



HH FILE PHOTO

Rachel Bieren, wife of Staff Sgt. Austin Bieren, 25, who died in March in Syria receives her husband's ashes April 14 after they were flown home and transported by hearse to Umatilla.



HH FILE PHOTO

Hermiston head coach David Faeteete hugs AJ Fernandez after the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against Churchill in the 5A state championship game on Nov. 25 in Hillsboro.



HH FILE PHOTO

Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, McNary Dam operations manager Dave Coleman and Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., tour the McNary Dam on August 14 in Umatilla.

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remembered as fun-loving, a good leader and dedicated to family during a memorial service in Umatilla later that week, and a moment of silence was observed in his honor during the Oregon Legislature and several local government meetings.

SENIOR CENTER RISING: Ground was broken on the Harkenrider Center on April 26, starting a transition that will move Hermiston's senior center from the former Umatilla County fairgrounds to downtown.

The building on the fairgrounds was torn down in September, as part of the Hermiston School District's acquisition of the property, and the senior meal program will operate out of Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church until the Harkenrider Center is complete.

The new center is expected to open March 2018, and so far the city says it is on time and on budget. It will be 7,000 square feet with a 4,000 square foot unfinished basement, compared to 5,000 square feet of space in the old building. Much of the building was paid for by a \$2 million federal grant and money from the city of Hermiston's general fund.

SCHOOL BOND FAILS: A school board campaign to pass a \$104 million capital improvement bond failed on May 16, with 59 percent of voters saying 'no.' The bond proposed construction of a new elementary school, new buildings for Rocky Heights and Highland Hills elementary schools, and significant upgrades and expansions to the high school.

Board members said they would reassess, and even-

tually come back with a new proposal. The district last passed a bond in 2008, which rebuilt Sunset and West Park elementaries, and Armand Larive Middle School.

WESTLAND WATER PROJECT DRAINED: The Westland Irrigation District announced it would abandon years of work to secure additional water from the Columbia River in order to defend a lawsuit filed by patrons alleging "massive misappropriation" of senior water rights.

The Northeast Oregon Water Association's "Central Project," as it was called, would have cost about \$14.4 million, financed by patrons who agreed to buy the water, and added production power to farms in the district.

NOWA is now looking for other groups to pick up the cost of the project. The lawsuit, filed by a group of senior water rights holders, was dismissed from federal court earlier in 2017 but continues in circuit court. The plaintiffs are seeking \$2.9 million in damages for what they claim is a misappropriation scheme favoring L&L Farms, Eagle Ranch and Amstad Farms — three operations with junior rights and more than 5,000 acres of farmland.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND HOMICIDE: A Hermiston man died as the result of a gunshot wound at a Hermiston apartment complex on May 27, but the suspect in the case was not arrested until two weeks later.

Tyree Houfmuse, of Hermiston, was initially listed as a "person of interest" in the death of James Cragun, but when officers arrested him on June 12, Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston identified Houfmuse as the suspect

in Cragun's death. Houfmuse had a settlement conference in December, but no settlement was reached. He is still waiting to go to trial. Houfmuse had previously been arrested for shootings in both Kennewick and Hermiston.

STATE DOLLARS FOR HERMISTON ROADS: The Oregon legislature passed a \$5.3 billion transportation bill on July 6, setting the state up for billions of dollars in upgrades to infrastructure from highways to railroads.

Hermiston walked away with a piece of the pie thanks to negotiations by Rep. Greg Smith. While each city and county will see a general increase in gas tax money for streets, some projects were also specifically earmarked to receive extra funds.

Projects that will receive grants include paving Ott Road and widening Airport Road around the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, a road project at the Port of Umatilla, a rail project at the Port of Morrow and an overhaul of North First Place in Hermiston, including widening the road and re-designing its intersections with Orchard Avenue and Highland Avenue.

MOONEY STEPS IN FOR MAIOCCO: Hermiston School District Superintendent and Brigadier General Fred Maiocco was called to active duty, leaving to serve 15 to 18 months with the U.S. Army Reserves. Maiocco was deployed to Kaiserslautern, Germany, and is coordinating logistical support to U.S. forces in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In his absence, the school board selected the district's assistant superintendent and HR director, Tricia Mooney, to serve as the interim superintendent until

Maiocco returns.

DEATH OF AN ICON: Frank Harkenrider, known as Hermiston's number one fan, died July 24 before seeing the completion of the Harkenrider Center named after him.

Harkenrider was a Hermiston city councilor or mayor for five decades in Hermiston before retiring from the council in 2014, and was known for his passionate dedication to Hermiston football. He helped hire Hermiston's first city manager, and started the tradition of bringing Hermiston watermelons to give away in Portland each summer.

Family wore pins, his Hermiston Bulldogs jacket with his name on it and other items in his memory as they cheered the Bulldogs on to a state championship in November.

NEW DIGS FOR COUNTY FAIR: The Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo had their much-anticipated first year at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in August.

Finishing touches on the multi-million dollar project literally came down to the last minute, but dedicated volunteers and paid contractors working nearly around the clock managed to pull it off.

The new location gave the previously-cramped fair room to grow, and featured perks like an air-conditioned building for booths and 4H displays, while the new rodeo arena offered expanded seating and extra box seats.

After the fair and rodeo wrapped up Hermiston Energy Services superintendent Nate Rivera stepped up to manage the center on an interim basis and helped the EOTEC board choose venue management company VenuWorks to run the

entire project starting next year.

SOMETHING SMELLS: A Stanfield potato dehydration plant sent a stench into the air, sending residents rushing inside all summer. The 3D Idapro facility had been having issues since a fire burned its air purification system. Complaints to the city and DEQ were so persistent, representatives from the factory's Midwest office came to Stanfield, implementing a 3-step plan to mitigate the smell.

A few months later in Hermiston, citizens off Highway 207 in Hermiston raised a stink about a vegetable waste recycling facility. Owner Luke Dynes was fined \$435 for violating the city's nuisance code, and ordered to abate the smell.

GRADUATION OUT OF TOWN: After months of discussion and a delayed vote, Hermiston School Board members decided on Oct. 2 that Hermiston High School's Class of 2018 will graduate at the Toyota Center in Kennewick. The decision was born of a concern that the burgeoning student population had outgrown the high school gym where Hermiston had long held graduation. The decision was contentious, with many worried about moving a quintessentially local event across the river. The board said they would revisit local graduation options next school year.

VISIT FROM ENERGY SECRETARY: Rick Perry, the U.S. Secretary of Energy, visited McNary Dam on Aug. 14 as part of his duties as an appointee to President Donald Trump's cabinet. It was Perry's first trip to the hydroelectric dam, which he toured with Rep. Greg Walden (R-Oregon) and Rep. Dan Newhouse

(R-Washington).

After the tour, Perry asserted he was in favor of hydroelectricity and renewable energy, and continued his tour at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation and Pacific Northwest National Laboratories in Richland.

HERMISTON FOODS CLOSES: The ninth-largest employer in Hermiston closed its doors on Nov. 13, laying off nearly 200 employees. Operations for Hermiston Foods, a vegetable-processing plant, were consolidated with the operations of a plant in Quincy Washington. NORPAC, Hermiston Foods' parent company, opened the facility in Hermiston in April 1990.

The facility processed peas, sugar snap peas, edamame, lima beans, carrots and asparagus. Future use for the facility has not yet been announced.

BULLDOG CHAMPIONS: In their last season playing in the Oregon School Activities Association, the Hermiston Bulldogs left with a little parting gift: a football state title. The Bulldogs beat the undefeated Churchill Lancers 38-35 in a thriller on Nov. 25 at Hillsboro Stadium.

It was the second title in program history, the first coming in 2014, and it was the first for head coach David Faeteete.

Hermiston will join the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association in the fall of 2018 for all sports and play in a league with Tri-Cities and Walla Walla teams. The move, which had to be approved by both states' athletic associations and member schools, was deemed necessary because of Hermiston's enrollment growth and travel distance to like-sized schools in central Oregon and the Portland area.