

## County school enrollment up 137 students over last year

A sharp increase in enrollment in Morrow County schools—particularly in the County's north end—has produced a new set of problems for school system officials.

"It's the biggest jump (in enrollment) yet," said Superintendent Matt Doherty. Enrollment at the start of this year's school year came to a total of 1,749 students—137 more than were enrolled at this time last year, he noted.

Bearing the brunt of the increase in northern Morrow County schools. In Irrigon, A.C. Houghton Elementary experienced a 20 per cent hike in enrollment, rising from last year's total of 408 to 509. Riverside Junior High's start-of-the-year enrollment totaled 393—up 72 from last year, and Riverside High School noted an increase of 50 students, with 393 students now attending classes at the Boardman high school.

Enrollment was down slightly in Heppner and Lone. Heppner Elementary showed enrollment figures dropping from 468 last year to 432 this year. Lone schools dipped from 199 to 189. At Heppner High School, enrollment rose by 10 with a total of 226 students taking classes at the start of this year.

Based on past experiences, Morrow County school officials are predicting that 50 to 60 additional students will enroll in the county by the end of the current school year. The student boom has pushed several classrooms in north Morrow schools to the 30-35 student range, well above the 25-student limit the school system has been trying to maintain.

Some bus routing has been altered due to the increase, and a new bus has been added to the north Morrow fleet to take up some of the slack.

Class loads may have to be adjusted to more evenly distribute teaching duties. Doherty said that a classroom might have to be established in the old school

building adjacent to A.C. Houghton to ease the overflow situation.

The Morrow County School Board is expected to take up the enrollment problems during a Sept. 18 meeting at 8 p.m. in Lexington. "At this point, we're not really sure what we'll recommend to them," Doherty said.

A new Boardman Elementary School, which was funded by county voters earlier this year, should solve the north

end's elementary school crowding problems for the near future, at least.

But, noted Doherty, "it will be at least a year before the school is built."

## Columbia Basin customers can expect rate increase

Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative will be considering rate increases over the next two years, in response to proposed rate hikes in the price of wholesale electricity.

The Bonneville Power Administration, the federal agency which sells electricity to Pacific Northwest private utilities, municipalities, public utility districts, and cooperatives like Columbia Basin, has announced plans to increase its wholesale rates by December 1979.

Columbia Basin Electric receives its power from Bonneville, and the cooperative plans to raise its rates to cover the Bonneville increases. The exact amount by which cooperative rates will be increased is not known, but indications are that retail rates to Columbia Basin consumers will be significant.

"Raising rates is not an enjoyable task," said Columbia Basin manager Fred Toombs, "but our costs are going up like everyone else's."

We have tried to be as frugal in our operation as possible, putting off until absolutely necessary any rate increase, but the time has finally come where we simply have to make a move if we are able to maintain our present level of service. "This increase will be the first of any consequence since formation of the cooperative in the late 1940's, according to Columbia Basin officials.

Prior to any Bonneville rate increase, the agency must first hold a series of public hearings to gain public input on the subject. Preliminary hearings have already been held. Columbia Basin representatives have attended these meetings and plan to attend those in the future to express their concerns about what effect the increases would have on the price of power for cooperative consumers.

Columbia Basin Electric likewise has announced that it will hold public meetings

throughout its service area to explain the need for the rate increases to answer questions about them.

Remarked Toombs, "This is everyone's chance to let their views be known. It's your opportunity to express your opinion on the proposed rate increases, both pro and con." The dates and times of these meetings have not been scheduled.

In the meantime, Toombs encourages cooperative members seeking further information to contact either him or their district representatives on the firm's board of directors.

## Weather By Don Gilliam

HI LOW PRECIP	
Wed., Sept. 6	66 53 .04
Thurs., Sept. 7	61 47 .17
Fri., Sept. 8	71 45
Sat., Sept. 9	72 62
Sun., Sept. 10	67 45 .18
Mon., Sept. 11	66 47
Tues., Sept. 12	71 40

## Cristopher Wright killed in two-car crash Monday evening

Christopher F. Wright, 18, of Lexington was killed Monday afternoon in a two-car collision on secondary Meyers Road, near the Buttercreek Junction area of northeastern Morrow County.

The accident occurred after Wright's eastbound car apparently veered off the right side of the roadway pavement. The youth apparently overcorrected his steering, causing him to swing into the path of an oncoming car operated by Gordon Hoffnagle, 20, of Heppner, according to state police at Hermiston.

A passenger in Hoffnagle's car, Randy Worden, 18, also of Heppner, suffered superficial injuries in the crash. Hoffnagle received cuts, abrasions, and was examined to check for possible internal injuries.



He was born March 19, 1960, in Portland, the son of the late Harvey Wright and Pat Majeske Wright. A 1978 graduate of Heppner High School, he was scheduled to enter Treasure Valley Community Col-

lege at Ontario this month.

Memorial services are today, Thursday, at 10 a.m. at the Lexington Church of Christ, with the Rev. Neil Chabot officiating. Sacred selections will be sung by Wilma Cheney with Betty Marquardt as accompanist.

Private interment will be at the Lexington Cemetery. Sweeney Mortuary is in charge of arrangements.

Chris is survived by his mother, Pat Wright, a brother, Mark Wright and a sister, Sandy Wright, all of Lexington; maternal grandmother, Freda Majeske, Lexington; paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. W. Wright, of Woodburn.

Contributions may be made to the Chris Wright Memorial Scholarship Fund in care of the Bank of Eastern Oregon.

## Lexington to consider new fire truck

Lexington residents are invited by the City Council to attend a hearing at the Lexington School Building on Wednesday, Sept. 27, 1978 at 7:30 p.m.

Under discussion will be the purchase of a new fire truck to

replace the present 1954 model. The new truck and equipment will cost an estimated \$48,000-\$49,000.

The city has enough money on hand to make the down payment. Payments will be about \$7,400 a year for six

years. If residents are generally in favor of purchasing the new truck, voters will be asked to approve a six year serial levy of \$7,400 a year, and an election will be scheduled before the Nov. 7 election.

## Irrigon voters to polls Tuesday

Voters in Irrigon will go to the polls next Tuesday, Sept. 19, to decide whether or not to approve a seven-year, \$12,800 serial levy for the Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District.

The fire district is seeking the funding in order to buy a new fully equipped, 2,000-gallon capacity fire truck in order to increase the water capacity of the district's fire fighting trucks.

Polling will be held in the Morrow County Office Building in Irrigon.

## Sen. Cook slates visit

State Senator Vern Cook, Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate position currently held by Republican Mark Hatfield, will bring his campaign to Heppner next week.

Cook, a 22-year veteran of the Oregon Legislature, will be the featured speaker at a no-host dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. in the West of Willow on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

The public is invited to attend. An opportunity will be provided to meet with and question the candidate.

## Retirement for couple brings end to long history of business here

A family tradition in Heppner retailing came to an end last week when the Thomson Brothers Grocery on Main Street closed its doors.

Owner James G. Thomson Jr. and his wife, Madge, sold out their inventory and placed the store building on the market to enter retirement. The couple had been considering retiring for several years, deciding to make the move now "to take the time to enjoy ourselves while we're still able to," according to Thomson.

The Thomson family has roots firmly entrenched in Heppner's business community, starting just before the turn of the century. Thomson's father James Thomson sr., operated the Orange Front grocery, located in what is now the Case Furniture building. The elder Thom-

son's brothers, Charles and George, joined him in the business, and in the early 1900s, they purchased the current Main Street store building from Henry Heppner, namesake of the Morrow County seat.

The brothers enlarged their operation, expanding the store into space formerly occupied by a shoe shop and a music store, eventually creating the Thomson Bros. Department Store. In addition to groceries, the Thomson brothers sold men's and women's clothing, dry goods, shoes and other wares.

Jim Jr. entered the family business in 1926, working in the grocery division, where he remained throughout his career.

While the grocery business appealed to him, so did a youthful thirst for adventure. In 1928, he and two companions took pas-

sage on a freighter and steamed to the Orient, making stops in cities like Tokyo, Yokohama, and Shanghai, returning after three months overseas.

Thomson admits that he toyed with the idea of becoming a merchant seaman, but a number of circumstances popped up to cloud that dream—like the Depression.

Business wasn't as usual, to say the least, after the stock market crash of 1929. All of Heppner's banks folded, and money was so scarce that the city printed its own sheepskin script for use in local trading.

"Dad carried a lot of people over when the times were tough," recalled Thomson. "Quite a few remained loyal customers over the years, and many of their children went on to trade with us."

Money was not the only

thing that was scarce during the depression years, Thomson recollected. "The Office of Price Administration rationed butter, sugar and other things. It made it difficult to get merchandise to sell."

The dark days of the Depression were made brighter, for Thomson at least, when a new school teacher arrived in town in 1931. Two years later she became Mrs. Thomson.

Thomson bought out the store's inventory from his father, the last surviving member of the original Thomson brothers, in 1942. He eventually closed out the dry goods sections and remodeled the grocery in 1948. Since then, Thomson, in his white grocery apron, has been a familiar sight to shoppers passing through his checkout stand or walking by his Main Street window.

While many of the faces

have changed over the years, "people are still friendly, and friendships have stayed the same," Thomson commented.

Since his years of running a grocery store have prevented him from taking but a very few extended trips, Thomson said he and his wife were looking forward to being able to do some traveling, hunting and fishing. "I could never depend on having the time off to do these things before," he noted.

Two days into his retirement, "it feels good, so far," he said.

A long history of retailing in Heppner ended recently when Thomson Bros. Grocery closed its doors. Jim and Madge Thomson take a brief moment from their cleaning activities for a picture.

