

COMMENTARY

Hermiston's rough draft of history

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Combing through old editions of the Hermiston Herald to put together our regular Hermiston History feature this month gave me a few chuckles.

Sometimes it was the story itself that made me laugh, such as the account of three city councilors who had their water shut off one morning after insisting that the city get tougher on delinquent bill-payers. Other times it was a reporter's particularly dry sense of humor that caught my eye, or the story from 25 years ago that breathlessly reported on a fancy new form of payment called the "debit card."

The dusty old volumes comprising the Herald's "rough draft of history" take the reader on a journey more than a century long, chronicling the day to day concerns of a society coping with world wars, changing social norms and a radical transformation of technology. But through all the changes, the thing that stuck out to me the most was how many things have stayed the same.

Seventy-five years ago mothers and fathers and grandparents were spending their Friday nights in bleachers cheering on their favorite high school athlete, and the Hermiston Herald was there too. I showed our sports reporter Alexis Mansanarez a lede from a 1943 high school basketball story that could have been written word for word by her today, if you overlooked the fact that Boardman athletes no longer go by the Yellowjackets.

It's nice to know that experiences and fandoms that have bonded our communities for decades continue today, although I'm sure Hermiston football fans are happy the scores of the Hermiston-Pendleton rivalry games have looked a little different in more recent years (when searching for something in our archives, I once found a story that described how Hermiston's first-string, second-string and third-string quarterback were all out with injuries mid-way through the season).

While the sports section has stayed

much the same, other sections of the paper have shifted over the years. The society pages of 100 and 75 years ago, chronicling Mrs. John Smith's dinner party and a visit from the Johnsons' daughter, no longer exist.

But who hasn't logged into Facebook to see photos from the Smiths' Christmas party and the Johnsons' daughter's visit home from college?

As one of the reporters who would have to call Mrs. Smith to ask about her party, I am more than happy to crowd-source today's "society pages" to social media.

Many of the phone calls I do make are the same calls that reporters old enough to be my parents were making. Schools were too crowded, downtown needed revitalization and the housing shortage was a major concern 25 years ago too.

On the other hand, Hermiston has made good headway on some of its issues. Crime — especially of the gang-inspired variety — is down significantly from the 1990s. Murder and assault were a much more frequent star of the Hermiston Herald's front pages in decades past. The city's budget is more stable than it was in the days before city managers. Women and people of color are quoted more often, and with titles like "city councilor."

The stories in the Herald's archives become more interesting when you remember that the people writing them didn't know how things would turn out. Those reporters writing about the desperate need for residents to donate their hunting knives and ammunition to "the boys" in the trenches of World War II didn't know the United States was going to prevail against Hitler.

Today, Herald reporters face the same uncertainty. We don't know whether the season-opener we're covering is the beginning of a winning or losing season. We don't know whether the city's latest project is going to work as planned. But we will be there to record what happened, and 25 years from now a reporter who perhaps hasn't even been born yet will get a good laugh over what a crazy world it was in 2018.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Umatilla County Commissioners saved our local fair

The Umatilla County Commissioners should be lauded for being a partner in building EOTEC. They, the city of Hermiston, Farm-City Pro Rodeo, and Fair Board saved the Umatilla County Fair.

Around eight years ago the County got an estimate of \$8 million to \$10 million to simply bring the decrepit downtown Hermiston fair site up to code. The county did not have the money and if the money was spent the site was still inadequate with absolutely no parking. The commissioners asked other county communities if they wanted the fair and if they could provide facilities. There was no interest.

Because of this, the staggering cost to bring the old fairground up to code, and a 30 year interest in Hermiston of moving the fair out of the middle of town, EOTEC was conceived as a home for the fair and much more. This was agreed upon by the unanimous approval of the Umatilla County, city of Hermiston, Farm City Pro Rodeo, Umatilla County Fair and Hermiston School District. An intergovernmental agreement was signed by the county and Hermiston with EOTEC to be built and jointly owned.

After years of daunting work, a new \$17 million facility was built, giving the Umatilla County Fair a wonderful home and providing 95 acres of grounds for a trade center and the rodeo — \$12 million of that money coming from the state of Oregon — money which would have gone elsewhere except for EOTEC being built.

In building EOTEC, the commissioners, city, rodeo and fair went "where no one has gone before," to use a phrase from an old space series. But they got it built — with no real bonded debt.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The city of Hermiston will take over full ownership and liability of the EOTEC facilities in spring of 2018.

But when you "go where no one has gone before," sometimes you have to adapt to conditions when you arrive at your destination. That is what the county commissioners are doing. They realize that the ownership, operation, management and liability of EOTEC would be better placed with just one entity — the city of Hermiston.

While much county money has been spent on EOTEC to date, with more to be spent in the next few years, those sums pale when you look at the \$8 million to \$10 million cost of renovation the county was faced with — or the loss of our county fair.

We should applaud the commissioners for their realism and for saving the fair.
George Anderson
Hermiston

Can we call EOTEC a money-losing disaster yet?

I remember hearing how the Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center was going to be great. I remember the great idea of the partnership between the city and the county. I remember the support from investors, the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, the Umatilla County Fair members and the city. I remember how the EOTEC board was formed.

That was 2013. The future seemed bright. It seemed like a great plan was in the making.

But that was then; this is now. The 2017 fair was a success, but afterwards that's where the story goes south. The city will be taking over EOTEC, the county partnership is over. The city says it loses \$1,000 a day on EOTEC. The county fair had a contract to lease the grounds for \$10,000; now it will be \$100,000. No one seems to have planned for the 350-odd days after the fair.

Costs skyrocketed, disagreements arose with the residents of Airport Road on noise, water, traffic, and construction problems. No one cared much after the fair was over.

Now, the city has decided to end the 2013 agreement with the county. Did you know that ahead of Monday's meeting between the county and the city? Do you know how much debt EOTEC is in? Do you know that the city is paying \$9,000 a month to a company to run EOTEC?

Do you know anything that the city does with your money? Did anyone ask you before they voted if you are OK with this? I don't remember any public hearings, do you, before they voted?

Now I am waiting to see how many tax dollars will be needed to pay to take over EOTEC. Watch out for a new tax. I guess the bottom line is, do any of you care how your money is spent?

Mark F. Gomolski
Hermiston

During the month of January, help us donate \$5,000 to MADE TO THRIVE

Empowering vulnerable kids through sports, adventure activities, music and art.

GET 0% UP TO 60 MONTHS

on select new 2017 & 2018 Toyota models.

On Approved Credit

NEW 2018 COROLLA SE	NEW 2018 CAMRY LE	NEW 2018 RAV4 AWD LE
\$235	\$269	\$304
/MO	/MO	/MO
On Approved Credit	On Approved Credit	On Approved Credit
\$0 CASH DOWN!	\$0 CASH DOWN!	\$0 CASH DOWN!

SK #18H167 New 2018 Toyota Corolla SE. MSRP \$20,522. MSRP \$21,685. Net Cap Cost \$20,157.67. MSRP \$21,639. After \$1,250 rebate by Toyota Financial Services. 36 month/12k mile per year lease at \$0 cash down = \$235/mo. On approved credit. No security deposit required. Plus tax, title and \$75 doc fee.
 SK #18H146 New 2018 Toyota Camry LE. MSRP \$23,383.67. MSRP \$24,532. Net Cap Cost \$23,106.24. After \$1,000 rebate by Toyota Financial Services. 36 month/12k mile per year lease at \$0 cash down = \$269/mo. On approved credit. No security deposit required. Plus tax, title and \$75 doc fee.
 SK #18H078 New 2018 Toyota RAV4 LE AWD. MSRP \$26,153. MSRP \$27,302. Net Cap Cost \$25,876. After \$1,000 rebate by Toyota Financial Services. 36 month/12k mile per year lease at \$0 cash down = \$304/mo. On approved credit. No security deposit required. Plus tax, title and \$75 doc fee.

For all leases: Subvention cash from Toyota Motor Sales (TMS), not applicable for cash back offers and must qualify for cash through Toyota Financial Services, does not include college or military rebate. Based on 12k miles per year lease. Available to qualified customers through Toyota Financial Services, except Tacoma lease which is on approved credit thru US Bank. Not all customers will qualify. \$350 disposition fee due at lease end.
 For all offers: Offers cannot be combined, other restrictions may apply. See dealer for details. A documentary service fee of \$75 will be added to vehicle price or capitalized cost. Does not include taxes, license, title, processing fees, insurance and dealer charges. Subject to availability. Must take retail delivery from dealer stock by 1/31/18.

We Care About What You're Driving!

541.567.6461 | 1.800.522.2308

1550 N. 1st Street
Hermiston, OR 97838

toyotaofhermiston.com |

SERVICE HOURS: MON-FRI 7 am – 5:30 pm SAT 8 am – 5 pm SALES HOURS: MON-SAT 8:30 am – 7 pm SUN 10 am – 5 pm