

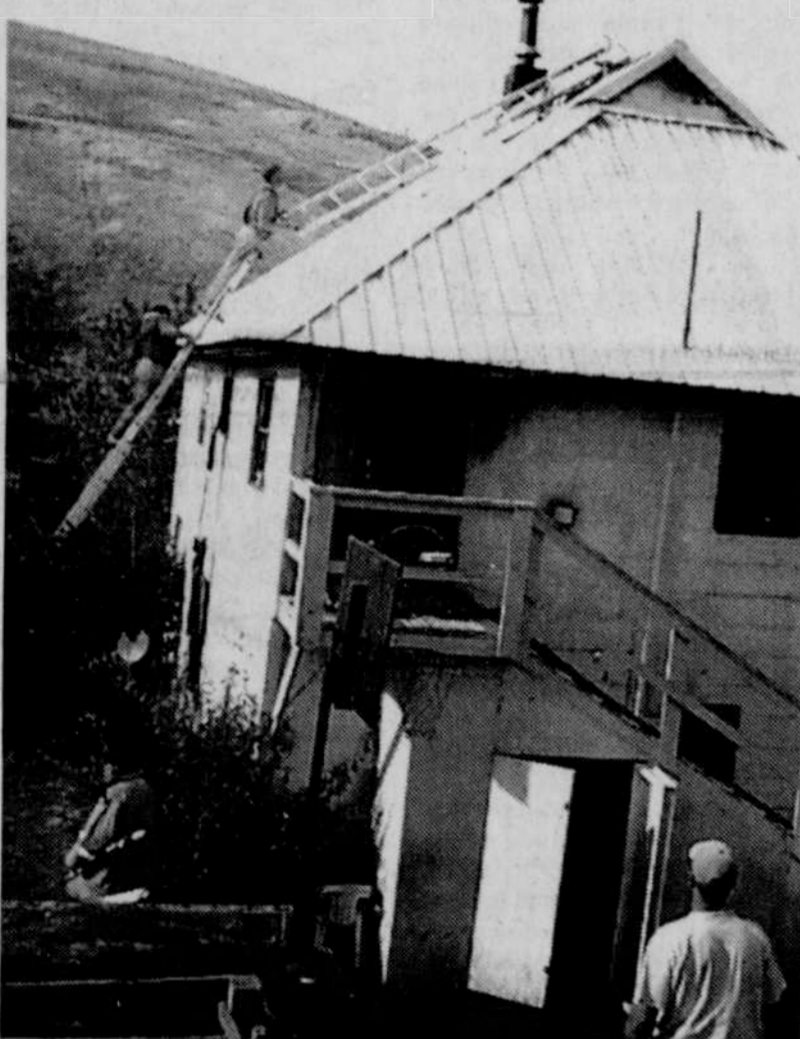
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HEPPNER



VOL. 119 NO. 42 10 Pages Wednesday, October 18, 2000 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Heppner home damaged in fire



Firemen place ladders on the roof in attempt to put out fire

A house at 460 S. Main in Heppner caught fire Tuesday, sustaining "substantial damage," according to Heppner Fire Chief Rusty Estes.

Estes said that the Heppner Fire Department was paged out around 1:13 p.m. Tuesday to the home of John and Shelly Wight of Heppner. He said that the fire wasn't detected until it was spotted by a passer by and "by then it was coming out the windows."

Estes said that the blaze appears to have originated in the kitchen, but said that an official

determination is pending.

Three Heppner Fire Department rigs, seven HFD fire fighters, six from the Ione Fire Department and one from the Lexington Fire Department responded to what Estes called "a hard fire to fight" because of the age of the home. He added that he was grateful to the Ione and Lexington departments for their response with manpower and air bottles. "It was nice to have the surrounding area respond," he said.

He said the fire fighters finally left the scene around 6:30 p.m.

Benefit fund started for twins

A benefit fund at the Bank of Eastern Oregon has been established for the family of Matt and DeRina Howard of Heppner.

The Howards recently had twin boys who will require an extended stay in the hospital before they can be brought home.

The babies, Dakota Dale Howard and Derek Matthew Howard, each weighing three pounds, three ounces, were born on October 2 at Kadlec Medical Center at Richland, WA.

The fund will help the Howards cover expenses until the homecoming of their twins.

Voters to face four-year option levy

A no vote on the county's four year \$1,500,000 option levy facing voters in the upcoming election will result in further cuts to county services, Morrow County Commission Dan Brosnan said.

The county is asking voters to approve a levy of \$1.50 per thousand of valuation to raise about \$1,500,000 each year for the next four years.

The county is facing a serious shortfall of funds this year and Brosnan says if voters say no, the county will have no choice but to "take cuts across the board" in county services.

After compression, uncollectible and city road tax distributions, it is estimated the county will collect approximately \$1,100,000 from the levy.

The money will be put in the road fund and used for road operations only. This would free up money in the general fund that had previously been transferred to the road fund.

The levy money is also needed because the county is receiving less and less federal timber receipts money, Brosnan says, from a high of \$369,768 in 1993, to an estimated \$45,000 for the year 2000.

To make ends meet the county has recently laid off 13 full and part time employees, as well as made cuts to the road department.

To deal with the shortfall the county has also taken money from "tippage fees" (money received from the Finley Buttes landfill) and placed it in the general fund. This was a one time transfer and won't be done again, Brosnan said.

Because of state property tax limit laws, residents of the city of Heppner will vote on the option levy, but if the levy is approved, will not see an increase in their tax bills.

Advisory committee meeting

The Heppner Advisory Committee will hold a special meeting on Thursday, Oct. 19, at 5:30 p.m. in the Heppner Elementary School library.

Long-time Heppner market to close doors



Shannon Wicklund works the counter for the remaining weeks at Court Street Market. She and her husband Tom (who was fighting a fire when this picture was taken) plan to close the store at the end of the month because of poor economic conditions. The store has been in continuous operation in Heppner since 1946.

Court Street Market, doing business on the same street corner in Heppner for the past 54 years, is closing its doors at the end of the month.

Owners Tom and Shannon Wicklund say the store cannot remain competitive anymore and they plan to shut it down. The recent mill closure in Heppner also played into their decision.

"We just can't compete with the Wal-Marts, Coscos and Safeways

anymore," Shannon said Tuesday. "The breaking point was when the mill shut down. We kept thinking things would get better, but they haven't. We probably hung on too long as it is," she added.

The Wicklunds took over the store four years ago from Shannon's parents Jack and Ruth Maben, who ran the store for 18 years after buying it from Len and Ann Schwarz in 1978. Len's parents Leonard and Mary built

the store at its present location across from the courthouse in 1946. After Leonard's death in 1972 Len and Ann operated it for six years before selling.

Tom and Shannon aren't sure what they are going to do next. "Next thing is to go out and try to find work. We own our home here," she says. "We might put the building up for sale. We just don't know. We have a lot to think about," she says.

Soccer explored for south Morrow Co.

South Morrow County (Heppner-Ione-Lexington) has developed an exploratory committee to look into the possibility of forming teams to play in the Columbia United Soccer Club, the regional leagues of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO).

The Columbia United Soccer Club has asked for information on how many children in what age groups would play and how many parents would commit to coaching/assistant coaching/refereeing. (Training will be provided for parents who would like to coach/assistant

coach/referee and need to learn the ropes).

To qualify to play, a child must be four years old by January 31 and no older than 13 years of age on July 31. Cost to play in the 2001 season will be between \$25-\$30 and a local group is planning to have scholarships available. The season begins August 1 and lasts through the first week of November.

Practices will be in south Morrow County. Games are weekends for younger teams and weekends/evenings for older teams. Organizers say they expect that most (if not all)

games will be played in Hermiston with some games possibly played in Boardman.

Those interested are asked to fill out forms and return to their child's school no later than October 31. The form is not an official registration form, but rather a means to assess interest in the community.

Organizers stress that response to the form does not obligate the parent or child to participate.

For more information, call Tina Edwards or Darrell Raver weekends or evenings at 676-8710, or Kim Cutsforth weekdays at 676-9625.

Courtroom video system to benefit county law enforcement

A newly installed video system now in place at the Morrow County Courthouse in Heppner is expected to greatly benefit law enforcement throughout the county.

The new system consists of a video unit at the Morrow County Courthouse in Heppner and another at the Justice Court at the Morrow County Annex building in Irrigon. The system's transmission lines run from Heppner to Irrigon and then to Pendleton, where there is a control unit that acts a bridge, whereby the system can be hooked up to compatible systems virtually anywhere in the state or even the world.

Compatible units are also in place at all four courtrooms in Pendleton, the courtroom at Hermiston, two rooms at the jail in Pendleton and at the Umatilla County District Attorney's office in Pendleton.

The Morrow County system will facilitate arraignments and, because it is also compatible with the state prison system, parole hearings will also be feasible.

The system not only picks up video and audio transmissions from three different locations (for example, the DA at the Morrow County Courthouse, the prisoner in jail and the judge in Hermiston), but is also voice activated. At the Morrow County Courthouse, the pre-set, voice-activated camera automatically moves from the judge's bench, to the jury box, to the attorney, depending upon who is speaking.

Currently the sound comes directly from the television speakers, but ultimately the sound system will be connected to the courthouse speakers.

The new system will dramatically cut the time sheriff's deputies spend transporting prisoners to and from court and jail for arraignments.



Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton (left) and Morrow County District Attorney David C. Allen demonstrate a new courtroom video system.

"It will save a tremendous amount of time," says Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton. "We were averaging about 450 hours in transport every six months. We figure we'll save around 600 hours (over the next six months). We can keep all those man hours in the county now. That's hours spent in the county, on the streets, rather than transporting prisoners."

Morrow County District Attorney David C. Allen said that the first two proceedings held via the new system last Thursday took only around five minutes. Before, the process would have taken at least six hours. Previously a deputy would have to travel to Pendleton to pick up a prisoner, transport him to court in Heppner and then transport him back to jail in Pendleton before returning to the sheriff's office in Heppner.

Denton and Allen said that on occasion three vehicles, and consequently at least three deputies, have been required to transport prisoners. In one instance they recall, one vehicle transported three prisoners, another transported two and a third was required to transport a

female prisoner.

Allen said that the courts are also enthusiastic because it will cut down on travel time and scheduling problems for judges.

Denton said that another benefit of the new system will be increased security. "One of my concerns was the security issue with prisoners who might be escape risks," said Denton. "They can have their day in court and never leave the jail."

Allen said that the two units were purchased for \$25,000. Funding was obtained by Allen through a Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant administered by the U.S. Department of Justice as a part of the Violence Against Women's Act.

Allen said that one goal of the grant is to decrease the isolation of rural victims. The video system will enable people in Morrow County to obtain restraining orders without traveling to Hermiston or Pendleton, thus making the process more easily attainable for victims of domestic violence.

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