a teen-age center. It is expected that the temporary arrangement will be ready sometime next week.