

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Letters to the editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit.

Health district board grandstanding

To the Editor:

In the April 30 edition of this newspaper, I wrote a letter to the editor in which I asked for your support in asking the Health District board to try to renegotiate a new contract with Dr. Bitsas to bring him back to Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Clinic. Your response to that request was tremendous.

On May 5, at the regular board meeting of the Health District, I presented them with a petition containing 288 signatures requesting that they renegotiate a new contract with Dr. Bitsas. I, at that time, spoke to them about feelings on this matter.

In the next issue of this newspaper, they let us know that they were to have an "executive session" to try and accomplish what we requested of them. They asked Dr. Bitsas and the staff and employees of the hospital and clinic to come and speak to them about their feelings and concerns on this matter.

One thing that puzzles me is that they did not ask for any other input from the community, which they represent, at that meeting. It is to my understanding that a board of directors, whether public or private, is to represent the best interest of the people they serve. My question to the board is, why didn't they ask the community to speak at that "executive session"? Does what we want mean anything to them? Evidently not.

In my opinion, their try to bring Dr. Bitsas back was a very weak try at the best and was nothing short of "grandstanding" to try and appear to renegotiate with Dr. Bitsas. I feel they had no intention of renegotiating in the first place.

If they truly wanted to renegotiate with Dr. Bitsas, then why was all the other input from the staff and employees of the hospital and clinic needed? Hadn't they already talked to them? A meeting to renegotiate with Dr. Bitsas should have been between the board and Dr. Bitsas only, and no one else.

When they were looking for a new doctor at the clinic, they advertised for two doctors, and we know they only hired one, which was Dr. Bitsas. Why does this board of directors want to inadequately staff our clinic at this time? If there has been at least three doctors at the clinic in the past, then why did the board think only two doctors is enough?

Another question is, why is there such a turnover in our health care professionals in this area and also at the north end of the

county? If the board plans to open a new clinic in Irrigon to serve the needs of the north county, then why do they keep the clinic open in Boardman when Dr. Boss' patients are seeing him in his new private practice?

This board always cries for more money. They claim they don't have enough. It cost them \$25,000 to bring Dr. Bitsas here and three months' severance pay when he resigned. At this point, I feel they have squandered over \$50,000 of taxpayer monies. How much will it cost to bring another doctor here if they can find one? Why go elsewhere for another doctor when Dr. Bitsas is still here? Why not bring him back, which is what a large part of the community want anyway?

If we keep advertising for doctors, the health care community is going to question why there is such a turnover of doctors in the "Mayberry of Oregon." Eventually any qualified, competent physician probably will not want to come here to practice medicine at the clinic.

Maybe the turnover in health care professionals here is because the board seems to inadequately staff the clinic. They seem more concerned about a \$29,000 phone system to handle 300 plus calls per day to take the workload off operators that in keeping a good doctor here.

I feel that we, the taxpayers and voters, should take a hard look at whether or not this board of directors and hospital administrator truly represent our best interests or not, and if we find they don't, maybe we should look at replacing them, not the doctors, as soon as possible, even if it takes a recall of voters to do that.

Let's all continue to call, sign the petitions, and in any way we can, let them know that we want to keep Dr. Bitsas here at our clinic. When the next regular session of the health district board meets on June 2, let's as many of us as can show up in person to let them know how we feel about that they are doing and ask questions of them as to what they plan to do in the future.

Rumor has it that the hospital administrator plans to tender his resignation at that board meeting. I wonder if he really plans to do this, and if so, why?

Let's don't accept answers about our concerns and wants from the board of directors as vague as a consensus, let's ask, "Why are you doing what you are doing?"

Sincerely,
(s) Vern Burke
Heppner

Meeting just to placate

To the Editor:

There were a total of 288 signatures gathered on the petitions that were presented to the (Morrow County Health District) board at the executive session to renegotiate another contract with Dr. Bitsas. But apparently the board called the meeting just as a formality to placate all of us that were upset at their decision to force Dr. Bitsas to resign.

From the beginning of all this the board and administrator have refused to give any reason for their choice to let one of the best doctors Heppners ever had go. There has been a lot of support from the townspeople to get the board to bring Dr. Bitsas back, and he would very much like to be a practicing physician here. The only reason he isn't opening his own practice here is because at this time he doesn't have the money to.

It's very important that

everyone who reads this to let the board and administration know they don't have the final say on this matter unless we choose to let them have it.

There is a board meeting on June 2. All of us who would like quality health care here in Heppner and surrounding areas need to show up at this meeting. Also between now and June 2, everyone needs to keep calling

all the members of the board and Kevin, the administrator, (to) let them know what you want, how you feel about what they've done.

For those of you that don't have their names and phone numbers already, get a copy of week before last newspaper—the information is in it. This is very important, so I'm asking everyone to please stand together on this and not to give up. There is plenty left to do, and it's for the good of everyone that we don't quit now.

(s)Laurie Reichardt

WCCC plans Monday barbecue

The Willow Creek Country Club will hold a family barbecue on Monday, May 26, at 4 p.m. at the club.

Each family will bring their own meat to barbecue. Those whose last names begin with A-

K are asked to bring a dessert; L-Z, a salad.

Hosting the barbecue are Dave and Trish Gunderson, Gary and Barb Watkins, Greg and Ericka Grant, and Dave and Patty Allstott.

St. William's Church holds confirmation

Bishop Thomas Connolly conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on four students of St. William Church in Ione on Sunday, May 11. Receiving the sacrament were Jake McElligott, Mark Orem, Jenny Sullivan, and Luke Swanson.

Men of the Holy Name Society provided Bishop Connolly an escort and Monsignor Raymond Beard, Father Frank Hebert, and Father Gerry Condon concelebrated the Mass. Altar servers were Adam McCabe and Colin McElligott. Debbie Wryn provided the music.

After the Confirmation and Mass, the Altar Society of Ione hosted a potluck dinner.

PICTURE: (L-R) Fr. F. Hebert, Fr. G. Condon, Luke Swanson, Jenny Sullivan, Jake McElligott, Bishop T. Connolly, Mark Orem, Msgr. R. Beard



Births

Michaela Angeline Marie Forester—a daughter Michaela Angeline Marie was born to Krissie Rea, Ione, and Michael Forester, Klamath Falls, on May 2, 1997 at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. The baby weighed 6 lbs. 13 oz.

She joins brothers Dylan Pettyjohn, 15, Koby Rea, 13, and sister Alisha Forester, 5, at home.

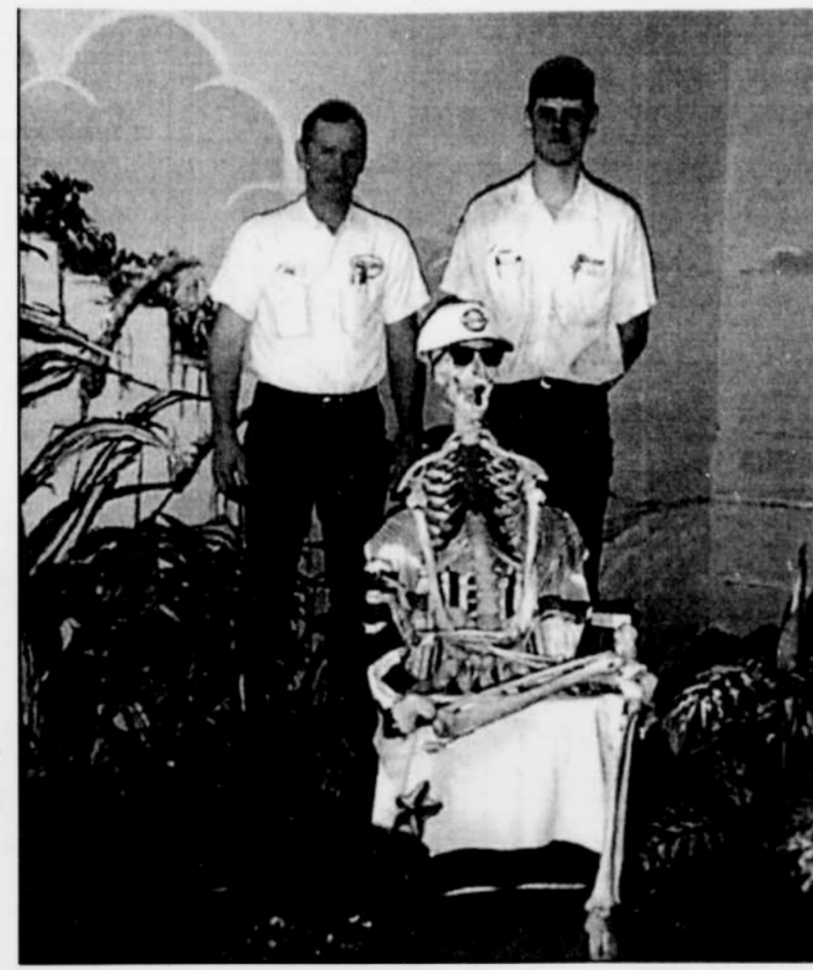
Her grandparents are Skip and Barb Pettyjohn, Ione, Ginny and Roger Morley, Tucson, AZ, and Sandy and Terry Cheyne, Midland, OR. Great-grandmother is Helen Pettyjohn, Ione.

Makenzi Kae Hughes—a daughter Makenzi Kae was born to Angie and Kevin Hughes of Heppner on May 8, 1997 at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. The baby weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz.

She joins a sister, Jessica, at home.

Her grandparents are Merlin and Claudia Hughes, Heppner, and Dan and Gail Haggard, Merrill, OR. Great-grandparents are W.E. and Pauline Hughes, Heppner, Corleene Coe, Walla Walla, WA, and Uyvonne Haggard, Redding, CA.

Schwab display takes 2nd



Heppner Les Schwab Assistant Manger Jeff Shank (left), Dustin Cossitt, along with "friend" show off Treasure Island promotional display created by store employees that earned second place in their district.

BMCC announces presidential pick

Dr. Virginia "Nicki" Harrington is in negotiations with the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Directors to become the new college president.

The board of directors made the selection Thursday evening and made a follow up phone call to Harrington to confirm her interest.

Harrington will be leaving her position as vice-president of teaching and learning at Moraine Park Technical College in Fond du Lac, WI. She has been there since 1993.

Originally a nursing instructor, Harrington has a bachelor of science in nursing from the University of Michigan. She holds two master's degrees, one in education and the other in

4-H now...

For many years people have thought of 4-H as cooking, sewing, pigs and cows. But it is much, much, more, says Morrow County Extension agent Bill Broderick.

"In the past few years Oregon's 4-H program has been struggling with the cut backs of ballot measure 5, and now 47, but the program is still strong," says Broderick, "and the people behind it are wonderfully energetic, so many volunteers dedicated to working with our kids, the adults of tomorrow."

4-H is looking for new leaders who might be interested in investigating some of the new programs available, along with sewing, cooking and livestock.

"One program that has decreased in the past years in Morrow County is the horse program, which is understandable because of the expense," he added, "and a horse is a 365 day/year project. Many parents are also afraid that after the purchase of a horse and equipment the child may lose interest and then they will have to sell everything."

A new program called the "Horseless Horse Club" is designed to teach all about the horse—breeds, health, equipment and feeding, before a horse is

purchased also encourages parents to learn together with the child to make the experience a happy one.

"Another problem is that many people think that a 4-H horse program is just about a horse show, but it's not," adds Broderick. "Many states have a trail horse program that deals with just on-the-trail activities, competitive trail rides, but always horsemanship. The Working Ranch Horse is also a fantastic program dealing with roping, cutting and ranch work. Both of these programs go through the same nine year steps of any 4-H program, so each year is added development."

Because there are so many programs available, Broderick suggests that anyone interested should talk to the Extension agent. A few examples include: computers, art, fishing, gardening, bug collections, and forestry, in addition to the leadership opportunities available like 4-H camps, Summer Days and many national opportunities.

To contribute ideas or for more information, contact the Extension office, 676-9642, or 1-800-342-3664 or Glaya Baker, president, Morrow County 4-H Leaders Council, 481-7488.



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Obituaries

Joan M. Hughes

Joan M. Hughes, 63, of Heppner, died Thursday, May 15, 1997, at her home.

The funeral was held Saturday, May 17, 1997 at All Saints Episcopal Church in Heppner, with burial at the Heppner Masonic Cemetery.

The daughter of Terrell and Mary Cartwright Benghe, she was born January 11, 1934, at Denver, Colorado. She was raised at Golden, Colorado, and attended school there. She moved to Heppner in 1945 and attended schools at Heppner and Ione, where she graduated in 1951. She attended business college in Portland and returned to Heppner in 1953.

Mrs. Hughes and her husband, Matt, raised two children.

She worked for the Bank of Eastern Oregon, then worked as a legal secretary in Heppner for 18 years. She has been employed by the Farm Service Agency for the past 20 years.

Mrs. Hughes was a member of All Saints Episcopal Church in Heppner, the Hermiston Eagles Lodge, and was a Lady Elk in the Heppner lodge.

Survivors include a son, Terry Hughes of John Day; a daughter, Teresa Andrews of Kennewick, Washington; her mother, Mary Benghe of Heppner; a brother, Michael D. Benghe of Fall Church, Virginia; a sister, Lynn Marie McDonald of Omaha, Nebraska; and four grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her father, Terrell Benghe, brother, Ralph, and sister, Mary.

Memorial contributions may be made to a charity of choice.

Sweeney Mortuary, Heppner, was in charge of arrangements.

LeRoy A. Britt

LeRoy A. Britt, 59, of Spray, died Thursday, May 15, 1997, at his ranch.

Graveside service was held Saturday, May 17, 1997 at the Heppner Masonic Cemetery.

Mr. Britt was born May 30, 1937, at Fossil, to Roy and Selma Anderson Britt. He was raised at Spray and attended local schools.

On March 16, 1957, he married Diana Nash at Spray. The couple moved to Pilot Rock in 1969 and returned to the Spray area in 1978.

Mr. Britt was a well-known Wheeler County logger and rancher. He operated a ranch along the John Day River for 20 years. He was named Eastern Oregon Logger of the Year in 1978 and was a member of the Oregon Log Truckers Association.

Survivors include his wife, Diana, of Spray; sons, Ted of Heppner, and Tony of Ukiah; his mother, Selma Adams of Spray; brothers, Rod of Redmond, and Sid of Echo; a sister, Ruth Pietila of Floodwood, Minnesota; and three grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to a charity of choice.

Sweeney Mortuary, Heppner, was in charge of arrangements.

WCCC ladies hold fun day

Willow Creek Country Club lady golfers held a fun day on May 13. Results are as follows:

Special events winners—#2 Lynnea Sargent, Jean Ball, Sheila and Pat Edmundson; #5 a tie between Sandi Hanna, Joyce Dinkins, Karen Morgan and Deborah Kendrick, Luvilla Sonstegard, Jackie Allstott and Norma French, Jean Ball, Lynnea Sargent, Sheila and Pat Edmundson; #8 Juanita Martin, Betty Carlson, Lorraine Montgomery and Sherron Woodside.

Scramble team winners: first Jean Ball, Lynnea Sargent, Sheila and Pat Edmundson; second Norma French, Jackie Allstott, Luvilla Sonstegard; third a tie between Lorraine Montgomery, Sherron Woodside, Juanita Martin, Betty Carlson, and Joyce Dinkins, Karen Morgan, Sandi Hanna, Deborah Kendrick; fourth Jenny Reynolds, Kate Reynolds, Lorie McKinney and Susan Atkins; fifth Lois Hunt, Jeanette Padberg, Carol Norris and Wendy Haack.

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