

A View from the Hill

By Doris Brosnan

Experience has taught Willow Creek Terrace residents that any day, month or season of the year can bring a mixture of joy and sorrow. December 25 was just such a day. Billie Kroske passed away at the age of 95, after infusing the day with her positive energy—as was her way—enjoying the opening of her Christmas gift, and having celebrated Christmas Eve with her room full of family members.

The Terrace was decked out for Christmas and the holiday season, and Billie had been able to join the other residents for the many holiday festivities in December: the lighting of the tree in the lobby on December 6, the music of the Ol' Time Fiddlers on the 9th, the high-steppin' synchronized dancing by the cloggers on the 10th, the December 21 piano recital and caroling, and the quiet Christmas Eve moments and Christmas morning excitement brought by gifts from Santa (and helpers).

Santa does visit the Terrace, and his helpers see that he does not miss a single apartment. Each resident, whether naughty or nice, receives a gift gaily wrapped and a handmade stocking stuffer with some handmade sweet treats. Though the Santa-assist is not in the job descriptions of the Terrace staff, it is something the 11 elves enjoy providing each Christmas.

Other "elves" who gifted the Terrace in December include the Food Elves, Odd Fellows and the Meligans; and the Sewing

Elf, Marlene Pointer, who brought protective dining wear that she had made; and the Garden Elf, Frank Jones, representing the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, who supervised two garden-cleanup workers.

The Holiday atmosphere continued to surround the residents and staff through the last week of December, and when December 31 arrived, all residents had noisemakers. Some residents said "good-bye" to 2011 and "hello" to 2012 when TV featured the Ball-drop in Times Square at 9 p.m., Heppner time. Some residents retired earlier, content to greet the new year when they awoke on January 1. One resident, Bud Batty, made certain he was awake and ready with his noise maker when the old-year-new-year moment arrived in Oregon live. Betty Brown and Mary Eleanor Gilman, both long-time residents of the Heppner area, are new members of the Terrace community who moved in just a few days before seeing the new year arrive at their new abodes. They were also in time to enjoy the delicious crab feed on New Year's Day, compliments of Colin and Erin Anderson.

No New-Year's babies presently live at the Terrace, though Anna Mae Steagall can boast of having given birth some years ago to a January-1 baby and then a January-5 baby a year later. The birthday closest to January 1 among the neighbors on the Hill belongs to Alvina Padberg, who will celebrate turning 91 on January 15.

Other notewor-

thy (always a questionable adjective) dates on the January calendar are Fruitcake Day (14th), when the staff had planned to hold a homemade-fruitcake toss competition, but the residents like the infamous treat so well that it will simply be tossed into their tummies; Maintenance Day (18th), when the staff and residents pay tribute to the maintenance staff who keep "things" running well; Hat Day (20th), when staff will wear interesting hats and invite the residents to join them; and Belly Laugh Day (24th), which is one of the most enjoyable and important days on the Hill because of the funny stories and incidents that will pop up and the stimulating effects on the endorphins and blood flow in everyone's brain. Three other laugh-filled observances follow, on Clothes-Clash Day (26th)—when visitors might wonder about color blindness at the Terrace—and Fun-at-Work Day and Backwards Day (27th), when visitors might wonder how manager George Nairns has delighted her staff so greatly as well as wondering if anyone knows if he/she is coming or going or is totally confused.

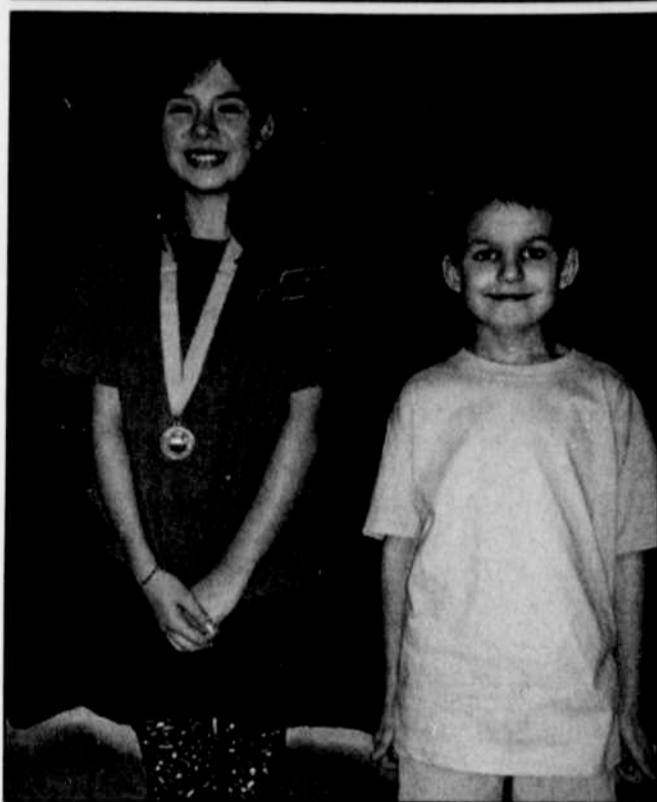
If "laughter is the best medicine," 2012 has started with a large dose of medicine for the good health of the staff and residents at Willow Creek Terrace. Everyone views this as an important beginning, and everyone remains eager to welcome one more neighbor to their community on the Hill for another new beginning.

Heppner elementary holds geography bee

The first week in January marks a big occasion each year at Heppner Elementary School. The annual Geographic Bee was held Friday, January 6 in the HES Gymnasium. Contestants, students, staff and visitors filed into the gym to the tunes "We Are the World," "On Top of the World" and "What a Wonderful World" as the stage was set for the competition.

Students in grades four through six took a qualifying test in November to see who would compete in this important contest. The top scorers who earned a spot in the bee were: fourth grader, Jorden Sweeney; fifth graders Zach Bredfield, Claire Grieb, Jaiden Mahoney, Hayden Qualls, Olivia Schmidt and Leo Waite; sixth graders Cara Arbogast, Jared Geier, Riley Gorham, Sophie Grant, Katlyn Harper (who was ill and unable to compete), Alex Lindsay, Kevin Smith and Mitchen VonGunten.

Moving on following the preliminary round were Cara, Sophie, Kevin, Jorden, Mitchell and Leo. As the questions grew progressively more difficult, the field was narrowed to the final round of Sophie and Jorden. After three questions were asked and answered, Sophie claimed the championship and a medal, and Jorden the runner-up position. Sophie also was presented a globe bank and Jorden a pillowcase. All of the competitors received



Top (L-R): Geography bee qualifiers Olivia Schmidt, Jaiden Mahoney, Claire Grieb, Hayden Qualls, Cara Arbogast, Sophie Grant, Jorden Sweeney, Zach Bredfield, Riley Gorham, Kevin Smith, Mitchell VonGunten, Jared Geier, Leo Waite and Alex Lindsay. Not pictured is Katlyn Harper. Bottom: Jorden Sweeney (right) and Sophie Grant (left). —Contributed photos

Wonders of the World calendars for 2012. To celebrate the accomplishments of all of the geographers, cookies from around the world were served to the students and their families.

Sophie's next step in the competition is to

take a written test in hopes of qualifying for the Oregon State Geography Bee in April. The winner of the United States wins a \$25,000 scholarship and a trip...last year the trip was to the Galapagos Islands.

Chamber holds annual luncheon



The Heppner Chamber of Commerce held its annual luncheon Thursday, January 5. Top: The chamber elected 2012 officers (L-R) John Gould, Kay Fowler, Michael Blauer, Les Paus-tian, Lisanne Currin, Jeff Bailey and Nancy Snider. Bottom: Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sheryll Bates (far right), presented 2011 volunteer appreciation awards to Joe Perry (left) for his efforts as parade coordinator, Bill Kuhn (center) for his work with the annual Town and Country event and Larry Mills (right) as parade announcer. —Photos by David Sykes

GRAVEL FEE

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rhetorically. "It is clearly a tax," he told the court.

Neal said because income from the fee would be split evenly, 50 percent to the road fund and the other half to the general fund, that made it a tax and subject to a vote of the county residents. Neal also said the fee violated the U.S. Constitution on restrictions on interstate commerce.

"You are discriminating when you pick one commodity to tax," he added.

The argument of why gravel was being taxed and not other commodities such as wheat, hay and cattle shipped outside the county, was raised many times during the hearing.

"What comes next?" asked Marvin Padberg, chairman of the Port of Morrow, "Wheat? Lumber?"

As part of the ordinance, producers would have to keep records of where all their gravel was going and then make those payments to the county quarterly. Under the ordinance, the county would have had the authority to come into the businesses and examine records for

verification. Failing to comply with the collection and payment would be considered a criminal misdemeanor offense and subject to a fine up to \$700 and 90 days in jail for the gravel producers or shippers.

Also testifying against the proposed fee was Chuck Rose, Aggregate Area Manager for the Cemex company, a global building materials company with offices at the Port of Morrow in Boardman. Rose said estimates by the county of two barges of gravel being shipped out of the port to Portland was "highly inflated."

Rose said his company had "invested millions of dollars in the Port of Morrow to ship downriver. That aggregate never saw a county road." He said the fee would "put us at a disadvantage to produce in Portland and other places."

Bill Montgomery, Aggregate Sales Manager with Cenex, agreed, saying timing of the fee could not be worse.

"We have been one of the hardest hit industries with the construction slump," he told the court.

He said his company has seen reduction in income of 50 to 60 percent in the current recession. "When some companies lose \$50,000," he said, "we lose \$50 million."

Jane Clark of Pendleton, who operates a rock quarry near the Morrow-Umatilla county line, said her company would actually benefit if the fee were enacted. "I have a pit on the county line which makes my value higher. I pay taxes in Umatilla County, and I will be hiring the experienced people you will be laying off," she said.

After testimony from the audience, the court decided not to move forward with the fee. "When I came in here, I was ready to vote yes," said Commissioner Rea. "I thought it was a heck of a good idea when we first considered it. But there were lots of things we didn't think about."

However, she also told the audience to expect cuts in services from the county if they do not receive additional revenue.

"People here have to be willing to have your services cut. Be prepared for cut-backs of road main-

tenance, road repairs and public safety," she said.

Rea also pointed out that the county is dealing with union negotiations, which will probably add expenses to the county budget in the coming year.

Commissioner Ken Grieb at first asked if the county should delay a vote on the proposed fee.

"I learned a lot and I would like to continue the hearing. I would like to think about it and bring it up next week (at the meeting in Irrigon)."

Grieb made a motion to continue which died from lack of a second.

Judge Terry Tallman said he was against the fee from the beginning.

"I had major reservations about this in the budget committee," he said. "I did not think it was a good idea then."

He also said the committee did not consider the commerce clause of the Constitution when the budget committee enacted the proposal. Tallman urged the court to make a decision, and the court then voted unanimously not to move forward with the proposed aggregate fee.

Chamber Chatter

Boardman

The January Economic Outlook Chamber Lunch will be held Wednesday, January 18 at noon at the Port of Morrow. We will have a panel discussing the outlook for Morrow County, so come prepared to ask your questions. Lunch is catered by Judy Scott Chuck Wagon; RSVP is due by Friday, January 13 because of the Monday holiday.

The Tillicum Club will be selling carnations and roses for Valentine's Day. All proceeds go to Tillicum Club projects. Flower sales will continue until January 27. All orders must be paid for when

placed. To order, email tillicumclub@live.com or call Shelby Percy at 541-771-0103.

The 22nd annual Citizens Award Night will be held Friday, February 3 at the Port of Morrow. We are taking nominations for Citizen of the Year, Educator of the Year, Business of the Year and Pioneer. Call or email the chamber to receive a nomination form; they are due by this Friday, January 13. Invitations are being mailed out today.

The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) of Morrow County is offering the Biggest Winner program

to support your efforts to achieve a healthy weight loss and allow you to participate in wellness education to establish lifelong healthy behaviors. The weigh-in education activity will be on Mondays at Sam Boardman Elementary, Heppner Elementary School and the Lone Community Church and on Tuesdays at Irrigon Jr./Sr. High School. For more information, call 541-676-2538

The Boardman Chamber will be hosting a booth for the Sportsmen Show at the TRAC in Pasco. The show is January 20-22. If you are interested in working in the booth, give Diane a call.

The Ford Institute

for Community Building is working on year two for Morrow County on Effective Organizations for non-profits and community organizations. Training is provided by Rural Development Initiatives. There is no cost to attend but you will need to fill out a registration form by January 15. This training is most beneficial for directors, board members, and staff and volunteer who work with non-profits and service organizations; it also has proven helpful to local government, service districts and institutions such as schools and clinics. For more information, contact Diane at the chamber or Alicia at the Ford Family Foundation 541-957-5574.



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