

# Lack of transportation hinders some residents

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

Every time Dale Orem leaves his house, it costs him.

Orem is one of many Hermiston residents who deals with the daily challenges of not owning a car in a city with no public transportation system. If he walks, he might use an hour of his day to make the round trip. If he uses a taxi, the fare chips away at his limited fixed income.

"This town is not big, but it's huge when you think of it in terms of walking," he said.

Orem has a driver's license, but looking at his budget he said if he got together the money to buy a car he wouldn't be able to keep up on paying for insurance, gas, maintenance, DMV fees, tires and other costs.

Instead, he buys \$32 worth of tickets — 16 one-way trips — a month from the city's senior and disabled taxi program.

"Thankfully I've got friends who will take me if I need to go to the Tri-Cities or Walla Walla, but when I moved here I didn't know a soul," he said.

His 12-year-old son walks back and forth to Sandstone Middle School, only blocks away, but Orem is worried about what will happen when his son is old enough to attend Hermiston High School and has to walk a little over a mile to school every day, rain or shine.

Orem, who spent 17 years living in California cities with public transportation, said having a small fixed-route bus system in Hermiston would be a huge benefit for people without other transportation.

"I would go out and just do things," he said.

Orem said the employees of Hermiston Transit Services and Umatilla Cab Company are all "beautiful people" he has enjoyed getting to know. But he wishes he could take a spontaneous trip to a restaurant or store without having to call and



Dale Orem, of Hermiston, climbs inside a Umatilla Cab Company taxi for a ride to Loneys Martial Arts Center on Main Street. Taxi driver Mickey Trujillo stands by to close the door.

wait as long as 30 minutes for a cab.

"It's doable to live with just the taxi system in town, but it's just not cutting the mustard," he said. "It's an existence but it's not a happiness."

Sundi Marquez sees a lot of car-less residents, including Orem, through the Umatilla Cab Company and Prestige Car Service. She said probably 80 to 85 percent of her companies' clients don't have another way to get around.

"You'd be surprised," she said. "There are a lot. We're their primary mode of transportation."

She said cab drivers in town became "part of peoples' daily activities," including rides to work, to medical appointments and to the grocery store.

"Wal-Mart is our mainstay, always," she said.

Umatilla Cab Company charges customers by the mile, while Prestige Car Service charges by the hour. Marquez said the car service has become popular with elderly customers who would like a driver to come into the store and help them with their groceries.

Not everyone who takes a taxi is without other modes of transportation. Marquez said clients' car might be in the shop, or they don't want to drive in the snow or need a ride home from a medical

procedure.

Taxis aren't the only way to get around without a car, either. For residents who want to go from one city to the next, Kayak Public Transit is a free bus system run by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The bus is open to all area residents and runs through cities around Umatilla County, as well as connecting the Tri-Cities, Walla Walla and La Grande. It stops daily in Hermiston at McKenzie Park and Wal-Mart.

CTUIR Planning Director J.D. Tovey said "kayak" is a tribal word that means "to remove hindrances."

"That's kind of what our mission is, is to remove obstacles for people to go to work, to play, whatever they need to do in their lives," he said.

Tovey said a family with two vehicles can save an estimated \$9,000 a year by getting rid of one. Kayak Public Transit saves families that money by allowing them to find another way to get to work, he said. Each bus seats about 30 people, and Tovey said every morning there is a "nearly full" busload of people commuting to work from Pendleton to Hermiston. Some go even farther, meeting up with a carpool buddy in Hermiston to travel the rest of the way

mark like the peace pole helps "make a town's history."

"I think it's pretty cool that it's got the different languages on it because it's inclusive," she said. "When people see it they will think, 'This is an inclusive community.'"

The dedication ceremony included a speech by Kane, prayers for America's veterans and an English translation of a poem about peace by Chinese poet Lao Tzu.

# Elderly man with Alzheimer's missing in Irrigon

By **GEORGE PAVEN**  
Staff Writer

After a second full day of searching, the trail appears to have gone cold for a missing Irrigon man with Alzheimer's disease who walked away from home at about 2 a.m. Monday.

John Getman, 78, was last seen near the Irrigon Fish Hatchery between 8 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. Monday, three miles northwest of town. He was spotted earlier that morning walking west on Washington Avenue.

A helicopter flew in from Salem on Tuesday to scout the surrounding area, including the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge. Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack said the search so far has come up empty.

"We still have no idea where he is," Matlack said. "At this point, we don't have a whole lot of options."

Authorities have issued all-points bulletins in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, and alerted truck stops from Biggs Junction to Ontario in case Getman was picked up somewhere along the road. Police also checked with local hospitals from The Dalles and Pendleton to Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities.

Matlack said they've received no other tips or sightings since Monday.

"We're hoping we will get calls from somebody who's seen him. It's not too late for that," he said. "But the reality is that time isn't our friend anymore. We need to catch a break."

Getman came to Irrigon from New York in February to live with his sister and is unfamiliar with the area. Matlack said Getman gets

confused when he can't find his way.

This isn't the first time Getman has gone missing. On Feb. 10, a news station in Utica, New York reported Getman went missing in his pickup truck from the nearby city of Little Falls. He was found safe the same day by New York State Police in Marcy, New York, 33 miles away.

Matlack said he will talk again with the family on Wednesday. Temperatures in Irrigon Tuesday night were expected to fall to 42 degrees, with winds gusting as high as 44 mph.

"We're just hopeful we'll get a lead today from someone who might have seen him," he said.

Getman is described as 6 feet tall, 190 pounds with very short gray hair, brown eyes and no facial hair. He was last seen wearing a heavy brown Carhartt jacket, brown plaid shirt, blue jeans and sneakers. Apart from Alzheimer's, he has no other serious medical problems.

In addition to the aerial search, Matlack said volunteers on horseback rode east from Irrigon to the Umatilla County line, but found no sign of Getman. Deputies used a patrol boat to check the banks of the Columbia River from Irrigon to Boardman, but found nothing.

There was a report Monday afternoon of an elderly man walking on old highway 30 near Frederickson Farming, though Matlack said they could not confirm it was Getman.

Anyone with information on Getman is asked to call the Morrow County Sheriff's Office at 541-676-5317.



Getman

## PEACE:

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thought and discussion with the girls we decided we wanted to do something for veterans and those currently serving our country."

The four sides of the pole say "May peace prevail on earth" in English, Spanish, Umatilla and braille. A plaque notes that the pole is meant to honor veterans and current service members.

"This connects Hermiston with hundreds of thousands of communities across the world in the spirit of peace," Kane said.

Girl Scout Andrea Gispert, 18, said she wasn't in the troop during its original dedication of the peace pole in 2007, but she was happy to be able to help plan the ceremony to relocate the pole to a safer place.

Her sister Sofia Gispert, also 18, said having a land-

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### Advance Directives

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 3:30 PM

What is an Advance Directive? When a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease there are many questions. One of the most confusing aspects can be the legal documents that need to be signed while your loved one can still make decisions.

For more information or to RSVP, call us at (541) 276-1987 or visit us today!

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