



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Rietmanns named Fourth of July grand marshals



Brian and Sharon Rietmann are this year's grand marshals for the Ione Fourth of July parade. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

By Andrea Di Salvo

Brian and Sharon Rietmann of Ione have been named the 2023 grand marshals of the Ione Fourth of July parade.

Brian and Sharon grew up in Ione, literally next door to each other. Brian was the son of Bill and Marilyn Rietmann, and Sharon was the daughter of Howard and June Crowell.

"I married the girl next door," says Brian Rietmann.

They attended school in Ione and graduated from Ione High School, Brian in 1978 and Sharon in 1983. After high school, Brian attended Blue Mountain Community College for a

couple of years, graduating with an Associate of Science degree in police science. Two weeks after Sharon graduated from high school, they were married.

By that time, Brian was a couple of years into his six-year career with the U.S. Army. He was stationed at Fort Henry Liggett in Jolon, CA. The newlyweds lived there until October of 1983, when Brian was deployed to Heidelberg, Germany. It was there that the Rietmanns' first son, Andrew, was born in 1984.

Brian served a four-year tour in Germany, returning home in May of 1988. Sharon returned slightly ahead

of him, coming home early for the birth of their second child, Alyssa. After a short stay at Fort Lewis near Tacoma, WA, Brian received his discharge from the Army, and they moved home to Ione.

Brian did odd jobs for a while, before going to truck driving school. He worked at Kinzua Mill until it closed, was a long-haul trucker for a while, and even worked as a 9-1-1 dispatcher.

In 2003 he went to work at the Umatilla Army Depot, working in security for two years before switching to air monitoring.

When the Depot closed in 2011, he was transferred to Kentucky for a while. He was there for three years before being let go because of disability. He then drove truck again until 2017, when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Now, Brian is the official babysitter for the couple's grandchildren—those within reach, anyway. They now have 10 grandchildren across the country, some as far away as Iowa, where their son-in-law is stationed with the U.S. Air Force.

Meanwhile, Sharon

spent several years as a stay-at-home mom to their five children—Andrew and Alyssa were later joined by Alan, Alex and Anthony. She worked for a time as city recorder for the City of Ione, as well as at Bristow's Market as a clerk.

She went to work for the Bank of Eastern Oregon 26 years ago, working her way from teller to branch manager in Ione. Brian says she was following in her mother's footsteps, since June Crowell had also managed the Ione branch in her time. When Beverly Crum retired in 2021, Sharon also took on the management of the Heppner BEO branch.

Their lives weren't all work, though. They've always been involved in the Ione community in a lot of different ways.

"I did a lot of volunteering when the kids were in school, and I've helped out when I can since then," Sharon says, adding that Brian also did a lot of volunteer work related to their kids. "Just those typical parent things."

The couple also took over the Ione Easter egg hunt for a while.

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## Gibbs retires from teaching after 25 years



Sue Gibbs

By Andrea Di Salvo

Students at Heppner Elementary School said goodbye to their teacher for the summer this month, but some of them had to say a more permanent kind of farewell to one teacher. Fourth-grade teacher Sue Gibbs is retiring from teaching after 25 years with Morrow County School District.

Gibbs's life may not have seemed set up to become a teacher in Heppner. She was born in Yosemite National Park, where her father was a park ranger. They moved from place to place during her growing up years, though she says they spent a lot of time in Colorado, where her grandfather had a ranch near Grand Junction.

Even in high school, her love for the land took her to far-flung places. She spent a year in Australia through an FFA exchange program, working with merino sheep, cattle, sorghum and sunflowers on a ranch of more than a million acres.

The ranch was so large,

she says, that when they worked cattle, they used helicopters. Gibbs, however, was part of the ground crew working the cows on horseback.

"A lot of ground, a lot of danger," she recalls.

The family eventually ended up in Washington State, in a small town at the foot of Mt. Rainier. That was where they were living when Gibbs graduated from Eatonville High School in 1985.

From there, she attended Washington State University, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in animal science and agriculture in 1989. She then went back to school, getting a second Bachelor of Science in rangeland management from Oregon State University in 1991 with the goal of working for the federal government.

Plans change sometimes though. While at OSU, she met Helix graduate Jay Gibbs. She took a job on a ranch in southern Oregon after graduation, but her path veered toward Pendleton when Jay Gibbs proposed.

She moved to Pendleton to be closer to her fiancé. She worked for a while at Pendleton Grain Growers, selling livestock equipment. She then got what might have been her dream job, working with a wheat geneticist at an agricultural research station in Pendleton. She had to leave that job behind when the couple married and moved to Condon.

"That was my hardest job to leave. I really enjoyed research," says Gibbs.

"In my teaching, I was most known for my science, for my earth science and trips to the fossil beds," she adds, saying that she feels her passion for science stemmed from that research job.

After the couple moved to Condon, Gibbs took a job as a buckaroo—another job she had to leave behind when she became pregnant with their first child, Garrett. She looked for a part-time job and found one as a preschool teacher. She stayed with that job for around two years.

"After about the first year I thought, 'Wow, I really like this,'" she says.

She also realized that with one child and more children possible in her future, it would be good to have a job that she could structure around their schedules.

"It seemed to me that getting my teaching certificate might be a good thing," she adds.

She took most of the Eastern Oregon University classes off campus but had to finish her degree with two terms on campus. She left Garrett with his father in Condon and took baby daughter Macy with her to La Grande for the winter.

It was a sacrifice for the family, but one that paid off when Morrow County School District hired her as the fifth- and sixth-grade science teacher at Heppner Elementary. It was the beginning of a 25-year career that, she says, has "never been boring."

"I stuck with it and developed my programs and I came out all right," she says.

She says the school bounced her around from grade to grade a few times, but after six or seven years, she moved to fourth grade, where she remained until her retirement this year.

"That grade just seemed to suit me," she says, adding that the students weren't small enough to be too needy, and had their own personalities, but hadn't yet developed the attitude and "sass" of later grades.

"Fourth grade was the

time when you took the basics and started adding detail," she adds. "It's a good grade."

And Gibbs loved going beyond the basics.

"A lot of the science I did, I developed pretty much on my own," she says. Not that the school didn't have science curriculum, says Gibbs, but she felt the need to go beyond what the curriculum offered. "I've always believed if a teacher's passionate about it, that shows through to the kids."

"I loved designing things," she adds. "I didn't like the approach of, 'Here's a book, read this.' I liked to put a twist on it."

Gibbs says she also liked to teach through stories, feeling that stories were a good way to connect children back to the curriculum. She recalls a certain dog, Nugget, that sparked a lot of stories.

"He's famous here in Heppner," she laughs.

Along the way, she received honors such as the Crystal Apple Award and the Town and County Citizen-Educator of the Year Award. She says those were really special, but her fondest memories remain watching the kids enjoy

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## G-T closed July 4

News and ad deadline June 30

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed Tuesday, July 4, for the Independence Day holiday.

Due to the closure, the deadline for all news and advertisements for the July 5 edition will be Friday, June 30, at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Wednesday, July 5. We wish everyone a safe and happy Fourth of July.

## County awarded state funding for new courthouse

Facility to be located in Heppner

Morrow County was recently awarded \$12,745,000 toward construction of a new courthouse in Heppner, Representative Greg Smith's (R-Heppner) office has announced.

The money is the state's share of the cost to construct the new facility, which will house the Morrow County Circuit Court and other offices.

The circuit court currently operates out of the historic courthouse building in Heppner. However, because of security, privacy and other deficiencies, the building has been deemed inadequate for court proceedings. The state authorized the money in the just-concluded legislative session in order to provide

its share of funding for a new, up-to-date facility. The circuit court system is run by the State of Oregon.

"We are very pleased this funding has been approved and we look forward to bringing forward to the public soon our plans for both the new building and usage of the current historical Heppner courthouse," said Morrow County Commission Chair David Sykes.

He said the county has been working for some time on details of how and where to locate the new facility in Heppner.

"This is great news for Morrow County," said Smith on announcing the approval of the grant. "Working together, we can accomplish great things."

## Boardman appoints new public works director



Rolf Prag

The City of Boardman has announced the appointment of Rolf Prag to lead the city's public works department. The department has six full-time employees and serves the city's essen-

tial needs in the areas of roads, bridges, and water and sewer utilities for its residents, as well as for those who work and do business within the city.

Prag will be replacing former public works director Kevin Kennedy, who retired at the end of May after 26 years with the city's public works department.

Prag has been working at the city in the position of special projects coordinator since March of 2022. In that position, he worked very closely with the public

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## Ione council adopts budget, hears sewer update

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Ione City Council adopted the budget for the upcoming year at its regular meeting June 20 in Ione. The council also heard concerns about the library rental rate and listened to updates regarding the ongoing sewer project and the new security cameras being installed in the city.

After a short budget committee meeting and uneventful public hearing, the city council unanimously adopted the city's budget in the amount of \$6,474,826 for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The meeting took a slightly contentious turn when representatives from the Ione Library District addressed the council regarding the rent increase on the building space the library leases from the city. The current lease expires

June 30, and the council voted unanimously at its May 9 meeting to increase the monthly rent from \$175 to \$325 for the 2023-2025 biennium.

Head librarian Becky Doherty and board member Anne Morter said they were concerned not only because the rent had gone up, but because it had gone up by so much without warning. They said they had already created their budget for the coming year, and the increase was a severe impact to that budget.

"I could take you back to a time in history when the city gave us money to be there," said Doherty.

Ione City Administrator Elizabeth Peterson responded that the previous rent hadn't been covering the operational costs for

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