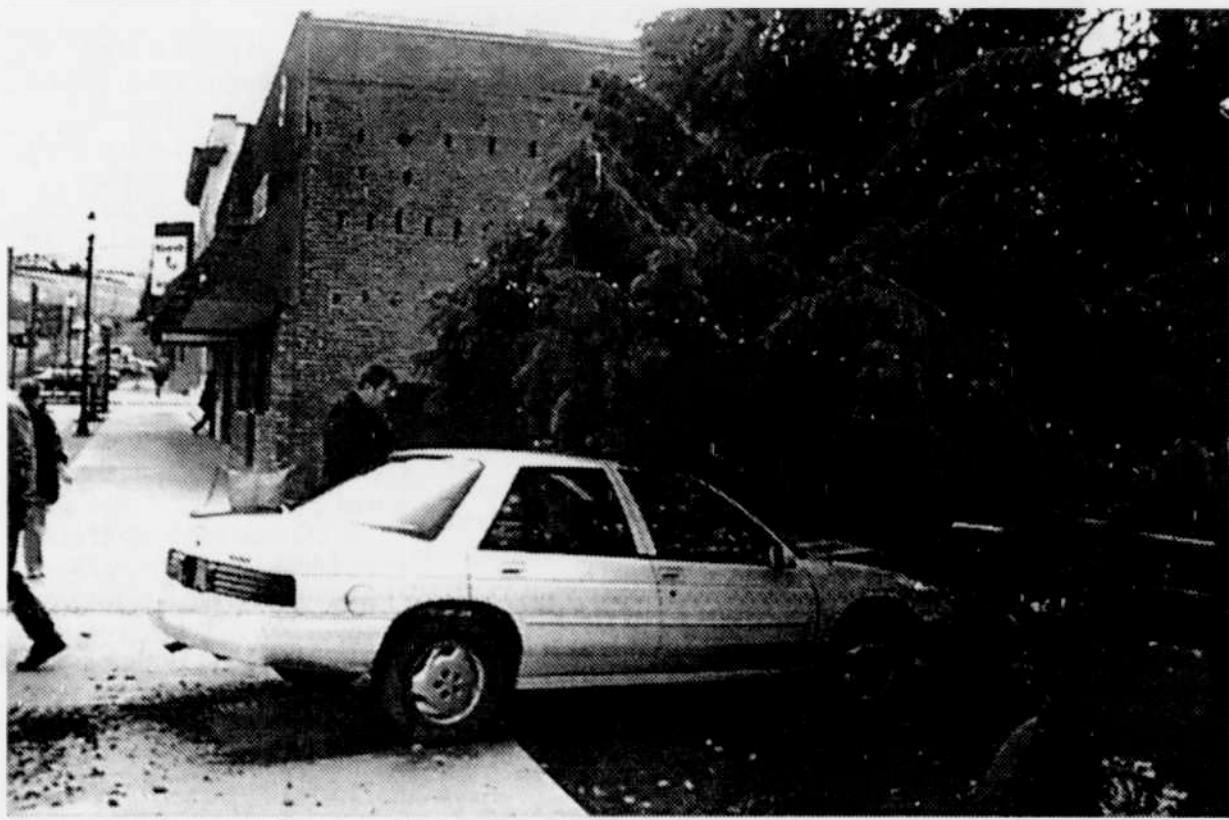


BESSIE WETZELL
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HEPPNER

50¢ Gazette times

VOL. 117 NO. 50 8 Pages Wednesday, December 16, 1998 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon



Heppner's Christmas tree got a bit of an unexpected jolt Tuesday afternoon, when it was hit by a car that jumped the sidewalk. Apparently the car's accelerator stuck, which cause the car to jump the curb, run over an electrical box and smash into the Christmas tree. The tree was tilted over a little bit, but otherwise was not damaged. The driver of the car was not hurt either, however, her car did sustain heavy damage.

Sample named undersheriff Miller receives promotion

Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton has announced the promotion of two deputies in his department. Both promotions take effect January 1.

Larry S. Sample, 54, was promoted from detective sergeant to undersheriff.

Sample, a resident of Boardman, has been with the Morrow County Sheriff's Department for over 11 years serving as a patrol deputy, detective and detective sergeant. Sample has been assigned to the Blue Mountain Drug Task Force as a supervisor for the past seven years.

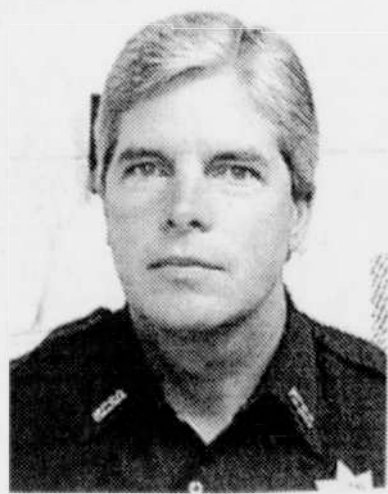
Sample started his law enforcement career as a patrolman for the Madras Police Department. In 1979 he was hired as a patrolman for the Prineville Police department. While with Prineville he was promoted to investigator, corporal and sergeant. He brings over 24 years of law enforcement experience to the position of undersheriff.

Sample is married with two daughters and two grand children.

Mark L. Miller, 49, was promoted from patrol deputy to detective sergeant.

Miller, a resident of Lexington, has been with the department six years, serving as a patrol deputy and code enforcement deputy.

Miller started his law enforcement career with the Gresham Police Department, spending 17 years with Gresham. His assignments with the city of Gresham included working in a drug task force and burglary task force as a detective. He also served as



Mark L. Miller



Larry S. Sample

NEWS DEADLINE
5 p.m. Monday

Umatilla considered for 2A by OSAA

According to a news release from the Oregon School Activities Association, Umatilla High School will be considered for placement in the 2A classification for the 2000-2001 school year if the school's attendance figures remain below the 3A classification cut-off point in the June 30, 1999, annual report of the Oregon Department of Education.

OSAA voted to move Portland Christian High School, Dayton High School, Gervais High School and Portland Adventist Academy from 2A to 3A for the 2000-2001 school year if figures remain above the cut-off point for the currently assigned classification.

Drama Club to present mystery

The Ione High School Drama Club will present "Bone Chiller" by Monk Ferris on Thursday, Dec. 17 at 7:30 p.m.

"Bone Chiller" is a comical murder mystery about friends, relatives and strangers vying for inheritance from Josiah Travers' will. The will is a picture-puzzle which causes some difficulties for those decoding it.

The main characters include Adler Sheridan (Colin McElligott), Dan Denton (Jeremy Rietmann) and Jerry Delvin (Cory Bennetto). Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for students and senior citizens. Children under five are free.

Health district situation improves

Financial consultant Michael Bell of Michael R. Bell & Company, Spokane, WA, told an audience of around 100 people gathered at Heppner High School Monday night that the Morrow County Health District's financial situation is improving.

Bell said that changes implemented by the district on a 40 percent of the consulting firm cut the district's monthly losses in half, from around \$40,000 to around \$20,000.

But, cautioned Bell, "You didn't get into this situation overnight and you won't get out of it overnight."

Bell detailed operational changes to improve the bottom line including: changing rates, resulting in a \$20,800 increase in net revenue; eliminating the human resources director, \$3,700; changing provider contracts, \$7,500 (the change would give the district an additional \$15-\$20 per visit in Medicare benefits); changing staff management, \$5,800; combining departments, \$10,300; changing employee benefits, \$4,200; purchasing new laboratory equipment (purchasing a new machine would not cost the district any additional monies for equipment and would save \$2,000 a month in the cost of chemicals); obtaining Rural Health certification, \$4,500; enhancing the nursing home, \$6,500.

Bell modified his previous recommendation of raising the nursing home rates to \$125 a day and instead suggested charges of \$100 a day, increased from \$90.63 per day. Bell said that he had not been aware that the nursing home patients were billed for additional services.

Bell's report recommended that the district increase clinic staff to provide more efficient service and cut down on overtime expenses at a cost of \$3,500 a month; and increase business office staff to make billing more efficient and reduce accounts receivable.

Bell also recommended that the district purchase a used CAT scan, which, according to interim administrator Sheila Dahlman, "would pay for itself within a year" and allow patients to remain in the district for testing, rather than being sent to facilities elsewhere.

Other recommendations include: adding telemedicine capabilities, which would aid in diagnosis and also retain patients; suggesting the possibility of adding an Alzheimer's/Dementia unit; adding a treadmill; providing visiting specialists; and establishing a procedure room.

Bell discussed a contract with Accent, a collections firm, which would give the firm 10.5 percent of all cash receipts.

According to Bell, the contract was signed by Susan Brock, former administrator and employee of Western Health Resources, the Adventist firm hired for hospital management services, but not approved by the board. The district did not have a copy of the contract.

According to district minutes, Accent was to concentrate on old accounts and follow up only and would not bill for current accounts, but the firm maintained it could bill between seven and 14 percent of all cash collections, which they then modified to 10.5 percent on all cash receipts, which could amount to \$25,000 to \$30,000 a month or in excess of \$750,000 over the two-year contract period.

The district is suing to be released from the contract.

Dahlman and Bell discussed the eventual necessity of purchasing a new computer



Interim MCHD administrator Sheila Dahlman (left) speaks with Jack Alistott.

system for the district, since the district with Western Health Resources for management and computer services has been terminated. The district hopes to extend the contract with WHR. A computer system is estimated at \$245,000 to \$290,000.

Bell's company also issued a report critical of the district's budget for the year ending June 30, 1999, and budgeting process. "Based on our review," said the report, "minimal effort was made to prepare this budget. Revenues and contractual adjustment were not properly evaluated based on changes in third party

payment rates and other factors." The report said expenses were adequately estimated, "however, little effort was made to identify ways in which the district could modify its operations to achieve financial stability."

The report also detailed the results of a survey Bell's survey conducted.

As expected, hospital services rated high among residents of south Morrow County, but lower among residents of the Boardman and Irrigon area, who have easier access to medical care elsewhere.

Christmas Santa project underway for kids, teens



Kim Pointer

Kim Pointer, a junior at Heppner High School, is spearheading a project to help make the season a little brighter for some children and teens in Morrow County who otherwise might not have a merry Christmas.

The Morrow County office of Children's Services at Boardman made a list for 10 children, noting the children's

ages, sex and their Christmas wishes, and Pointer posted the list by the Christmas tree in the front foyer at HHS.

Anyone wishing to participate in the project may stop by the high school, purchase one or more of the Christmas gifts and then return the gifts, unwrapped, to the high school by Monday, Dec. 21. Since the items are to be gifts, it is requested that they be new and not used items.

Colt basketball sign-ups

Colt basketball sign-ups and parents meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 20 from 2-4 p.m. at the Heppner High School gym.

Those attending should bring

gym shoes.

Anyone interested in coaching should either attend the meeting Sunday or call George at 676-9252, or Chuck, 676-5250.

Holiday events planned

Wednesday, Dec. 16: 7 p.m.-Heppner Elementary School holiday concert.

Thursday, Dec. 17: 7 p.m.-Heppner High School holiday

concert.

Sunday, Dec. 20: Heppner business and residential lighting contest judged.

Tuesday, Dec. 22: 7 p.m. Ione Schools winter concert.

Mail letters to Santa at museum

Letters to Santa Claus may be mailed at the Morrow County Museum again this year. Helpful elves will see that all letters put in the mailbox in the Museum (1-5 p.m. Tuesday

through Saturday) or the library back drop (all other times) by December 18 are individually answered.

Those sending letters are asked to make sure that full names and addresses are included.



Last Minute Gift Ideas HERE!

MCGG will be closed at noon on Dec. 24, and closed Dec. 25 & 26

MORROW COUNTY GRAIN GROWERS

Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgg.net