

Gazette Times

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Tarnasky retires from a lifetime of healthcare

By Andrea Di Salvo

A Heppner woman with life-long ties to Heppner medical care is stepping away from her work at Pioneer Memorial and into retirement.

Sheridan Tarnasky, 68, retired officially from Pioneer Memorial Clinic July 29 of last year, though she has still been a presence in the Heppner hospital and clinic, filling in where needed.



Sheridan Tarnasky

Tarnasky has a longer relationship with Pioneer Memorial Hospital than many can boast. She was born in Pendleton because, ironically, Heppner didn't have a hospital at that time. She returned to the community when she was 10 days old and has spent most of her life since then living in Heppner's city limits. She did spend a lot of time at the family ranch growing up, but says she was always a "townie."

"My cousins made fun of me because I was a town kid," she says.

She attended school in Heppner from kindergarten through her graduation in

1966. As important as her school ties, however, were her ties to the local hospital.

She, of course, had hospital experiences that anyone might have. They included a week in the hospital for cellulitis at age five—"My crib was in the hall as they had no room in the inn," she quipped—and a night in the hospital due to a broken arm at the age of six. She says she was kept overnight because they gave her ether for her arm.

"Back in those days they kept you in the hospital until you finished throwing up from the ether."

Her ties ran even deeper than those of a typical patient, however. Her mother, Ilene Laughlin, worked in the hospital's front office for several years and then spent several more years as hospital administrator.

"Mom worked in the office when I was a toddler and then went back to work when I was in the sixth grade," recalls Tarnasky. "That is when I started spending time at the hospital.

"I was up there a lot. I got my ears pierced sitting on my mom's desk," she adds.

She says she sat with her first patient at the age of 14.

"She was an OB with some postpartum complications, and they were short-staffed," recalls Tarnasky.

Despite early exposure to hospital life, she says she didn't grow up wanting to be a nurse. Instead, admiration of a high school teacher gave her the goal of being a school counselor and drama coach. After she graduated from Heppner High, she attended a year at Marylhurst University, Portland, before being accepted into the University of Oregon's theatrical arts program "with every intention of going."

"Then I woke up one

morning in June and decided I wanted to be a nurse," she says. She says that, in a way, it was logical because both counseling and nursing involved helping people.

"Dr. Carpenter told me once that it made sense because a really good nurse has to be a really good actress," she adds. "Not that I'm a really good actress, but it was nice of him to say."

She applied to four different nursing schools and says it must have been "divine intervention" that got her accepted to three of them in a time when options for women were limited and competition for nursing schools was high. She ended up attending Emanuel Hospital School of Nursing, graduating in 1970. She began work as a graduate nurse at Pioneer Memorial that summer.

Then, in September of 1970, she married Edward Tarnasky and the couple moved to Portland so he could finish his education. She went back to Emanuel as a nurse, where she worked in surgery until June of 1972. While there, she assisted with the first total hip replacement.

"Dr. Zimmerman did it, and I was a scrub nurse," she says.

That medical milestone was only one of many that she recalls from her lifetime, she says.

"I've seen some interesting things occur," she says, giving administration of IVs as an example—nurses commonly administer IVs now, but it used to be done only by doctors. "An MRI wasn't heard of. Ultrasounds were poor, poor quality. HIV wasn't even heard of," she says.

"One of my favorite things about medicine today is hospice," she adds. "The care of the terminally ill today, it's amazing."

In 1972, with his graduation nearing, Edward Tarnasky was searching the newspaper for jobs; he

Smith takes home mirror ball trophy from area dance contest

State Rep. Greg Smith of Heppner took home the mirror ball trophy at the end of the fifth annual Dancing with the Hermiston Stars performance Saturday night.

Six local celebrities teamed up with professional dancers from the Utah Ballroom Dance Troupe to raise money for local charities in the event put on by the Desert Arts Council. Along with Smith, Hermiston-area celebrities included LuAnn Davison, Spike Piersol, Eva Swain, Bill Elferring and Clara Beas-Fitzgerald.

The stars practiced for a week with the professionals and then performed



Rep. Greg Smith and professional dance partner Trina Morago claimed the mirror ball trophy at Saturday's Dancing with the Hermiston Stars performance. -Contributed photo

their dances to try and earn

audience votes and money for charity. Every dollar donated to the charity counted as a vote for the star. The winner was decided based on a combination of votes from the audience, donation amounts and scores from the judges.

Smith and professional partner Trina Morago danced the paso doble to the Kongos' "Come with Me Now."

Smith, who described himself as having two left feet, said winning was a shock. Known for his support of area wrestling programs, he told the crowd of nearly 500 that there was no doubt which was more difficult.

"There's no comparison. Wrestling is so much easier than dancing," he said on stage. "This has been hard."

Despite the weather, the Hermiston High School's fine arts auditorium was nearly at capacity with a crowd of almost 500 spectators. The event raised around \$11,000 for local charities. Smith was dancing to support the Hermiston Warming Station.

McDowell retires from Wheatland

Janet McDowell retired from Wheatland Insurance Center, Inc. on Dec. 31.

McDowell started her career in insurance with Bob and Marianne Kahl in the late 1990s, and continued when Wheatland purchased that agency in 2001. Her position was account manager for personal insurance (auto and home).

Nancy Snider of Wheatland says McDowell will be missed not only by the staff at Wheatland but also by the many clients she helped during her career.

McDowell herself wasn't available for an interview, as friends tell us her retirement is in full swing, with she and husband Ron on their way to Texas to spend some time with their son and his family.

Ione mayor sworn in

New Ione mayor Rod Taylor was sworn into office at the Ione City Council meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 10.



Rod Taylor

The council currently has three open positions, and Ione residents are asked to consider serving their city in that capacity. Anyone interested can submit a letter of interest or call city hall at 541-422-7414.

Lindsay, Orem selected for D.C. trip

Alex Lindsay of Lexington and Morgan Orem of Heppner will act as student representatives for the Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative NRECA Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. this summer, June 9-15.

While at the nation's capital, the students will have a chance to speak with Oregon's state representatives, learn about electric cooperatives, listen to motivational speakers and tour national landmarks includ-

ing the Smithsonian and the Vietnam War Memorial.

Alex is active in basketball, track, FFA, FBLA, art, culture club and 4-H. Alex is also a part of the school's yearbook class. Alex has been active in his community by helping in the snack shack during sporting events and helping with "Adopt-a-Family" during the holidays. Alex also enjoys helping out on the family cattle ranch by branding cows. Alex is

the son of Kim and Barney Lindsay.

Morgan is Junior Class President and a member of National Honor Society. Morgan also enjoys volleyball, basketball and 4-H, as well as volunteering in food drives, 4-H camp counseling and many other activities. In her spare time, Morgan enjoys photography, traveling and taking care of animals. Morgan is the daughter of Eric and Brandi Orem.

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