

Heppner Gazette-Times

MORROW COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER
PHONE 676-9228

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WESLEY A. SHERMAN
Editor and Publisher

HELEN E. SHERMAN
Associate Publisher



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Elks Fire Big Loss to Whole Community

Loss from the fire which claimed the Elks lodge hall, club rooms and the Star Theater is far greater than the some \$200,000 to \$250,000 in material damage. It hurts the business community; it restricts the social life of the area; it destroys recreational outlets. Its damage will reach many who are not members of the lodge and who never attended the shows at the theater.

Heppner's Elks lodge is known and respected throughout the northwest, and it has brought many visitors here who otherwise would never have come to the city. As we mentioned in a recent editorial, the lodge through its projects has done immeasurable good, and its generosity has been enjoyed by the entire area.

Likewise, the theater has been a drawing card for the town. Its manager, Mrs. Elaine George, consistently endeavored to bring the best in entertainment, and young folks particularly enjoyed it in leisure hours.

Being as hardy and as well-established as it is, we know that the lodge will take steps as soon as possible to build again, and its program, though temporarily curtailed, will continue.

Many have expressed warranted concern for the future of the theater. It did not receive the support it deserved from adults in the community. Whether it will be in operation again is a matter that not even Mrs. George can say at this time. Its importance must not be overlooked, however, and we join many others in hoping that it can be restored or replaced. It is a rather painful thought that this community may not be able to provide adequate recreational facilities so that both adults and youth would be forced to travel to towns some 50 miles away or more to find leisure activity of this type.

Thus, loss from the fire is not only that suffered by the Elks and the theater management; it is shared by the community.

While expressing our condolences to the Elks and Mrs. George, we would add our voice to the many who have praised the work of the volunteer fire department and to those who assisted at the time of the fire.

After the initial shock of realization that one of the town's better buildings was in flames and the rush to get at it, little confusion was evident. The firemen pitched into their work methodically and efficiently. They stuck with it until it was out. Until that time, they contained it so that even the adjoining buildings suffered no greater damage than a small note poked in the tarpaper roof of one. In a fire of this magnitude one would expect that an entire downtown block could go, but this was never an actual threat because of the fireman's in evidence.

The public at large did itself proud, too. Everyone who could see anything that needed doing pitched in to help out. Former firemen stepped back into harness, and others offered to assist. Those who couldn't be of use kept out of the way—and that's a big help in itself. There were no reports of driving over hoses, interfering with the firemen, nor obstructing their work.

In such an emergency as this, the true neighborliness that is characteristic of our area shows to its best, and the spirit seems to prevail that no matter how great the loss, each offers to share so that all meet it together.

Road Tax Base Defeated Before Election

No matter how much a voter might have been in favor of the county's measure to establish a \$115,000 road tax base in the primary election, it will do no good to vote for it. At the "11th hour"—just before the election—the county has been advised by the State Tax Commission that the proposal is illegal because the county cannot have two tax bases—one for the general fund and one for the road fund.

Since there is no way at this late date to take it from the ballot, the only sensible thing to do is to vote No on this. Doing so will be no affront to the county court nor to other county officials. This is merely the inevitable that has to be accepted. If it should pass (and the chance now is remote), it would only be declared illegal anyway.

This, of course, will leave the county road situation in a precarious position for a while. It would appear that the county court will call a special election to propose another serial levy for roads, but the legal pitfalls that beset the last serial levy no doubt will be avoided. When the current budget runs its course, the road department will have no tax funds to turn to unless a serial levy is proposed and approved by the voters at a special election.

Down With Lethargy! Get Out and Vote!

Lethargy—the state of inaction or indifference—is one of the greatest threats to our way of life. Its brother—apathy—is seldom more apparent than in a primary election in an off-presidential year. But how about a campaign to beat lethargy and apathy? All those willing may signify by getting out and voting in the primary.

True, there isn't widespread interest, but there are some important local contests on the Republican ballot, and some other state and national races of significance on both of the party ballots. There are two state measures that command attention, and two contests on the judiciary ballot.

This is certainly worth the trouble of any registered voter to state his preference. But if you don't bother to go to the polls, you may be sure that there are always two candidates who will be the victors and rule you in the end—Mr. Lethargy and Mr. Apathy.

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(Advertisement)

Chaff and Chatter

Wes Sherman

LIVING NEXT door to the city fire alarm almost insures that a sleeping editor will be catapulted out of bed from sheer shock of the nerve-shattering blasts at any time of night that a summons comes. A few years ago, as a volunteer smoke eater in another town, we answered every nocturnal call, routing the weary bones and groping for a pair of pants to slip over the pajamas, grabbing turnout coat and eventually reaching the scene of the fire still uncertain whether this was really happening or whether our lost soul had been transferred to the River Styx.

By steeling oneself, though, it is possible to control the old fire-horse tendencies, and a guy can convince himself that he has a right to sleep through it. We have learned to roll over and drift back into the realms of morpheus, secure in the knowledge that here Charlie and his boys will competently take care

of it, and undoubtedly it's only a chimney fire anyway. For some reason the sleep that we enjoy from 5 to 7 is the best of the night, being by nature and vocational necessity a swing-shifter.

So when the big blast came Friday morning just after 6 a. m. it was as annoying as if a huge horse fly had suddenly burst in the bedroom to start his raucous buzzing. A lot of noise for another chimney fire. We rolled over to take another crack at dreamland. The pestiferous conscience clamored when the blasts continued, but by now we were determined to stay in bed.

Printer Joe Hartle, though, is a fitting candidate for daylight time if there ever was one. For some ridiculous reason, he is up around 4 a. m. and is about town for morning coffee often between 5 and 6. We got through the siren all right, but when Joe knocked at the apartment door and yelled that the Elks' build-

Painful Plight of Paper Procrastinators

We have said it before, and we will say it once more. Probably the most painful duty facing an editor is leaving out important stories from the paper for the simple reason that there is no place to put them.

Sadly enough, this happens every week. The thing that makes it tough is that we know very well that, to someone, the story we leave out is most important. Quite often the one who is the victim of the omission is convinced that there are many stories of far less importance that reached print, and oddly enough, this may be true.

The basic trouble comes because too many people who want news in the paper think that Wednesday is soon enough, and Tuesday is early. But that isn't true. In our little plant, all the news must be set into type on one machine. Volume of news now in the paper has probably increased as much as 100% over what it was just a few years ago. One man has to set that type, and he sticks with it Tuesday and Wednesday nights until his eyes look like two "burnt holes in a blanket," as the saying goes. We have no more mechanical capacity than the Gazette-Times ever had since the "hand peg" days.

When all the real important news comes Tuesday and Wednesday, it is necessary to use less important material to get the paper started. The printing process is not done all at once, but the press starts to roll as early as possible on Wednesday. It is necessary to use whatever is ready to get out on time.

It is not our intention to leave out legitimate news that is of significance to our area, but the contributor has an obligation, too. He should inform us of important events coming up just as soon as he knows of them so that we can get them on our calendar and expect them.

For example, when the Jaycees seat belt drive was scheduled for Heppner, one of the members of the Pendleton organization called on us well in advance, told us of their plans and asked for our cooperation. He said that he would send us the details as soon as plans were completed. That was exactly the thing to do. We put it on our calendar, expected it, and when it came we were ready for it. Result was that it received adequate publicity treatment and the drive was a success.

On the other hand, an important meeting was scheduled in Heppner that was to be held this week. Publicity had to be in the paper last Thursday. We were not advised of the forthcoming meeting until last Tuesday when we received a phone call, and in the mid-week rush, its significance was overlooked. Along with some thirty other stories, it was left out of the paper because there was no place to put it without taking out something else which was equally important to some other group.

We had failed to realize its significance until we received an irate call Friday morning, charging that we are prejudiced against the sponsoring group. We are prejudiced against no community group—lodge, church, civic organization, political party, nor any other legitimate entity.

We want news of local organizations, and we appreciate those who are so helpful in letting us know of things going on. But we ask that those interested in publicity bear a few things in mind: 1. Do not assume that we know of your important event coming up until you tell us. 2. Remember that a community the size of ours has more organizations in proportion to its size than larger cities with consequently greater demands on the limited paper facilities available. 3. To avoid the painful plight to which we referred above, do not procrastinate. Get the word to us at the earliest possible time. 4. Bear in mind that it is not practicable to run an added page in the paper at will. This is geared to the amount of advertising and the time and resources available to produce it. 5. Be sure that we comprehend the significance of your story.

In case there are any who still do not understand, we cordially invite them down at midnight any Wednesday, or at 2 p. m. any Thursday to peruse with us as we attempt to squeeze all the type we have into the space available.

ing was engulfed in fire, we hit the deck, growling at our stupidity in not getting up in the first place.

CHIEF CHARLIE and his smoke eaters looked as if they had been on the job for hours when we arrived on the scene with camera about 6:20. Charlie, backed by his firemen, had already gone up the south stairway in an attempt to stop the second-story fire but they were forced to retreat by the intense heat and dense smoke.

We found young Tom Gonty on hand with camera, and with the same thought as ours. Together we clambered to Gonty's roof for a better picture-taking vantage point. Within a few minutes, Ed Gonty joined us.

Soon the Elks friends organized a salvage operation and swarmed in and out of the club room like ants on a disarranged anthill. They carried out chairs, desks, trophy case, files and hundreds of articles, each man with tears running down his cheeks from the heavy smoke.

ASSISTANT CHIEF Bill Farra had set up the rural pumper at the rear of the building and was attacking the fire from that point. The steel door at the top of the fire escape, entry through which the fire might have meant stopping the fire considerably earlier, yielded to no man until an acetylene torch was brought, and the door was burned through.

On the roof of Heppner Auto Sales a crew poured thousands of gallons of water on the top of the fire as flames broke through. Howard Keithley, H. J. Stroeber, Fred Gimbel, Herman Green, Don Stroeber, and Nate McBride were at it. They placed ladders against the fire wall that rises some 12-14 feet above the Auto Sales building and climbed up.

When the roaring flames broke through, the heat was searing, and only the protective wall of water from the hoses kept the firemen from getting scorched as they poked their heads above the top of the wall.

Morgan Connor took a position at the back of the building and poured water into the inferno from his 2 1/2 inch line. It got so hot that he had to move back, but he couldn't leave without shutting off the water, and he could hardly do that without getting burned. He had a tiger by the tail. But he managed it. Avery Taylor grabbed a hose and cat-walked along the narrow ledge at the crest of the wall, not more than a foot wide. A slip one way would have plunged him into the fire. A slip the other way would have plummeted him 14 feet to the Auto Sales roof.

FOR A TIME it appeared that the volume of water was failing to do the job, but the men stuck at it doggedly and stubbornly and they gained ground. Eventually there came a time when the dense black smoke that rolled out of the building in a cloud turned whiter as it became dissipated with steam. It was then the smoke eaters knew that they were getting it controlled. Wind came up slightly and shifted to blow to the southeast to pose another threat, but it subsided.

Soon only blackened waste remained in the upper portion of the building, and the once proud and well-furnished lodge hall was charred chaos.

THERE IS THE old saying,

"There is no great loss but what there is some small gain." That is true again in this case. This emergency showed the helpfulness and thoughtfulness of many people. Mr. and Mrs. Max McCormac of Mack's Cafe made a big urn of coffee and took it to the firemen. Strangely enough, nothing tastes better after an hour or so on the end of a hose than a cup of coffee. Fred Gimbel grabbed the insulated cup that was handed to him and took a big gulp as if it were Kool-Aid. That man instantly was afire inside, too!

The McCormacs also earned gratitude of the boys by serving them double portions for breakfast, and the department asked us to express their appreciation in print.

NEWS of the fire traveled fast through the countryside, and many neighbors from other towns responded. Charles O'Connor of Lone arrived to have his townspeople could be of help, and a crew was standing by there. But at no time did it appear that the fire was getting away, and no extra aid was summoned.

OVER THE week-end liniment sales at the drug stores must have been booming. Even the more active firemen found muscles they hadn't used in a long time as they ran up and down ladders, hoisted hose and clambered about the premises.

"THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED" was a thoroughly delightful play, and its director, Mrs. Maurice (Janet) Groves did a superb job on it. One long-time citizen here declared it was the best play that the high school had ever presented.

It is always a revelation to see what the high school kids can do when they get on the stage. Probably not many ever intended to become actors, but the experiences for them is wonderful, and it brings out hidden talents.

We particularly enjoyed the clever little touches that the director worked into this play—the paper boy (Randy Stillman) riding his bike across the front and tossing a paper on to the porch as naturally as if he were making his morning rounds down the avenue—the actors making their entrance from the front—the use of inkblot slides in the play—the excellent stage setting (that we'd wager Mrs. Groves' contractor husband had a hand in).

The entire cast did a wonderful job. Rodney Ayers as the absentminded bird fancier surely put his whole physical being into his work and got hearty laughs for it. His falls were neatly executed and after going through them three nights in a row and at rehearsals, he should be black and blue all over.

It is apparent that Mrs. Groves is dedicated to her work as director and the interest reflects in the production.

ENGAGED in an unusual and valuable project are pupils in Mrs. Harold (Inez) Erwin's 6th grade class. They are studying Willow Creek and its drainage, and Wednesday took a field trip as far towards the source as they could go, accompanied by extension and soil conservation helpers. They are making a relief map of the 70-mile long creek, studying its tributaries, plant and animal life along the creek and other interesting points in the science project.

Winning Exhibits To Be on Display At NW Science Fair

Oregon museum of Science and Industry, Portland, will play host May 25-26 to more than 600 science fair exhibits which will be on display during the Northwest Science Fair.

Approximately 14 students from Umatilla-Morrow area will be eligible to enter exhibits in the fair. Students eligible to enter this fair are the gold medal winners from school and regional fairs throughout Oregon and southwest Washington.

Winners of the Future Scientists of America competition and finalists in the Oregon State Science Talent Search will also have projects on display. Subjects range all the way from a linear accelerator to a study of soap bubbles. Experimentation and scientific investigation have been emphasized in this year's projects.

Gold medal winners of the three competitions will be invited to attend the Science Award Dinner May 26.

They found that little material on the subject is available and have aroused the interest of local agencies.

We hope to publish results of this study.



Coming Events

SPRING MUSIC CONCERT
High School Band, Chorus, Grade School Honor Band
Benefit of Scholarship Fund
Wednesday, May 23, 8 p. m.
High School Gymnasium
Adm. 75c 50c, 25c

BASEBALL GAME
Varsity vs. Faculty
Tonight (Thursday) 7:00 P. M., under the lights
Adults, 50c; children, 10c

AWARD ASSEMBLY
High School Students Awards
Tuesday, May 22, 7:30 p. m.
High School Gymnasium

This space will be used each week to announce coming events of a public service nature at no charge.

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To All Who Helped During Our Fire ---

We Extend Our Grateful And Sincere Appreciation.

It is impossible to thank everyone individually. In fact, dozens lended a hand to protect our property and that of others in a truly neighborly spirit, with no thought of receiving credit nor compensation and without bothering even to be identified.

To all those who shared in battling the fire, or in any manner had a part in helping, we extend this message of gratitude in the hope that each one will know it is intended for him.

We can find no words sufficient to express our thanks to the members of the Fire Department who did such efficient and valiant work in fighting the fire. We feel tremendously fortunate in having such reliable and unselfish men as these volunteering their services to us and our community.

B.P.O.E. No. 358
By Conley Lanham, Exalted Ruler

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