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HEPPNER 50¢

Gazette Times

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Wishing Morrow County a Jurassic Christmas

Jurassic or modern, the North Lex Scraposaurs are certainly festive as they greet drivers along Highway 207. The machine-scrap creatures, products of the Rauch family, are decked out in garlands and bows, with stockings in hand to receive gifts from Santa. And, as promised, a third species has joined the other two...this one with wings in case St. Nicholas needs help pulling that sleigh. *-Photo by Megan Futter*

Heppner residents experience mall shooting

Mall scenes were 'surreal,' witness says

Lynda and Alvin Liu, still suffering from jet lag but happy to be alive after their experience at Clackamas Town Center last week. *-Photo by Megan Futter*

By Andrea Di Salvo

For many of us this Christmas season, acts of violence are blessedly far away...scenes from the news, posts on Facebook or stories told to us of war on other continents. We empathize with victims, feel sorrow for families, yet largely remain untouched by those far-off events.

For four Heppner residents, though, violence hit all too close to home during a trip to the mall.

On Monday, Dec. 10, Alvin and Lynda Liu and Darren and Catherine Olsen flew into Portland International Airport, returning from a mission trip to the Philippines. They spent that night in an area hotel. The next day, they decided to stay awake and battle jet lag with a trip to one of Portland's most popular malls, Clackamas Town Center. Little did they know that, around 3:30 that afternoon, 22-year-old Jacob Roberts would walk into the mall and open fire with an AR-15 rifle.

The couples had split up; the Lius headed to Coldwater Creek, a store just outside the main mall. The Olsens themselves separated after agreeing to a meeting place. Alvin and Lynda Liu said they thought Darren also went outside the mall, perhaps to REI.

In fact, neither of the Lius realized anything had happened until they went back into the mall to meet their friends. Neither they nor anyone else in Coldwater Creek, on the opposite side of the mall from the food court where the shooter entered, had heard the approximately 60 gunshots during Roberts' shooting spree.

They said that when they walked inside the mall, they saw some store gates going down. Their first thought, according to Alvin, was "Where are all the people?" A shoe store employee asked if they wanted to get inside the locked-down store. Still unaware of what had happened, the Lius kept walking toward the place they were to rendezvous with the Olsens.

Alvin said they saw broken glass, spilled pop and dropped packages, but didn't fully understand the significance of what they were seeing; they thought it might be vandalism, but wondered where the cleaning crews were.

"You just don't think about something like that (a shooting)," said Lynda.

With escalators that had stopped running, the couple headed up to the second floor toward the food court. There, the disaster started to set in. The food court was empty. They said they saw a young woman in hysterics, with a security guard trying to comfort her. The guard told them to get out of the mall. The Lius also saw the body of one of the victims. They still didn't realize he had been shot, but saw three people working over the still form trying to administer CPR.

"It was good to see... there were still people there who were willing (to help)," said Lynda, adding that, at that point, the gunman was still at large.

"When I saw that man dead, it was so surreal," Alvin said. "I thought, 'Is this a movie?'"

To add to the surreal Hollywood feel, the couple came face-to-face with the incoming SWAT team.

"First they pointed their guns at us," Alvin said. "They said, 'What are you still doing here? Run!'"

The Lius said they "walked quickly" out of the mall. After that, the police wouldn't let them near the building again. They still hadn't seen the Olsens, and Alvin said the airways were jammed with calls, made it impossible to reach anyone on a cell phone. They walked around the mall's exterior to Chipotle, where they met Catherine and Darren Olsen, already safely outside.

Catherine Olsen's experience, inside Clackamas Town Center, had been far different. For her, "Christmas carols playing over Macy's speakers were suddenly drowned out by the awful noise of close gunfire."

When the sound of gunfire erupted, Catherine said she looked for a place to hide.

"I asked the clerks who were motioning me away from the 'employee only' locked room if I could come in, too," she said. "There was no time to figure out what was happening, where to hide, how to react—heroically or selfishly—or, worst of all, to find my loved ones."

She said that sobbing and frightened customers continually knocked on the door, and the group in the closet continued to let them in.

"There, they too discovered that the door was made of thin composite wood—hardly bulletproof!" said Catherine.

She said the people around her discussed whether or not they should be quiet so the gunman wouldn't hear them; her only thought was that she wished they would, indeed, be quiet so as not to draw the shooter's attention. There was no way to call for help or reach family; cell phones didn't have service inside their wooden hiding place.

Just before the shooting, she said, she walked past the store the gunman entered moments later. She thought about going in and shopping for one last Christmas present.

"Instead, I continued to the place I'd left an outfit to try on. I didn't know why, since I didn't even really like the outfit and definitely wasn't clothes shopping," Catherine said.

Instead of "dawdling" as she said was her habit, she grabbed the outfit and headed for the dressing room.

"That was when the gunman came through the same store, same floor, feet away," she finished.

Catherine eventually met up with husband, Dar-

-See MALL SHOOTING/ PAGE SIX

Town and Country nominations due

Heppner area residents have until the end of the week to nominate individuals and businesses for the annual Town and Country Community Awards. Deadline for nominations is Friday, Dec. 21; forms need to be turned in to the Heppner chamber or Kuhn Law Offices.

The event will be held at the Morrow County Fairgrounds and will begin at 6 p.m. with a no-host social hour.

Cornerstone Gallery will be catering the meal and will be serving the "Ultimate Barbecue Feast," consisting of barbecued brisket, barbecued baby back ribs, barbecued beans with bacon, Al's favorite corn bread muffins, oven-roasted garlic and herb potatoes, vanilla ice cream with mint chocolate sauce and country strawberry lemonade.

Tickets will be $20 per person and will be available for purchase.

Don't be a Scrooge!

Celebrate Christmas in Heppner this Thursday

Scrooge (pictured here played by Jeff Bailey) will be alive and well during this year's Celebrate Christmas event in Heppner...but he won't be spoiling anyone's good time. The evening at the Morrow county Fairgrounds promises lots of food, fun and festivities this Thursday, Dec. 20, beginning with dinner and Santa photos at 6 p.m. and moving on to reward card, raffles and other prize drawings at 7:30 p.m. *–File photo*

G-T closed for Christmas, New Year's

The Gazette-Times will be closed Monday, Dec. 24 and Tuesday, Dec. 25, for the Christmas holiday. The news and ad deadline for the Dec. 26 edition will be Friday, Dec. 21 at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Wednesday, Dec. 26.

The Gazette-Times will also be closed Tuesday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day. The news and ad deadline for the Jan. 2 edition will be Friday, Dec. 28 at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Wednesday, Jan 2.

We wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas season.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:

FRIDAY AT 5:00 P.M.

WE HAVE GREAT LAST MINUTE GIFTS
Wrangler Mens 13 MWZ Jeans $21.95
Wrangler
Montana Silver & Cowboy Kickers 20% OFF
All other Wrangler clothing 10% off thru Dec. 24th
ALL MCGG LOCATIONS CLOSED DECEMBER 24 & 25
FEED STORE WILL BE OPEN UNTIL NOON DECEMBER 24
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)