



A fire engine sits at the ready Tuesday evening as firefighters check out the smoking interior of the Hermiston City Hall.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

## Fire:

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the smoke, which could be seen through windows from outside.

In a Facebook post, the fire district stated that the heavy smoke likely originated from HVAC units

inside the building, and that damage was "limited."

Currently, the incident is under investigation.

No injuries were reported.

After 6 p.m., lights inside city hall remained on and two firetrucks could be seen outside as crews investigated the building's interior.

City staff were located

at the Hermiston Community Center, where they were putting together boxes for the police department's Christmas Express program that provides food and gifts to families in need.

The city announced that city hall, at 180 NE Second St., will be closed on Wednesday to deal with the smoke damage.

## BTW:

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contribution to one or more of Oregon's 1,400+ cultural nonprofits, then make a matching gift to the Oregon Cultural Trust by Tuesday, Dec. 31.

People who make contributions can claim the cultural tax credit when filing Oregon state taxes. For more information, visit [www.culturaltrust.org](http://www.culturaltrust.org).

The **Stone Building**, which has housed the **Spray School**, will be turning 100 years old. A celebration is planned with a reunion event April 26 at 2 p.m. in the school's gymnasium.

Superintendent/Principal **Larry Johnson** is extending an invitation to anyone connected to the school — either as past students, past employees or had parents or relatives who attended or worked at the school.

In addition, Johnson invites people to share pictures, stories or anything that would be of interest to others about the Spray School. Contact Johnson at 541-468-2226, [ljohnson@spray.k12.or.us](mailto:ljohnson@spray.k12.or.us) or Spray School, 303 Park Ave., Spray, OR 97874.

Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort will open for the season Saturday.

The ski area, 35 miles northwest of Baker City, will operate daily through Jan. 5, except Christmas Day. You can ski with Santa on Christmas Eve from 10 a.m. to noon.

Skiers and snowboarders are reminded that early season conditions will exist this weekend. Groomed runs will include Broadway, Variety, Vista and Road Run, and on the Nordic trail system the Lake Loop, Campground Loop, Gunsight, College, College Extension and Training Loop will be groomed.

Season passes can be picked up starting at 8 a.m. Saturday in the main lodge. Lift tickets will be sold starting at 8:30 a.m. in the ticket booth. The Rock Garden chairlift, along with the handle-tow and Magic Carpet, will start at 9 a.m.

Thursday's menu at the **Harkenrider Senior Activity Center** will be a Christmas dinner of ham, potatoes, rolls, broccoli salad and dessert. Friday is ham salad sandwich, salad and dessert. The senior center will be closed the week of Christmas and will reopen for lunch on Monday, Jan. 30.



Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Dwight Johnson, right, hands a slice of cake to Sheriff's Deputy Roy Drago, 90, during his 90th birthday party Friday at the Stafford Hansell Government Center in Hermiston.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

## Drago:

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anybody today. That's not to say we don't need people."

Drago explained that, although he's retired twice, he picked up work with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office again to offset retirement savings lost in the stock market. But he also appreciates the sense of community he's collected over the years.

"I've made an awful lot of friends here," he said. "There are so many people that I know. It's a pleasure being here."

Those who listen closely can still hear an east-coast lilt in Drago's voice. It's one of the last remaining clues that he was in fact born in Yonkers, New York in 1929.

Upon graduating high school, he came to live and work with his uncle in Oregon until being drafted into the U.S. Army during the Cold War.

"I think that set a standard

for me to follow the rest of my life," Drago said. "To be at work on time, to maintain a good relationship with employer and employees. And I still make my bed everyday."

After being discharged from the military in 1954, Drago landed a job with the Yonkers Police Department, as a patrolman assigned to animal control. But following what he describes as a "nasty" divorce, Drago decided to head back to the west.

"I wasn't a stranger," he said.

Drago eventually found himself working for the Eastside Police Department in Coos Bay. When the department merged with the Coos Bay Police Department in 1980, he shipped over to Morrow County, and started working for the sheriff's office.

In 1983, he was appointed sheriff, and it was the beginning of the most challenging part of his career.

"I got appointed to that job not knowing anything about what a sheriff is supposed to

do. I knew what a police officer was supposed to do, but not a sheriff," Drago said. "It's a political role."

An article in *PoliceOne* stated that under Drago's leadership, the department grew from a handful of sheriff's deputies to 17 and that eventually, each one got their own patrol car.

He retired in 1999 during his fourth term. Then a few years later, Drago took a job with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. He retired there in 2012, but now he's back.

Drago said he'll be celebrating 18 years with the Umatilla County Sheriff's office next month.

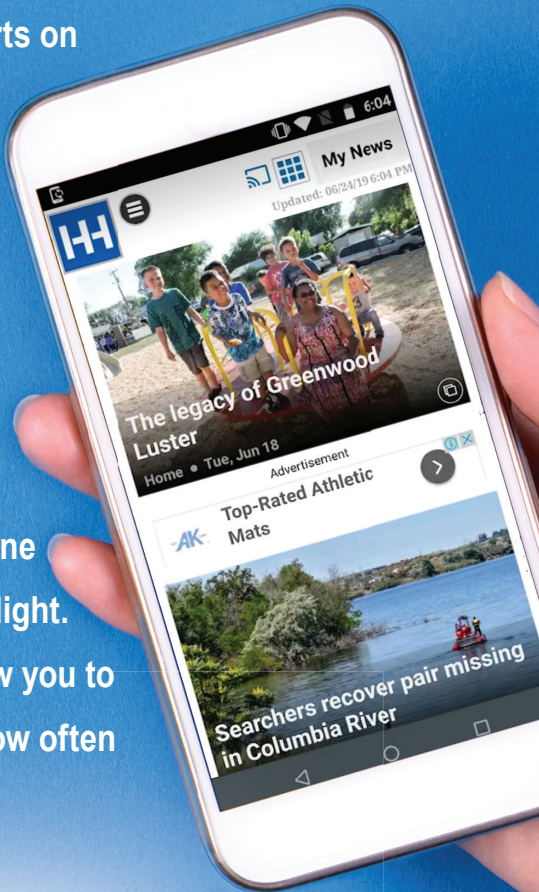
The heartbreaks, mishaps and adventures that pair with his lengthy career are immortalized in a poem written by his co-worker, deputy Tim Gallaher, aptly dubbed "The Ballad of Roy Drago."

"You'd think his job is done," it reads. "But Roy still wears a shiny badge and buckles on his gun."

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