

The Heppner Gazette-Times

Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper

VOL 103 NO. 2 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1985 10 PAGES

Heppner, Oregon 25



Weather
by the City of Heppner

	High	Low	Prec
Tues., Jan. 1	26	18	
Wed., Jan. 2	22	16	
Thurs., Jan. 3	21	11	
Fri., Jan. 4	24	17	
Sat., Jan. 5	32	18	
Sun., Jan. 6	23	19	
Mon., Jan. 7	28	19	

New Year's Baby arrives at Pioneer January 6



Donald Jon Adams, Heppner's New Year's Baby arrived at Pioneer Memorial Hospital January 6 at 12:06 a.m. weighing 10 pounds 6 ounces. His parents Terra Lee and Timothy Lee Adams will receive gifts donated from the following local merchants: Morrow

County Grain Growers, Lexington Lumber, Pioneer Memorial Hospital, Murray's Drug, Peterson's Jewellers, Case Furniture, Central Market, Heppner Auto Parts, Pettyjohn's Farm and Builders Supply, The Shoe Box, R & W Drive-In, Court Street Market and Ray Boyce Insurance.

Lack of inpatient and nursing home use of hospital has caused financial problems

Although there has been no official statement, the Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner is "not in good financial position" say both Fred Martin, chairman of the Hospital Board, and John Ochsner, hospital administrator.

The crux of the matter is that the facility is underutilized explains Martin, the administration has been cutting expenses to amounts under those budgeted, or we would be in bad shape. Certain expenses must be met, however, once services are cut to basic and to minimum staff requirements, there's no more we can cut without jeopardizing services. "While we are down 25 percent of the budgeted revenue, we have managed to keep expenses down, but not to that same extent," says Ochsner.

"It is my opinion that any financial problems are due to a lack of utilization," Ochsner continued.

The hospital is licensed for 20 hospital beds and 28 nursing home beds. Because of space limitations, we could not staff more than 16-18 hospital beds now. Records show that not more than 13 beds have been filled on any given day. The budget, however, had been based for the last two years on an average usage of five patients per day. The average daily census at Pioneer was 2.9 per day through November 30.

Although the hospital inpatient usage has the biggest single impact, when usage is down, a similar decrease is reflected in the decreased use of the ancillary or support services such as the lab and radiology, Ochsner says.

The nursing home averaged 26.6 beds occupied per day during the last fiscal year, a 95 percent usage rate, and so far this year the rate has gone from 81 percent use down to 75 percent in November. Part of the reason which the nursing home usage is down may be due to agencies diverting people away from traditional nursing home situations. The expense of going to a hospital or nursing home and the increased emphasis on home health care keep people away from the hospital and nursing home, says Martin. It seems to be a trend and we're not the only hospital with problem right now.

Some firms, however, are making money at operating hospitals but the Hospital Board, directed by the County Court "to run the hospital hasn't found the secret yet," says Martin. The Board has been looking at different possibilities for keeping the hospital open and operating.

One of those possibilities is a management firm, such as Brim and Assoc. of Portland, which may mean some loss of local control over the hospital. Ochsner explains that management firms differ, and that most do allow the county to retain some amount of local control. In some cases, a Hospital Board continues to set policy and rate changes, some firms may require that they have a representative on the Board, others may determine the day to day management of the hospital by their own corporate policy and leave other decisions to the Board.

Although the Hospital Board is researching the situation it is important to remember that they only make recommendations to the County Court. It is the Court which has the final decision whether to maintain management or to hire a firm for the job.

"We have reserves enough to be able to go through to the end of this fiscal year," said Martin, but next year's budget may cause a "tax jolt" if usage is not increased.

The most obvious solution to the lack of use is to bring in another physician into the community. At the last Hospital Board meeting a Physician Recruitment Firm was hired to help find another doctor willing to set up a practice in the Heppner area.

"We hope to solve the problems for quite awhile and develop something which will be a self-drawing

situation" says Ochsner. "It is important to remember that the Board and I are very concerned about meeting the needs of the community and that we want the hospital to be a viable entity. We see the situation as requiring additional physician services available to the community." We do not want to see the hospital close, if utilization can meet equipment maintenance, payroll, and other expenses.

Also keeping a quality facility going, means good quality emergency services says Ochsner. "We have good emergency services because we have a good facility." We can't just keep the intermediate care nursing home because a Registered Nurse is on duty 24 hours a day at the hospital, too. We can't just maintain emergency services because without the individual skills provided by the full-service facility, emergency care would merely be a transport system.

Martin explains that it is the feeling of some of the board members that three family physicians are needed to maintain the hospital properly. Others argue that the population isn't sufficient to support a third physician in the community. The problem is increased by the fact that people are mobile and will go where they feel that they can get the best medical care, Martin says.

Bringing another physician into the area would provide for a choice and for wider coverage for people in the area says Ochsner. It might be possible to do day surgery at the hospital again, offers Martin, and to have a physician-supervised EMT group, all of which would build up hospital usage.

Frozen ground slows work at well

Problems with frozen grounds have prompted the Heppner city council to grant Buckner Pump Co. until March 31 to finish work on the city's new water well.

The well has been drilled to 1,100 feet and is producing 150 gallons of water per minute; however, because of the difficulty in working with frozen ground, roadwork and pipe laying have not been done, the company told the city council Monday.

There have been problems with the \$89,270 well, which, including administrative expenses, will end up costing \$130,200, but the project has come in under the original estimate, and the quality of water is good.

In the beginning the city had hoped to pump about 250 gallons per minute, and only have to drill to 500 feet; however, no usable water was

found at that depth, so the city exercised an option and the drilling went to 1,100 feet.

The well, when connected to the city reservoir later, will be used as a backup system to the other city wells, and was paid for by a bond issue through the Farmer's Home Administration.

Delays in finishing of the well have caused about \$1,250 in excess engineering and legal fees. The city council agreed Monday to wait until the project is completed before deciding how much to penalize the drilling company for the excess costs.

The council also decided to pay \$880 for an extra sixty feet of road that was not included in the original bid specifications, and which the contractor did not know he would have to build.

In other business at the Monday meeting, the council granted approval to the Soroptimists who asked if they could, as a club project, replace playground equipment at the city park.

Council reverses earlier decision

Parking limit lifted

The city of Heppner has decided to drop its three-month long campaign against parking violations downtown, the city council announced Monday night.

Since October the city police have been issuing two-dollar parking tickets for cars parked in the downtown area for more than two hours, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

In October the council decided to have the police enforce an existing law against parking longer than two hours in one place, and since then police have been marking tires with chalk and issuing tickets.

Irrigation workshop scheduled

By STEPHEN CAMPBELL
OSU Ext. Agent
Morrow County

The Morrow County Office of the Oregon State University Extension Service, will sponsor a workshop on the basics of irrigation system design and operation. Walt Trimmer, O.S.U. Extension Irrigation Specialist, will present a program for smaller irrigators on bottom lands and bench lands using flood, hand-line, wheel-line, solid set, or traveling gun irrigation systems. The program will be at the Morrow County fairgrounds, January 15 at 1:30 p.m. All irrigators, equipment suppliers, and people with an interest in system design or the improvement of existing systems are invited to attend.

The program will be helpful to all irrigators and will enable producers to design or upgrade their irrigation systems to most efficiently water a desired crop or area. Topics of discussion will include basic hydraulics, (channel hydraulics, and pipe size requirements), system capacity, pressure requirements, uniformity of water cover (sprinklers and flood), and crop water requirements. It will answer questions concerning ditch size and design, field preparation, plant water requirements, pipe and pump specifications and others.

The program will last three hours and ample time will be scheduled for questions and specific producer problems. Bob Costa and Steve Campbell, Morrow County Extension Agents, can be contacted at 676-9642 for further information about the program.

There will be a \$5 registration fee to cover the cost of materials which will be handed out. Coffee and

doughnuts will be served, compliments of Morrow County Grain Growers.



Judge Abrams swears oath of office

Judge William W. Wells, Pendleton, administers the oath of Circuit Court Judge to Bob Abrams, Heppner in the courtroom of the Morrow County Courthouse, Friday, Jan. 4. Following the swearing in ceremony, Mylo Pope, a member of the Board of Governors of the Oregon State Bar Assoc. welcomed Abrams to the judiciary branch of the government and Judge William Wells congratulated him as the newest in a "long line of Morrow County Judges."

Abrams told the courtroom full of family and well-wishers that he had wanted to be formally inducted in this courtroom where he tried so many cases and that it is a "pleasure and a challenge to be the new judge partially because of the fine job which Judge Wells has done."

He also said the "first two days I've spent working as a judge indicated that I had more to learn and judges learn on the job."

Historical Society announces contest

The Morrow County Historical Society has contacted the three county junior high schools to invite students to join in an essay competition. Topics suggested to the students included the first fair and rodeo, the coal fired plant, and other general topics concerning the county's development.

The winning essay will be read at the County's Centennial Celebration February 16 reports chairman Delpha Jones.

Fuel Assistance applications available

By NEOLA MACKAY

Fuel assistance applications are available at the Heppner Neighborhood Center. The next appointments can be made for Friday, Jan. 11 and Friday, Jan. 18. Appointments are necessary in order to receive fuel assistance.

The Neighborhood Center will be closed January 15 in observance of Martin Luther King's birthday. Therefore the monthly Women Infant Children clinic will be held January 22.

Adult and Family Services Counselor Janet Phillips will be at the Center Wednesday, Jan. 16 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

The Center is in need of buttons and yarn for their various craft projects. All donations will be appreciated.



Harold Peck

By JUSTINE WEATHERFORD
Harold Peck, who is affectionately called "Shorty", has never been short in the time and effort he has good-naturedly given in helpful volunteer community service.

The variety of his helpful services during his 72 years has included always being a friendly, good neighbor, an active member of the Heppner Christian Church, of the Rhea Creek Grange, of the Elks Lodge No. 358 and of the Morrow County Historical Society.

Harold has for many years been an exhibitor and booster of the Morrow County Fair which he has served as a member of the Fair Committee and on the Fair Board and where he has done much to build up the fairgrounds and to increase the rating of the fair.

Harold Kenneth Peck was born in Heppner in October 1912 and has spent much of his life on homestead land on Upper Rhea Creek where his parents and grandparents lived before him. He and his wife, Edna Crump Peck, celebrated their golden anniversary in Heppner last year.

Their three daughters are Patricia (Mrs. John Hardy) of Tempe, AZ., who has three children and one grandchild; Shirley (Mrs. Roger Palmer, Heppner) with six children and four grandchildren and Marjori (Mrs. John Church) of Troy, Montana. Harold and Edna are proudly the grandparents of nine and now great-grandparents of five.

The life stories of Harold and Edna and their families are well told in the big, new Morrow County History published in 1983 (pages 288 through 300).



Vera Cooley

By JUSTINE WEATHERFORD
At Irrigon Vera Cooley is "Mrs. She Does Everything," a real community leader, the woman who helps in every emergency, who worked as the cook at A.C. Houghton School for 17 years, but who continues to be very active since retiring.

Vera's husband Lloyd died about 25 years ago, and she became the single parent to their sons Bill and Burrell. She helped with school activities, served as President and Treasurer of the P.T.A., led 4-H groups and served on the 4-H council. She has long been a county Extension leader, a main pillar in her church, Columbia View Fellowship, guiding the construction of their new building. She is a member of the Irrigon Crime Watch Group.

Vera spearheaded the committee that has successfully worked toward the building of a Senior Citizen Building at Irrigon and has even been seen out shoveling dirt to get the building started. She is presently Chairman of the Morrow County Senior Citizens Advisory Council and on the budget committee and the board of Oregon State District 12, Area Agency on Aging.

Her sons Bill and Burrell and their wives Janet and Karen are active in Irrigon's activities. Four grandchildren, David, Bob, Michelle, and Vickie help keep Vera young and still active in school activities.