

Searchers recover pair missing in Columbia River

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

The search for two adults missing from a boat on the Columbia River ended Monday evening when the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office confirmed the recovery of both bodies.

Sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Holcomb said sonar equipment played the crucial role in finding the bodies of Janice Arsenault, 44, of Umatilla, and Trenton Williams, 20, from Idaho.

They went missing Saturday evening on the river near Bobby's Beach, a small site along Highway 730 near milepost 195, after a caller reported two adults were no longer on a boat that pulled onto shore.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, Morrow County Sheriff's Office and several other agencies responded soon after the call. Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said rescue boats from multiple agencies arrived that night to scour the water, and as word spread of the crisis, as many as 30 private boats participated.

"There was a tremendous number of resources out there Saturday evening until about 1 Sunday morning," he said.

Law enforcement from nearby counties in Wash-



Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan talks on a cellphone while on the south shore of the Columbia River on Monday during a search for two missing boaters east of Umatilla.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

ington sent personnel. Teams walked the shoreline for any signs of Arsenault and Williams.

"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack," Rowan said, "only underwater."

Searchers took a break Sunday night and resumed the effort in the morning. They returned again Mon-



Arsenault

day morning. By that afternoon, Holcomb reported, the focus of the search became recovery efforts.

In June 2018, Arsenault became a volunteer firefighter for the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District. The *Hermiston Herald* profiled Arsenault in September 2018 for the Three

Minutes feature.

She revealed she lost her health care job in Las Vegas in 2008 and moved to Umatilla because she has family there. She worked as an office specialist at Blue Mountain Community College. She loved sushi and in her spare time enjoyed hanging with friends and riding her Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Arsenault said

she was working toward the completion of an associate's degree.

Holcomb said the sheriff's office did not have much information about Williams but was able to get notices to relatives of the missing about the situation.

Information about what happened remained sketchy. The driver of the boat, Richard Kirkendall, 41, of

Hermiston, reported Arsenault and Williams had been riding on the dive step of the boat while he was driving to shore, according to the sheriff's office. Kirkendall noticed they were missing when he arrived on shore. Rowan said it appears the two adults lacked life jackets.

The size of the effort scaled down after the initial frenzy of the search, Holcomb explained, but the work remained methodical.

Airplanes conducted an aerial search along the shallow shorelines where boats could not gain access. Umatilla County Fire District members and volunteers searched along the shoreline. Teams reported the water was "pretty murky," according to Holcomb. She also said the Columbia Basin Dive Rescue of Richland, Washington, provided a towable side-scan sonar to help search the bottom of the river. The sensitive equipment provides valuable information, she said, and dive teams will investigate objects of interest that show up on the sonar.

Holcomb said the team found Williams' body at 8 p.m. and Arsenault's body shortly before 8:30, both in the area of Bobby's Beach. Their remains were transported to a funeral home Monday night, accompanied by emergency vehicles.

Former Hermiston city manager remembered

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Hermiston's first city manager, Tom Harper, died June 11 at the age of 96. He was one of the final living members of a generation of city leaders who helped move Hermiston from a small town with few paved roads to the largest city in Eastern Oregon.

"It's the passing of an era," Beverly Harkenrider said.

Harkenrider's husband Frank Harkenrider, who served as mayor of Hermiston for 10 years and a city councilor for 40, frequently said before his death that hiring Harper as Hermiston's first city manager was the best decision he and the council ever made.

Harper served as city manager for 26 years, from 1961 to 1987, after the city council decided Hermiston had grown large enough to need a full-time manager outside of the mayor.

At the time Harper was hired, Hermiston had about 4,000 residents. Under his management the city built a library, public works building, wastewater treatment plant, opened a new city hall and built the public safety building that houses the police and fire departments. The city paved miles of road, purchased the land that now houses the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, created the Hermiston Cemetery District and put together the master plan that charted the course for its fledgling municipal airport.

Harper was an original member of the Hermiston Development Corporation, the first nonprofit develop-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Former Hermiston city manager Tom Harper, center, looks at the signatures on a ribbon used in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center as current city manager Byron Smith, at right, looks on Monday, Aug. 7, 2017, in Hermiston. Harper was the city manager when the city of Hermiston originally bought the EOTEC property.

ment corporation in Oregon. The group was instrumental in recruiting many of the city's largest employers, including Lamb Weston, Hermiston Foods and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center.

Current city manager Byron Smith — one of only four city managers in Hermiston's history thanks to the tradition of longevity that Harper set — said Harper's work laid a strong foundation for the community.

"He did a great job getting the city ready for the growth we are experiencing," Smith said.

A plaque at city hall honors Harper for "his distinguished service and dedication to the City of Hermiston and its citizens."

Beverly Harkenrider said

her husband and Harper were different in a lot of ways — Frank was famously outspoken while the city manager was quietly diplomatic — but the two of them worked well together along with people like Joe Burns, Russ Dorran and Charlie Kik for the betterment of Hermiston.

"So many of them have gone now," she said.

Harper stayed in Hermiston after his retirement and

always followed Hermiston politics closely, looking up city council agendas and writing the occasional letter to the editor into his nineties.

"When he retired, someone asked if he would move, and he said, 'I spent 25 years trying to make this a good place to live. Why would I

move now?'" Harkenrider said.

She remembered Harper as a good friend and a good person, as did many who reacted to his passing on social media.

A celebration of life will be 11 a.m. on June 29 at Burns Mortuary.

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