

	HI	Low	Pre.
Wed., Apr. 12	55	28	
Thurs., Apr. 13	56	30	
Fri., Apr. 14	65	34	
Sat., Apr. 15	65	41	
Sun., Apr. 16	52	36	.22
Mon., Apr. 17	59	32	.04
Tues., Apr. 18	64	39	

Life on the farm with the Texas Tigers

by Elaine Blanchet

Tucked away in the middle of Lexington is a tiny farm which produces more stock on its 1,800 square feet than any ranch in Morrow County. T.E.M. Farms, owned and managed by Truman Messenger and his three sons, raises not cattle but worms.

A year ago January the Messengers received their shipment of a bin full of 300,000 Texas Tiger cross worms. Since that time, halving the worms about every six weeks depending on the weather, the original stock has multiplied into 90 standard size bins measuring 21 square feet each.

Truman Messenger, retired from the State Highway Department, was planning to fix up a repair shop as a kind of a hobby when his sons approached him about the worm-raising project.

"I didn't think they were serious, I just laughed at them," Messenger recalled.

Somehow he was finally convinced, and after a year of study on the subject and building bins to house the prolific animals, the Messengers received their stock from Clear Creek Worm Hatchery near Vancouver, Wash., for an investment of \$500.

The senior Messenger does much of the day-to-day work on the farm, though sons Frank, Carroll and Jerry travel as often as they can from their homes in Portland and Bend to help out. Jerry plans to resign from truck driving job in Portland and devote full time to worm raising as soon as the family starts getting a cash return on the business.

There's a lot of work and worry to worm-raising, as in any farming operation. The Messengers are looking forward to their first harvest, to be conducted soon, with some trepidation. The majority of the worm bins are located outdoors in a small orchard and they think some of the stock probably died during the cold weather in spite of bales of straw stacked on the bins for insulation.

The family hopes to get from five to seven pounds of worms per bin (about 800 worms per pound) from their first crop but won't know the extent of damage until they actually harvest. They have a contract with the Clear Creek hatchery to sell back as many worms as they can provide and expect to start harvesting about once a month.

Truman Messenger, originally skeptical about the project, now finds worms a fascinating study.

"They aren't like ordinary angleworms," he said proudly, holding up one of his striped Texas Tigers.

He explained why worms are so prolific. Possessing both male and female reproductive organs, worms cross-fertilize each other, and each is capable of producing an egg sac containing from seven to 25 eggs every seven days. The tiny, newly hatched animals, in turn, are ready to start reproducing in about six weeks.

A current project on T.E.M. Farms is separating worms and egg sacs from the straw used for insulation this winter. A large rotating screened drum, constructed by one of

Messenger's sons, is being utilized for this tedious labor, and will also be used during harvest to separate the harvest-sized worms from the rest of the stock.

Each bin of worms is fed four cubic inches of processed barnyard manure—scattered, watered and leached in the sun to remove impurities—per month.

Problems inherent in the worm business, besides cold weather, includes keeping the bins damp enough so the worms don't dry out and dry enough so they don't drown. The bins are built above the ground with cracks in the bottom for drainage. The worms don't escape, said Messenger, explaining a little-known psychological ploy of managing the wiggle critters, because they are afraid of falling.

What is the worm's eventual fate? Besides use as fish bait, the animals are used as breeding stock for others getting into the business and, because they are very high in protein, for dog and cat food.

"They even make cookies out of them," Truman Messenger commented. "The biggest thing coming to the front is using worms for sewage disposal. They eat the sludge, but have to be replaced because they don't reproduce in those conditions."

T.E.M. Farms doesn't sell their stock to local fisherman because "we're wholesalers, not retailers, and we could get



Truman Messenger looks over one head of his stock of Texas Tiger-crosses, raised by him and his sons on their worm farm in Lexington. A screen drum to be used when harvesting the 'crop' can be seen in the background.

in trouble with the law," Messenger explained.

He said he'd rather not say how much money the worms sell for per pound because there were already too many people getting into the business.

The Messengers plan to eventually expand their 90 bin operation into 500 to 1,000 bins. Though T.E.M. Farms thinks of square feet instead of acres it promises to be a big business for Truman Messenger and sons.

Krueger named foreman

Meeting in Executive Session last Thursday, the Heppner City Council voted to replace Ray Schierman, the city foreman for the past 2½ months, with Randy Krueger, who has worked as the city's treatment plant operator since March 27.

Krueger's duties as Heppner's fourth city foreman in the past eight months began this week.

Krueger, 26, is state certified as a treatment plant operator and has considerable experience in maintenance and advisory positions. He realizes many of the problems now faced by the city are the result of poor or lacking maintenance but adds that a lot of improvements can be made.

"It's a challenge," Krueger said. "I wouldn't have come here if it wasn't."

Krueger said control and maintenance of the city water

system and upkeep of streets will be his main priorities for the present. Of the treatment plant where he worked for a month before being selected as city foreman, Krueger said simply, "It is in bad shape." He said he is working towards Heppner's inclusion in a federally funded program that would allow the city to bring its treatment plant up to state standards, which it currently is not doing in some requirements.

A replacement for the vacant position on the city payroll is now being sought.



Randy Krueger

Republicans sponsor debate viewing here

The Morrow County Republican Central Committee will sponsor a no-host luncheon Friday, April 22, for viewing a televised debate among the three leading Republican candidates for governor.

The luncheon will begin at noon in West of Willow, Heppner.

Vic Atiyeh, Roger Martin and Tom McCall will participate in the debate which will be televised live from the City Club in Portland. The debate will begin at 12:30 p.m. on KGW-TV Channel 8. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Vote is May 23rd

Reductions made in BMCC levy

After being sent back to the drawing board once, the Blue Mountain Community College tax levy to be brought before voters May 23 will be down \$43,020 from the amount narrowly rejected April 4.

A total levy of \$1,950,532, an increase of less than five per cent over last year's levy, will be submitted to voters in Umatilla and Morrow Counties. Because BMCC has no established tax base, the proposed levy is the entire amount of local taxes necessary to support the 1978-79 operating budget.

Changes in the levy amount were made April 12 during a joint meeting of the college board of education and budget committee. The reduction was the result of a transfer of funds for capital outlay, an updated estimate of the college's resources and expenses for next year as well as budget item cuts.

The increase in resources of \$10,800 came from an anticipated increase in state funds due to higher enrollment in an expanded summer session and additional programs for part-time students.

Reductions in the previous budget totaling \$6,020 were

made by cutting the amount for sabbatical leave, dental and medical benefits and salary resulting from finalized contract negotiations. An additional \$3,000 was sliced from negotiators' salary because of the present three-year agreements.

A transfers of \$17,420 from the operating budget to the construction fund was made for equipment for the mechanical department. All the approved equipment is considered capital outlay because of its long-term use.

Additionally, budget cuts allow the college to reduce by \$4,780 the amount required to cover uncollected taxes.

If the levy is approved, the total BMCC operating budget for 1978-79 will be \$3,621,992, an increase of 9.1 per cent from the present school year.

Public meeting Monday

County to air budget

The Morrow County Budget Committee and the County Court will meet for the second time Monday, April 24 at 9 a.m. in the court house to finish their review of budget requests from all departments financed by the county. The two groups will then begin making decisions on changes in the proposed budget.

Budget requests have put the preliminary budget \$122,879 over revenue the county expects to receive in fiscal year 1978-79 and the Budget Committee will decide whether it can trim the budget down to size or ask for a special election to go beyond

the six per cent limitation. The transfer of revenue sharing money to the general fund has kept the budget within the six per cent in the past, but it is doubtful this practice will be continued since it reduces the amount of revenue sharing money received by the county.

Another question facing the Budget Committee is whether

or not to ask for a new tax base in November.

Members of the Budget

Committee are Gary Grieb, chairman; Harry O'Donnell and Dan Creamer. Also attending the budget meetings is the Revenue Sharing Advisory Committee consisting of Pat Cutsforth, Shirley Zielinsky and Lyle Lowe.

News Briefs

Lions Charter Night set for Saturday

The Heppner Lions Club will hold its Annual Charter Night celebration Saturday, April 22, at the Heppner American Legion Hall.

This will be the fifth annual charter night for the 49-member club and will begin with a dinner at 7 p.m., followed by dancing to the Jim Ackley Band at 9 p.m.

Neil Parks will act as Master of Ceremonies for the evening and the guest speaker will be Dr. Paul Bassford of Salem. Bassford is an Oregon Lions candidate for Lions International Director.

Recently elected officers for the Heppner Lions Club who will be installed on charter night include: President, Larry Mills; First Vice President, John Edmundson; Second Vice President, Dave Dollarhide; Third Vice President, Joe Miller; Secretary, Bill Kuhn; Treasurer, George Rex; Tail Twister, Lyle Lowe; Lion Tamer, Lee Hazen; and Past President, Dave Harrison. Board members elected were Ron Forrar, Allen Nistad, Al Osmin and Frank Pearson.

Ione business sold

The Independent Garage in Ione passed into new hands recently when Ekstrom Chemical Co., Ione, took over ownership and management. The change broke a 60-year, three generation family ownership which started in 1918 when the business was purchased by E.R. Lundell and continued when he sold it to his son Cleo Drake and grandson Bob Drake in 1949.

While Herb Ekstrom Jr. oversees the whole operation, the service station is managed by his son John. Ekstrom said the station will offer the same services as in the past.

Former owner, Ione mayor Bob Drake, said that his future plans were "up in the air".

"We don't know what we'll do yet," Drake commented. "I'm just looking around."

HHS orientation next Tuesday

An orientation meeting for eighth graders due to enter high school next year and their parents is scheduled Tuesday, April 25, in the Heppner High School Cafeteria at 7:30 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to make transition from junior high to high school easier for entering freshmen, to complete registration for the 1978-79 school year and to answer any questions students or parents may have.

For more information call Vi Lanham, HHS counselor, 676-9138.

Fromwiller added at First National

Tina Fromwiller has been named operations officer of the Heppner branch of First National Bank of Oregon, according to Bank Manager Lyle Lowe. He replaces Scott Gunn, who has left the bank.

Fromwiller, a 1973 graduate of Portland State University with a degree in business administration, joined First National as a management trainee in 1976. After completing training, he was assigned briefly to the Klamath Falls branch, and was named assistant operations officer of the Bend branch in December, 1976.



Tim Fromwiller

Heppner levy vote is May 2

May 2 is the date set by the Heppner City Council for the tax levy election to balance the city's operating budget for the 1978-79 fiscal year.

Voting will take place from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the old library next to City Hall.

Although the city's tax base has been raised to \$43,974—compared to \$41,485 for the current year—it is still inadequate to cover general operation of the city. If the tax levy is approved, the operating budget to be financed by local taxes for fiscal year 1978-79 will be \$38,689 greater than the operating budget financed by local taxes for the current fiscal year.

That leaves \$36,200 outside the six per cent limitation which is subject to voter approval. The total operating

budget proposed for the city is \$451,670.

Major increases in the budget result from the addition of two city employees, inclusion of funds for both the city library and swimming pool and a 10 per cent pay raise for city employees.

The additional employees were included in the budget to bring the city staff up to the level proposed last year before the budget was shot down twice by voters. Last year's proposed 10 per cent pay raise was also a budget casualty and the increase was included this year to bring city salaries up to competitive levels. Funds for the library and pool were eliminated completely from the current year's budget.