

81st Elks Annual is Saturday in Heppner

Full day of activities is planned

Saturday, Feb. 25, Heppner Elks Lodge BPOE 358, will celebrate 81 years of Elksdom and preparations are well under-way to make this year's Annual the biggest and best ever.

Registration for the day's events will be held at the Elks Lodge, beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday. The Ladies Champagne Tea will start at 1:30 p.m., with activities for ladies of all ages. Pinochle, bridge and ognib will be played, and numerous doorprizes awarded to lucky ticketholders.

Lodge and Ritual will begin at 2 p.m., with the officers of Condon's Elks Lodge performing the Ritual. Approximately 40 new members will be initiated during the afternoon meeting.

Dinner will be served from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., with dancing to follow from 9 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Highlighting the Annual will be music presented by two musical groups very popular with Heppner Elks. The Jim Ackley Band will play for dancing on the Main Floor. Music for dancing in the upstairs Lodge Room will be provided by former Heppnerites, the Leonnig Family, including Ron Sr., Roger, Lorraine and Melinda Ann.

Following the dancing, breakfast will be served from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. Charge for the entire proceedings will be \$17 per couple, or \$8.50 single. The charge for those attending only to dance will be \$5 per couple, or \$3 single.

Only Elks members and their out-of-town guests will be admitted. Membership cards will be checked at registration.



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\$195,000 asked

Road levy on Tuesday ballot

A \$195,000, three-year road serial levy will be placed before Morrow County voters in a special election next Tuesday, Feb. 28.

The levy, intended for county road maintenance and improvement, reflects an increase of \$50,000 over the one approved by voters in 1973. If passed the tax rate for property owners would increase approximately 5.7 cents per thousand, from 50.7 cents to 56.4 cents per thousand based on an estimated county valuation of \$340,000,000.

The increase is being asked by the Morrow County Road Department to off-set inflation which has caused the cost of asphalt, equipment, labor, gas, freight and other expenditures by the

road department to rise steadily in the last few years.

A share of the road levy money is slated to go to each of the county's five cities for street maintenance. If the levy is approved, Heppner will receive approximately \$4,293; Ione, \$843; Lexington, \$767; Irrigon, \$1,063; and Boardman, \$3,458. These amounts are based on each city's estimated valuation, a total of \$36,351,074.

The first road serial levy was approved for county road maintenance in 1948 after a defeat of the county general budget in 1947 virtually closed the Morrow County Road Department, putting it on an emergency-only basis. That first levy raised approximately \$120,000 per year and rose to

a high of \$150,000 in the 1967 special election, and was cut back to \$145,000 in 1973. The rate per thousand has steadily decreased as county property has increased.

The road levy money, to-

gether with forest receipts and the county's share of the Oregon Motor License fund, goes to maintain and improve 1,080 miles of county roads. Ongoing projects include repairing water damage, grad-

ing, sanding ice and snow, controlling noxious weeds, oiling roads, crushing rock for fill, putting in needed culverts, repairing damaged bridges and clearing brush from roadsides.

County faces \$125,000 in pivot irrigation pay back

A 1977 law returning pivot irrigation equipment to its former status as personal property means that Morrow County must dig down in its pockets for some \$125,000 to repay farmers who have been improperly taxed on their equipment.

The mixup began in 1975 when the state Department of Revenue advised counties to begin taxing the irrigation systems as real property instead of personal property, which was and still is, in the process of being phased out of the tax books. The Revenue Department decision was appealed in Oregon Tax Court by six Morrow County corporate farms and the court ruled in favor of the irrigators.

A Revenue Department counter appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court was still on the docket when the legislature took action in the last session, returning the pivots to the personal property tax rolls until he phase out is complete in 1980. The counter appeal has since been withdrawn by the Revenue Department.

Because of the large num-

ber of pivot irrigators here, Morrow County is by far the hardest hit of all counties in the state and must shoulder 65 per cent of the state payback total. The actual amount in taxes to be paid back by Morrow County has been set at \$106,188, but tacked on to that figure is a 12 per cent annual interest rate which increases the amount by \$19,000.

With the interest figure continuing to rise—repayment from 1975 includes 24 per cent interest—the county is filing a supplemental budget so the money can be paid back during the current fiscal year. As a result, all 19 entities receiving tax money from the county will be getting proportionately less than is budgeted to them.

Feeling the worst effects in the county is the Morrow County School District which receives 62 per cent of the county tax money and will in effect, have to contribute 62 per cent of the pay back. After learning of the payback requirement, the district shut off all purchase orders a month

ago in an effort to trim expenses for the current year.

Supt. Matt Doherty said since that time, district administrators have identified areas of the budget that can be more easily underspent and purchase orders have been resumed in some areas.

"We're starting to move again, but cautiously," Doherty said.

Twenty-one farmers, in addition to the six corporates which filed the Tax Court appeal, are eligible for the pay back and have until June 30 to make their refund applications.

Weather

by Don Gilliam

	HI	Low	Prec
Wed., Feb. 15	43	26	11
Thurs., Feb. 16	45	27	
Fri., Feb. 17	47	31	02
Sat., Feb. 18	51	30	11
Sun., Feb. 19	49	42	
Mon., Feb. 20	42	37	
Tues., Feb. 21	46	36	

Flood plain study nears completion

The Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce Flood Plain Study Committee is continuing to work on scheduling a public meeting from which city and county officials can make a decision on the Willow Creek Dam.

The committee is compiling information on the effects of the flood plain as it pertains to Heppner; that information to be released at the public meeting. Spokesmen from the Flood Insurance Administration and the Corp of Engineers will also be at the meeting. A meeting date is uncertain

at this time, according to Terry M. Hager, committee chairman, but hopes are that it can be held on March 6 or 7.

Resurrection of the Willow Creek Dam Project surfaced last month when Senator Mark Hatfield indicated that funding could be obtained from this year's Congress.

Heppner's flood plain and an imposing ordinance requiring flood-proofing of any future buildings constructed in much of the city has caused much local concern. The dam would virtually eliminate Heppner's flood plain, according to Corp officials.



Now on sale

Heppner Lions (l-r) Dave Harrison, Frank Pearson, Lee Hazen and John Edmundson display one of the jackets that the club will sell to benefit the Heppner band program.

Mothers' March raises \$2,215

A total of \$2,215 was raised in the county for the March of Dimes during the annual Mothers' March held earlier this month. Eight marchers in Ione, 36 in Heppner and 15 in Boardman and Irrigon joined this year's drive.

Ione marchers, led by Linda

LaRue, collected \$133; the Boardman-Irrigon group, spearheaded by Marylou Daltoso, raised \$850; and Heppner marchers, organized by Beta Gamma, added \$627 to the March of Dimes fight against birth defects.

Although the total was slightly less than last year, Pat Gentry, Morrow County coordinator of the Mothers' March said, "I was very satisfied with the drive. Everyone did a good job and it was a big success."

'Doc' Sherer oversees 1,080 miles of roads



"I can sit here in my office and tell you where every culvert in every road in this county is," commented 'Doc' Sherer, looking back over a career with the Morrow County Road Department that spans 42 years.

Roadmaster Sherer has worked under six judges since joining the department at age 27 and expects he will be retiring "one of these days." Starting as a truck driver in September of 1935, 'Doc' took over as roadmaster in 1943, though the official title wasn't bestowed until later.

"Most of the roads were dirt when I started", Sherer said, adding that the present county road system includes 1,080 miles with 378 miles of road now oiled.

Will he be glad to retire?

'Doc' Sherer, Morrow County roadmaster: "I guess I'll be glad to get away from all the problems."

"Oh, I don't know," he replied. "I guess I'll be glad to get away from all the problems."

The problems 'Doc' deals with everyday include everything from winter snow storms, spring water damage and keeping up with basic road maintenance with a limited mini-man road crew.

The primary difficulty faced by the road department, and the source of all other problems, according to the roadmaster is the lack of enough money to keep up with inflation.

"We used to have 21.22 men working on the crew. It's been gradually cut down over the years," Sherer said. Presently the road department employs 12 men including the road crew, two mechanics and the roadmaster himself. "I could use twice the crew," Sherer said.

Next Tuesday, county residents will be asked to approve a \$195,000 three-year road levy which represents a \$50,000 increase over the levy raised for many years.

Sherer said the increase will help, but couldn't promise it would enable his crew to do more road work than it is already doing. He pointed to inflation as the culprit, citing, as an example, the doubling of the cost of asphalt in the last four years.

Sherer remembers when the first levy was passed in 1948, giving the road department approximately \$120,000 per year for five years, its only source of income at the time. Previously, road department funds came out of the court's general budget, but with the defeat of the budget in the spring of 1947, it became apparent that another revenue source for the department was necessary.

After the budget failure, Sherer recalled, that all of the road equipment was stored in the shed and the road crew dismissed. Consternation over the worsening condition of the county roads prompted the formation of a committee of concerned county residents who organized the push to get the first five-year road levy

put to a vote. According to Sherer, bad storms that caused extensive bridge and road damage helped the passage of the levy on May 21, 1948.

The levy has increased very little in 30 years, and Sherer said one increase, \$75,000, was voted down in the 1960's. A levy defeat this year would not completely close down operations as it did in 1947, he added, because the road department now receives money from forest service receipts and the Oregon Motor License Fund. Sherer estimates the present levy is approximately half of the total budget in a normal year, though forest receipts in 1977 were almost triple the usual amount.

The roadmaster said his job was "to keep everything going and to keep everyone happy—but I don't do that." He commented that "I've been here so long I've made as many enemies as friends." He mentioned one unnamed person who told Sherer recently that he was going to make up

some posters to try to get the roadmaster fired. "I said to go ahead, I'd even help him distribute them," Sherer said with a laugh. "We get lots of criticism, some of it warranted and some of it not," he added.

This time of the year, the road crew spends a lot of time repairing washouts caused by heavy rains. Five men recently worked two days hauling rock to fill in a 150 yard wash out on the Keck Canyon Road.

Sherer said it is impossible to keep up on road repair, especially in the spring. "How can you when it hits you everywhere at once," he asked. "It's a big county we take care of."

Weather mainly dictates what road work goes on in a given season. In the winter the crew fights snow and ice and crushes rock. In the spring road repair and blading takes precedence. All of the oiling—which requires the entire crew—is done in the summer, and blading begins again in the fall. Road repair is, of course, an all year priority.

The roadmaster said the department, in addition to county road work, also helps the cities out in emergencies. He pointed to two temporary bridges his crew built, and the clean up work done in Heppner, after the Shobe Canyon flood in 1971, as examples. The department also seals city streets, with the cities paying the cost. Sherer said his crew oiled four miles of streets in Ione not too long ago.

When he retires, Sherer said he doesn't know what he'll do. He said between his roadmaster job and operating a small ranch north of Ione, "I haven't had any spare time in 40 years."

The roadmaster's son, Dick Sherer, works for the road department as a mechanic. Following in his father's footsteps? 'Doc' remarked, "I've been discouraging that."

Though retirement is in sight for 'Doc' Sherer, it is doubtful that anyone else in the county has ever left a mark that extends 1,080 miles.