HONORING OUR VETERANS

World War II veteran and prisoner of war would do it again

By Craig Reed

The memories of Sherm Talbot's World War II experiences remain vivid.

Now 95 years old, Sherm was a soldier in Troop A, 18th Calvary Recon Squadron as a young man. Even after 74 years, Sherm recalls his soldier days, especially in April and around Veterans Day on November 11.

Sherm was at Omaha Beach, one of the landing sites for the Normandy invasion. He was in the Battle of the Bulge, only to be captured by the Germans on December 16, 1944. He spent time at Camp 12A in Lindberg, Germany.

"Conditions were horrible," he says. "You slept on the floor. There was no heat. There was an open cess pool at one end of the camp. It was a hell hole. I knew if I stayed there much longer, I would die because a lot of others were dying."

In early April, 1945, Sherm and other soldiers were transferred to another camp. But they were locked in boxcars for eight days before being released into Stalag X-B in Bremerhaven, Germany. Conditions were again deplorable and many prisoners were starving, says Sherm.

He remembers hearing gunfire one night from a nearby compound that housed political prisoners. The next morning he learned that those prisoners had been shot while rushing the kitchen in search of food.

On April 29, 1945, after four weeks of confinement in Stalag X-B, Sherm and his buddies were freed. Germany surrendered the next day.

As Sherm left Stalag X-B, he saw "bodies of men, women and children stacked like cordwood, a grotesque jumble of lime-covered limbs and skeleton-like forms which had once been human beings, stark evidence that there had been countless nights of killings."

The freed prisoners were flown to Brussels, Belgium, and spent time at Camp Lucky Strike near Le Havre, France, before crossing the Atlantic Ocean via ship and landing in Boston. A troop train returned Sherm, a native of Pasadena, California, to his home state.

"Was it worth it? Yes. Would I do it again? Yes," says Sherm, who lives a quiet life in his house on the timbered hills of the Coast Range near Elkton. Even though he experienced the worst, Sherm says he is proud.

"I have warm feelings for the friends I was with during that time," he says. "We were diverse in our backgrounds, but we got along and we helped each other. There have been reunions since getting home. We've stayed friends."

With the end of WWII almost 80 years ago, many veterans who survived that war have since died. Of the 16 million Americans who served in WWII, there were just under 500,000 still living as of one year ago. It is estimated that in another five years, most, if not all, will be gone.

In the meantime, remaining veterans such as Sherm are recognized and honored on Veterans Day.

"It's a special day, a time to honor those who have gone above and beyond," says Terry Chiodo, a close friend of Sherm's.

"Sherm feels like he is just a regular guy, but I think he deserves to be honored for his service," Terry says. "He had some terrible experiences, but he makes light of them. I think they made him stronger and more patriotic, if that is possible. He's one of those people who makes lemonade out of lemons."

After returning home, Sherm lived a less dramatic life. He and his wife, Merlyn, were married for 70 years before she died in 2017. The couple lived for many years in the Los Angeles area. Sherm retired in 1984 as an outside salesman of hardwood lumber for American Forests Products.

That same year, the Talbots moved north and settled in a house on 6 acres near Elkton where Sherm continues to live.

"I could see the road ahead in California, and it was not what we wanted," Sherm says. "Things were changing in California. We decided it was a good time to pull the plug and start something new."

Their initial new venture was to establish a bed-and-breakfast at their home. They operated that for two years before deciding to focus on growing Douglas fir trees on their property.

Some of those trees ended up adding more excitement to Sherm's life than he had anticipated. During the

Above, Sherm lost a lot of weight while a prisoner of war.

Top, Sherm and his mother, Martha, shortly after he enlisted in 1942.

Left, Sherm Talbot still has his wool uniform jacket from World War II.

major snow storm earlier this year, several trees and branches came down on and around his house and on his driveway.

Friends and neighbors were worried about Sherm because his driveway was blocked and phone communication had been knocked out. But after clearing trees and branches with chainsaws, a neighbor on a tractor was able to reach his house.

Sherm told his rescuers he was doing fine and half-jokingly asked them why they were so concerned.

After greetings were exchanged, Sherm was bundled up, placed in the bucket of the tractor and driven down out of the timber to the open road and a waiting vehicle. He spent two weeks in a motel room before returning to his home once power had been restored.

Eventually the fallen trees around his house were cut and split into six cords of firewood. His house also received a new roof this past summer.

"He joked and made the best of that snow experience," Terry says.

The situations were obviously different, but Sherm had the experience of living through and dealing with even tougher times back when he was a soldier, so he knows how to endure.

He remains proud of serving his country during WWII despite the hardships he survived. ■

From left, Central Electric Cooperative linemen Grant Young and Rob Lane and Line Foreman Andy Burford set a pole at the Oregon Youth Challenge Program.
Photo by Courtney Cobb

CEC in Your Community

Cooperative donates new poles to Oregon Youth Challenge Program

By Courtney Cobb

In July, Central Electric Cooperative made a significant in-kind contribution to the Oregon Youth Challenge Program. CEC donated utility poles, and the Bend crew replaced rotted-out poles on the facility's obstacle course.

The obstacle course sat idle for two years due to safety concerns. The original poles were more than 12 years old.

Without the obstacle course, instructors had to be creative in designing physical activities for the students, including using trails that criss-cross 160 acres of Bureau Land Management property adjacent to the facility.

OYCP Deputy Director Frank Tallman says CEC's donation this summer helped get the obstacle course back up and running for decades to come. He says the course plays an integral role in a student's overall development.

"It is a great team-building course for the kids," he says. "We get a lot of kids afraid of heights or success, and lack self-confidence. The obstacle course provides kids the opportunity to come out here in a safe environment, overcome some fears or gain the self-confidence they didn't have."

CEC also supports OYCP by contributing funds to four different annual scholarships available to graduating students or alumni seeking to continue down a path of success.

"CEC has been a great help to our foundation and organization," Frank says.

A recent success story highlights how a scholarship can assist an OYCP graduate. Alumni Jasmyn Troncoso used a scholarship to attend law school in California. In August, Jasmyn was sworn in as deputy district attorney for Deschutes County.

Lineman Grant Young works to remove the top piece of a climbing structure at OYCP.

Photo by Brent ten Pas

What Is Youth Challenge?

OYCP gives at-risk youth a second chance.

"For most of these kids, it is their last chance," Frank says. "They have failed in most other traditional high school settings. They see our program as a chance for them to catch up with their peers."

While in OYCP, students earn credits to receive their high school diploma, or enough credits to get back on track to earn a diploma from their hometown high school. Students too far behind to catch up may earn a GED certificate.

Students ages 16 to 18 must enter the program willingly and have a desire to change. OYCP is a 100% public-funded program. With 75% of funding from the federal government and 25% from the state, students pay no tuition or fees.

OYCP resembles a quasi-military-modeled school that emphasizes structure, education, self-discipline and self-esteem. Students work through eight core components: leadership/followership, responsible citizenship, academic excellence, job skills, life coping skills, health and hygiene, service to the community and physical fitness.

Competencies are designed to help students reshape their mind, body and personal values.

"We can take a kid who is behind two years, and in 5½ half months get them caught up with almost two years of high school," Frank says. "It's a great program, and we have a high success rate. That's why we are going through our current expansion right now to offer more kids in Oregon a second chance."

Expansion Project

Amid a $10 million expansion, OYCP can take 156 kids twice a year but turns away many applicants. The expansion, once completed, will allow OYCP to take up to 240 kids twice a year.

Frank says with help from Gov. Kate Brown, state legislators, the advisory board and other local politicians, the school secured the necessary funding.

The expansion allows for OYCP to increase what is currently a small female student population.

"With the new design, we will be able to give equal access to both male and female students," Frank says. "Before, we were limited because of the building's limitation."

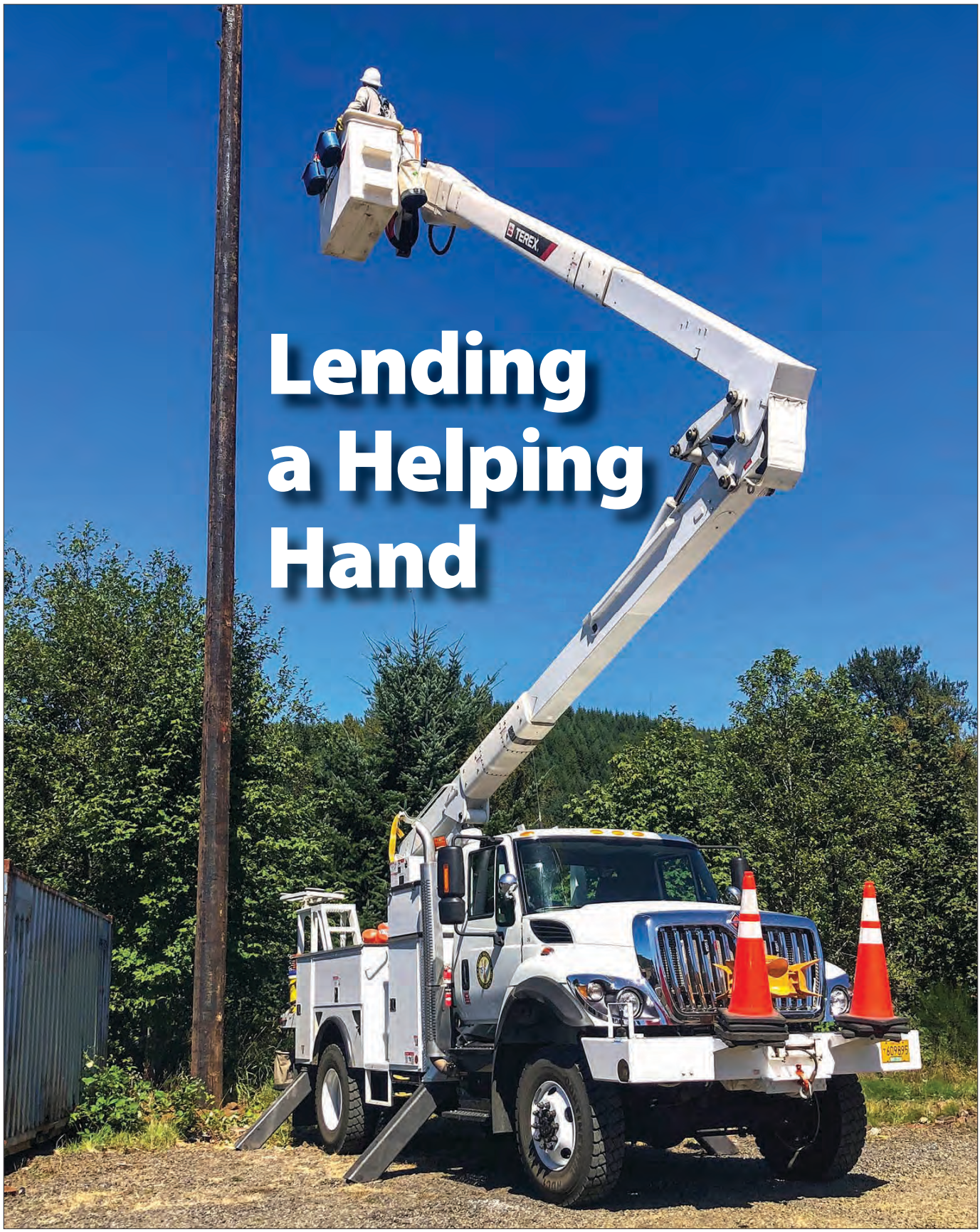
Battling Misconceptions

While students come into the program thinking only about their education, OYCP does much more. OYCP graduates come away with American Red Cross CPR and AED certifications, a resume with cover letters, a food handlers card, 80 hours of community service and life skills.

So what does Frank tell the students?

"You don't quit," he says. "We won't quit on you, and you just have to put a little work in." ■

To learn more about the Oregon Youth Challenge Program, go to www.oycp.com.



Lending a Helping Hand

WOEC helps install emergency radio antenna at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD

By Scott Laird

In late August, a West Oregon Electric Cooperative crew was dispatched to work at the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District headquarters to install a 70-foot power pole for an emergency radio antenna.

The antenna is part of an ongoing effort to provide emergency radio access to all areas in Columbia County. It will allow amateur radio operators to communicate with outside resources in the event of a major disaster when other forms of communication are not operational.

Ed Bodenlos is the Columbia County emergency coordinator for Amateur Radio Emergency Service. He helped coordinate the project among several regional agencies.

"The strategy is to have every outlying area that has a recognized and professional facility—like a fire department or Red Cross facility that would be used for groups to assemble in the event of an emergency—and get amateur radio stations installed," he says. "If other forms of communication go down, they would always have the capability to talk with—and share information with—county and state emergency management people."

ARES is a national and statewide volunteer structure that organizes at the county level to maintain volunteers and radio equipment for rapid deployment as part of incident response in an emergency.

"One of the big problems we've had with some of the outlying area in Columbia County is that we don't have good, reliable communication capabilities, and Mist-Birkenfeld is one of those locations," Ed says. "It's been a problem for a long time. They received radio equipment in the past, but they've never moved forward to fix the real problem, which is a good and reliable antenna system."

WOEC General Manager Bob Perry is a ham radio operator and a member of Columbia County ARES. As the top administrator at WOEC, he has dealt with natural and weather-related disasters, so he understands the need for a reliable communication system during an emergency.

"When we look at communications around the county, the Mist-Birkenfeld area is a sort of a black hole," Bob says. "There's no cellphone coverage. Other than police or first responder's radio, there's really no other way for civilians to get information in or out. This antenna will allow the county emergency management team in St. Helens to establish an amateur radio presence at Mist-Birkenfeld at their fire department."

WOEC donated the pole as a way to provide community service for their members in the Mist-Birkenfeld area. A utility crew drilled the hole, set the pole and installed a pulley so the antenna hardware can be easily lowered for maintenance and repairs.

"We have very challenging communications issues here in Columbia County because of the terrain," says Steve Pegram, emergency management director for Columbia County. "While there's a lot of spots in the county that don't have good cell service, there are also places in the county that don't even have radio service."

The county created a comprehensive communications plan about four years ago and has received federal grants to address issues identified in that plan. Those funds bought the radio hardware for Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD.

"We often partner with our private-sector agencies," Steve says. "WOEC is a member of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Commission and works with us on these types of emergency issues around the county. They've been a really important member of that organization and have contributed greatly to it. WOEC is a really good partner and always steps up when we need something. This pole installation was another part of their contribution, and we really appreciate them."

Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Chief Joe Kaczenski says the pole WOEC installed at his station will be multifunctional. In addition to holding the radio antenna, a windsock installed at the top can be used to aid Life Flight landings at the station.

A WOEC crew also recently came out to the station with a boom truck to help fix a broken pulley at the top of the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD flag pole.

"We have such a good working relationship with the WOEC crews that come out when we have storms or other issues that interfere with their line and poles," Joe says.

Bob has been an amateur ham radio operator since he was a teenager in the early 1970s. He learned Morse code early on, which he still practices. He worked in electronics in the U.S. Navy and has been employed in the electric field ever since. He has donated equipment to upgrade the radio capabilities at WOEC headquarters.

"When all else fails, ham radio is there," Bob says. "Earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods—after it's all over with, the first person to come back on the air is going to be a ham radio operator." ■

Opposite page: A West Oregon Electric Cooperative crew installs a windsock after setting a pole for the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District.

Photo by Billi Kohler

Donnie and his 1969 Toyota Corona, Columbo, have traveled more than 1 million miles together since he bought the vehicle in 1980.

50 Years on the Road

The unbreakable bond between a man and his vintage Japanese vehicle

By Jean Bilodeaux

In 1980, while living in Los Angeles, Donnie Clark bought a 1969 Toyota Corona from his father-in-law.

The car's exterior may not have been the fanciest, but to Donnie, its 1900cc engine—the most powerful imported vehicle at the time—was a thing of beauty.

He named it "Columbo," after the detective in his favorite TV show, by the same name, and started what has become a nearly 40-year friendship between man and machine.

"Columbo wasn't much to look at on the outside, and people were always razzing me about him, but inside he was sharp," Donnie says proudly. "I have to admit there's a strong personal relationship established between us. To me, Columbo is more than just a hunk of steel. I am proud of him."

Donnie's special relationship with his ride started when he moved to Modoc County 31 years ago. Donnie began working as a fire captain at the Devil's Garden Conservation Camp. The only path to his employment was a punishingly steep gravel road, which the car miraculously climbed every day, without fail.

The duo had more than their fair share of adventures throughout the years. They've driven from Mexico to Canada and everywhere in between, with Donnie jumping at any opportunity to take Columbo on the open road.

However, all that driving did come with a few dangers. In 1988, while driving over mountainous terrain, miles from any help, Donnie hit a pheasant, damaging Columbo's grill.

Being the mechanic he is, Donnie fashioned a new grill using scrap metal from a discarded birdcage, which remains to this day.

In 1990, with more than 800,000 miles, Columbo's engine finally failed.

Donnie was determined to breathe life back into his old friend. He rebuilt the engine and continued his daily commute for another 11 years before retiring in 2001.

Donnie doesn't park Columbo, who he refers to in the third person, in a garage. He drives him almost every day. People often stop and ask Donnie about Columbo. As he drives down the street, people wave. They may not remember Donnie's name, but they know Columbo.

"Everywhere I go guys tell me they used to own one like Columbo and loved it," he says. "Columbo has helped many people learn to drive a car with a manual transmission. Others have borrowed or rode in him. Columbo is a bit particular about who he'll start for, but most of the time he's in a good mood. But everyone who's had a connection with him will call on occasion and ask, 'How's Columbo?'"

According to Donnie, the 1969 Toyota Corona was Motor Trend's Import Car of

Donnie points at Columbo's birdcage grill, which Donnie fabricated to replace the one he damaged when he collided with a pheasant in 1988.

the Year. In October Columbo turned 50 years old.

"I kind of wanted to give him a surprise birthday party," Donnie says. "This story will be his special gift."

Donnie has driven Columbo more than 1 million miles. Finding parts has become more difficult by the day. Donnie knows Columbo is reaching the end of the road, but he still has pride in his mechanical friend.

"A spray paint has to rattle to make it work best," Donnie says. "So does Columbo. I'll stick with Columbo until the end and then I'll recycle him.

"He may be getting up there in years, but if I had to drive to New York tomorrow, I'd take Columbo. He'd get me there and back." ■

While Donnie admits Columbo was never much to look at it, but it's simple, yet sleek, interior made up for what it lacked in the looks department.

Honoring LEC Veterans

By Craig Reed

Four members of the Lane Electric Cooperative family have served not only the co-op, but also their country.

Lane Electric staking technician Blair Blizzard and co-op board of directors' members Jack Billings, Hugh Buermann and Jerry Shorey are each U.S. military veterans. Blair was a photographer in the Army from 1972 to 1975. Jack was in the Iowa National Guard from 1968 to 1971 and was a member of the Army Reserve for the next two years. Hugh served in the U.S. Navy from 1959 to 1963. Jerry is a U.S. Air Force veteran, serving from 1975 to 1997.

These veterans and many others will be recognized, appreciated and honored this month, specifically Veterans Day on November 11.

Blair is proud to be part of the military family.

"What does Veterans Day mean to me?" the 66-year-old asks. "It recognizes that Americans have donated years out of their lives to stand up for the rest of the country to keep our freedom."

Blair, a 1971 graduate of Astoria High School, joined the Army in 1972 to be a photographer. She had taken photography classes in high school and enjoyed packing a camera around and taking pictures.

"I wanted to be able to get some real pictures of what was going on in Vietnam," she recalls. "It wasn't pretty, but back in those days I didn't scare easy."

She did her basic training at Fort McClellan in Alabama and went to Fort Dix in New Jersey for additional photography training. The Vietnam War ended just before she completed her training. She was assigned to a post in Germany, and spent 2½ years there.

"I've always been disappointed I didn't get the opportunity in Vietnam," Blair says. "I didn't get to go, but that was probably a blessing. I might not have come back."

Instead, she took photos of soldiers who were re-enlisting, being promoted, receiving awards or were on parade. She was excited to photograph the action during international competitions of soldiers maneuvering through ground drills, and taking aerial photos of skydivers from a helicopter while she was strapped in and standing on a landing skid.

"It was great fun," she says. "I just didn't have any fear of doing stuff like that. Although I didn't get to serve in the midst of a war, I loved being there and being ready.

"It was great while I was in the service, but I really wanted to get back to the states, get to college and to figure out what I was going to do with my life."

Blair left the service in 1975. After some college classes and a marriage, she was hired as a meter reader by Missoula Electric Cooperative in Montana. She spent 15 years there, learning and moving up and eventually becoming a mapper, dispatcher and staking technician.

Blair moved back to Oregon in 2011 to be closer to her mother, who needed care. She applied for electric co-op jobs and was hired by Lane Electric in 2013 as a staking technician.

"My military experience taught me discipline, a stick-to-it attitude," she says. "I was a free spirit when I was younger, but the military showed me how to follow through with your job, how to buckle down and get the job done."

Jack, 73, says Veterans Day reminds him he had the opportunity to serve in the military and it was a good experience.

He graduated from Iowa State University in 1968 and went to law school as a member of the Iowa National Guard. He graduated from the Iowa Military Academy in 1971 and was a member of the Army Reserve for the next two years.

Jack was not deployed overseas. He was assigned to medical services, tracking the inventory of medical supplies at his Iowa City post.

"It is a good memory for me," he says. "I learned I could

Blair Blizzard

Jack Billings

Hugh Buermann

Jerry Shorey

meet the military standards for physical fitness. It gave me a broader appreciation for what the Army does. I'm glad I served."

Hugh, 79, enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1959, shortly after his high school graduation from New Plymouth, Idaho.

He wanted to be in the Seabees, a construction battalion, but his Navy test score suggested he would be a better fit for electronics. He was sent to electronics school on Treasure Island in San Francisco, and spent three years on destroyer ships in the Pacific Ocean working on communication and radar systems.

"It was a very good decision," Hugh says. "It set me up for my career."

In November 1962, Hugh was on a ship on the Saigon River near Saigon, South Korea. The city was under fire, and Hugh's ship was at battle stations during its stay of a few days before returning to open waters.

During those three years, Hugh on numerous occasions was transported between ships in a basket attached to a high line to fix communication problems on other ships. He also climbed up masts or worked from a helicopter to repair antennas.

"It was the best four years of my life up to that time," Hugh says. "I loved my job, I was able to learn a trade that I've used ever since. I feel good that I was able to serve. I was glad to do my patriotic duty."

Jerry, 82, graduated from Oakridge High School in 1955 and six months later enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He had a 22-year military career, retiring in 1963.

Jerry spent four years on active duty. He and his canine partner, Mike, teamed up to patrol and guard airplanes, munitions supplies and the base at Mountain Home, Idaho.

"We were a good team," he says. "Mike was smarter than me."

Jerry's active duty years were between the Korean and Vietnam wars, so he wasn't deployed.

After he was discharged, Jerry became an emergency medical technician. When he joined the Air Force Reserve in 1976, he served as a medic and eventually transferred to air evacuation medic duty. He was deployed in 1990 during Desert Storm. He was a member of five-person medical teams that accompanied wounded from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to Germany and from Germany to the U.S.

"In the reserves, I felt like I was doing something useful," Jerry says.

He would have stayed in the reserves longer, but retirement was mandatory when he turned 60 in 1997.

"I saw the guys who gave up a lot, and not just the guys who served, but their families, the ones left at home," Jerry says. "They don't get the credit they should." ■

Veterans Day Lunch

The third annual Veterans Day Lunch hosted by Lane Electric Cooperative is Thursday, November 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the co-op's main facility, 787 Bailey Hill Road, Eugene. The event is not held November 11, Veterans Day, so as not to conflict with other events on that date.

The lunch is open to veterans living in Lane Electric's service territory. A spouse or significant other may also attend.

Julie Stephens, a co-op employee, came up with the lunch idea. She has several family members who are veterans. Because of them, she wanted some way to honor those who served.

"Lane Electric was gracious enough to support my idea," she says.

A catered lunch of chicken, baked beans, salad, rolls and dessert will be served. A Veterans Affairs representative will be the guest speaker and will discuss programs and services available to veterans.

Julie says invitations were sent to the co-op's veterans, but if a veteran did not receive one and wants to attend, they should call Lane Electric at 541-484-1151 and ask for Julie or a member services representative.

"Personally, it hits my heart, the sacrifices that the veterans have made," Julie says. "We want them to know how much we appreciate them."

HONORING OUR VETERANS

World War II veteran wishes he never left the Marines

By Craig Reed

When the sergeant asked the 200 young men in the room who were drafted, John Hodgin was one of only 10 who didn't raise his hand.

John recalls the sergeant then said, "I want you, you, you, you," to those 10. That is how John joined the U.S. Marines in 1944, even though he had enlisted with the intention of joining the Navy.

"The Marines weren't taking drafted men at that time," John says. "I didn't have much choice. I really didn't want to go into the Marine Corps. I had a cousin who was a Marine. He was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed, and that wasn't a memorable experience."

But the young man who was born in the back seat of a Model T Ford in the parking lot of a Colorado Springs, Colorado, hospital and was raised in the mountains of that state quickly adjusted. He did his basic training in San Diego, California, and after a stop at Camp Pendleton, California, he shipped out to a base on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

World War II ended in 1945 so John was not deployed to Europe. He spent almost two years at the Oahu base. He was in Marine aviation, driving a refueler truck for fighter planes.

"Some of the routine I didn't think much of, but you just had to do it," he says. "Driving the refueler truck, nobody bothered me. I was on call 24 hours a day in case somebody was going to fly. I would get planes fueled as soon as they came in unless they were going to be worked on."

John returned to California in 1947. After four years as a Marine, he was discharged. He regrets his decision to leave the Marines.

"I should have stayed in," says John, who will be 94 on December 1. "I still kick my butt for getting out."

John, who lives in the Chelsea area, says he was pleased to serve his country, adding that he served with many good people.

A member of the American Legion, John used to attend Veterans Day events, but he says November 11 is now just another day and he's OK with spending it at home. He doesn't drive anymore.

Dan Hymer, an Army veteran of the Vietnam War, has known John for 18 years. The two have talked and shared war stories through the years.

"John is real proud to be a veteran," Dan says. "When we go somewhere, he wears his WWII hat, and I wear my Vietnam War hat. He's proud of the time he served."

John Hodgin, opposite page, is proud to have served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Above, a sign on his home exemplifies his patriotism.

After his discharge, John worked at a couple of jobs in Texas. He married Ruby Standeford in 1947. A few years later, they moved to Springfield, where his parents lived.

Having driven truck in the service, John eventually turned to driving truck during much of his work career. He drove a propane tanker in Lane County for 1½ years before he and Ruby moved in 1959 to Bakersfield, California, where he drove a similar truck and did mechanic work.

Through the years he worked as a truck driver and mechanic for a handful of Southern California companies.

In 1998, after 51 years of marriage, Ruby died from complications of a stroke. Losing his wife started a run of misfortunes for John. During the next five years, he dealt with three cancer surgeries and two heart attacks.

In 2002, he moved to Springfield. In 2015, John moved to his home in the Chelsea area. In recent years, he's had several surgeries to remove skin cancers and he had prostate surgery. Earlier this year, he was the recipient of a pacemaker.

His daughter, Cindy Tapia, and his son, Terry Hodgin, both live in nearby Elmira.

John says he's enjoying the quiet life of western Lane County.

"I love it here," he says. "It's nice and quiet. Nobody bothers you. You can look out the window clear over to the mountains. I'm doing as well as can be expected."

John doesn't plan to do anything special on Veterans Day, but if he does venture out, he'll proudly wear his WWII hat. ■

Raft River Trap Club Takes Aim

State champion Lee Stanger shares prize-winning advice

By Dianna Troyer

Lee Stanger has found his niche in shooting sports. He won a statewide contest in trap shooting in May.
Photos courtesy of Raft River Trap Club

Talk about bad timing. The night before a state championship competition in May, a frustrating scenario unfolded for trap shooter Lee Stanger. A firing pin broke in his Stoeger Condor Competition shotgun. Instead of the incident becoming the worst of times, however, the misfortune led to the best of times.

"We tried to fix it and couldn't," says the 17-year-old Raft River High School junior. "It didn't throw me off, though. Shooting is all mental, so you don't let yourself get rattled. We hoped to find a replacement."

He called Sportsman's Warehouse in Twin Falls—80 miles from his home in Almo—and learned a similar gun was in stock.

The next morning on the way to the USA Youth Education in Shooting Sports state championship in Boise, Lee and his dad, DJ, picked up a new gun.

"In Boise, we put it together in the parking lot, and I went to the firing line," Lee says. "You don't get a chance to practice at a state meet, so I had to trust everything would work fine."

He settled into a routine he has perfected for several years.

"It's all about keeping both eyes open, developing muscle memory and letting your subconscious take over," Lee says. "You don't think about shooting or it throws you off. You just go with the flow and focus on one clay pigeon at a time."

Lee follows a routine when he shoots. First, he kicks the dirt with his right foot, plants his feet in his shooting stance, has his gun action open and sings to himself.

"I like random country Western songs or goofy slogans from commercials," he says. "One of my favorites is, 'Lucky Charms are magically delicious.'"

When the shooter beside him is done, Lee snaps his gun action shut and shouts, "Pull," for the target.

"I squeeze the trigger and bang—it's game over," he says.

At the state USAYESS competition, Lee shot 99 out of 100 targets to win the state championship in the varsity division. The second place score was 98.

"I wasn't sure how I finished until everyone was done shooting," Lee says. "You never keep track of your score at a competition or get upset if you miss. You just have a good time shooting."

Before becoming involved with USAYESS, Lee shot with family friends in Salt Lake City.

Above left and top, the Raft River Trap Club is affiliated with USA Youth Education in Shooting Sports, a national organization with a fast-growing membership. Above right, an ejected shell flies through the air as Thaine Loughmiller competes as a member of the Raft River Trap Club.

"A friend of my brother's has a trap team there and invited us to shoot with them," DJ says.

An avid bird and big game hunter since childhood, DJ taught his kids to shoot and hunt when they were young.

"There's plenty of room to shoot at our house," he says. "Whenever my family gets together for holidays and reunions, we have a good time shooting. As a family, we go through about 5,000 shells a year."

After hearing about USAYESS while shooting at the Burley Trap Club 50 miles from home, DJ and a friend, Heber Loughmiller of Elba, decided to form a club with the organization's sanctioning. USAYESS promotes gun safety, shooting sports and outdoor conservation for youths from fifth to 12th grades.

In 2017, they started the Raft River Trap Club to coach and offer kids an alternative to organized school sports. The first year, the club had 12 members. Last year, it increased to 20. This year, the club has 15 shooters, including Lee's siblings, Amy, 13, and Zak, 10.

Based on their ages, participants compete in four divisions: rookie for fifth and sixth graders; intermediate for seventh and eighth graders; junior varsity for high school freshmen and sophomores; and varsity for juniors and seniors.

"Our priority is gun safety," DJ says. "Next, we teach kids a proper stance and to be mentally prepared. We remind them to never get upset about missing a target. Think of what you did right, not what you did wrong. The kids are awesome and have really progressed."

The club practices every Tuesday at the Burley Trap Club. Practice has paid off for Lee, who has won guns at competitions and given them to Amy and Zak.

The Stangers agree the camaraderie on the shooting circuit is as important as the prizes.

"We've met great people and made new friends in Montana, Utah, Arizona, Washington and throughout Idaho," DJ says.

In November, when the Stangers get together with their extended family for Thanksgiving, they do some shooting Stanger style, with a no-mercy rule.

"One time, Dad and I bet each other and decided the loser had to walk home," Lee says. "We were at my Grandma's, so it wasn't that far from our house. Dad had to walk home."

Lee says he wants to earn a scholarship as a member of a collegiate shooting team.

"I love all the shooting sports—trap, sporting clays, five-stand, rifle," he says. "We'll see where it leads."

DJ invites others to join the club.

"Come and see how much fun it is," he says. ■

The second event at the 50th Anniversary Ritzville Rodeo was tie down roping, commonly referred to as calf roping.

Celebrating 50 Years of Ritzville Rodeo

Ritzville rodeo history and tradition were on display Labor Day weekend

By Katelin Davidson

The fairgrounds and rodeo arena on the outskirts of Ritzville sit quiet for most of the year. But the history on those grounds has stories to fill a lifetime.

Tthe Ritzville Rodeo Association hosted the 50th anniversary celebration at the local arena during Labor Day weekend, and rodeo fans and community members alike gathered to enjoy the occasion.

The Ritzville Rodeo was started in 1970 by a group of dedicated volunteers who contributed money and labor to build the rodeo arena and surrounding facilities.

But Ritzville's rodeo history spans back to 1920. In the early 1920s, Ritzville hosted a Round-Up rodeo on the grounds where the city airport sits today. People traveled from across the region to participate in and watch the event, which eventually ended in 1930 due to lack of funds and the Great Depression.

For nearly 30 years, Ritzville lacked the rodeo action that helped drive the economy and entertained hundreds.

Shortly after Bill and Karen Curtis moved to Ritzville, they wanted to fill the void. They began hosting rodeo events on their property outside of town. As the events grew in popularity, a neighboring farmer donated land to host the event.

The event outgrew the facilities again, which spurred the creation of the Ritzville Rodeo Association and ultimately the Ritzville Rodeo.

The first rodeo attracted 1,700 people, with Sunday's admission boasting 922 paid admissions, and 250 cowboys and their family members.

By 1972, the local fair joined in partnership with the rodeo to host events in cooperation with one another. The tradition remains today. The Wheat Land Communities' Fair spans from Thursday

Julia Klein successfully completed the Queen's Contest during Labor Day weekend and will serve as the 2020 Ritzville Rodeo Queen. Bareback riding, right, is always a fan favorite at the Ritzville Rodeo.

to Sunday of Labor Day weekend, and Ritzville Rodeo hosts nighttime performances Friday and Saturday.

One ticket gets guest admission to the fair, rodeo events and activities.

At its core, the Ritzville Rodeo Association thrives on volunteerism and community support. All of the association's board members are volunteers.

Ritzville Rodeo Association President Scott Yaeger is a longtime volunteer and has dedicated his time to ensuring a successful rodeo each year.

"I started out just volunteering my time to the Rodeo Association in 1988 when I was in high school," Scott says. "I had always been involved in livestock at a very young age and even did a little high school rodeo."

In the early years of rodeo, the association also hosted calf roping events throughout the year.

"Those ropings were long days but a great fundraiser," Scott says. "I remember working on several last-minute projects weeks before our rodeo with a large group of members. I think the camaraderie of the group was extremely strong."

Today, the rodeo arena hosts junior high and high school rodeo events in the offseason, as well as a horse riding clinic in June and a play day in July. The junior high and high school rodeo events attract an estimated 500 people during the two-and-a-half days of rodeo competition.

This year's anniversary was one for the record books. Both evenings attracted a large crowd of participants and spectators to enjoy one of the best sports on dirt.

"For the 50th, the association budgeted to remove and repaint the entire fence and corrals," Scott says. "We also added siding to the auxiliary buildings and new calf holding pens to benefit our crew and members in handling calves for the performance. The rough stock chutes were modified on both sides to provide the cowboys and stock contractor more visibility and workability."

The association sold special merchandise and a commemorative program for the 50th anniversary. Another unique addition was the creation of "Rodeo

Story continues on page 8

Ritzville Rodeo

Continued from page 5

Gold," a beer brewed specifically for the Ritzville anniversary. Rodeo Gold was sold at the association beer garden at the grounds, as well as at local bars and grocery stores.

Each evening, rodeo performances were spurred by the grand entry. Sponsor flags, visiting rodeo royalty and the local queen were introduced to the crowd as they entered the arena.

2019 Ritzville Rodeo Queen Rachel Nygren holds the title of queen for the 50th year event, and the honor did not go unnoticed. The high school junior worked tirelessly throughout the rodeo season to invite other royalty members to the Ritzville event, as well as coordinate a reunion for former Ritzville Rodeo royalty.

Above, the first Ritzville Rodeo court members, from left, Connie Kagele, Mary Lou Hennings and Sue Benzel, helped lead the Ritzville Rodeo Association entry in the Ritzville Community Parade as part of the 50-year celebration. Below left, Rachel Nygren and her trusty steed Jackpot have been making the rounds to parades and rodeos in the region, but the highlight of the year for the duo was participating in the 50th Anniversary Ritzville Rodeo events.

This summer, Rachel represented the Ritzville Rodeo Association at parades and rodeos throughout the region. She says her favorite part was traveling and meeting new people, but most of all, she enjoys seeing how kids light up when they see her.

Rachel says she wanted to become queen because she wanted to inspire local children and represent what can happen if they go after their dreams.

"When I was little, I would look up to the queens," she says. "And now I'm honored to be that person."

Rachel is no stranger to the Ritzville Rodeo arena. She spent three years riding with the Ritzville Rodeo Association Youth Drill Team and also represented the Wheat Land Communities' Fair as royalty on horseback during the grand entry two years ago.

On Saturday, former royalty gathered together to participate in the Ritzville Community Parade before attending the Barbecue in the Park for lunch. The royalty members met in the evening for a group photo, before leading the grand entry and being introduced to the crowd.

This year's anniversary was supported by countless sponsors, community members and organizations. To help celebrate the momentous event, the Wheat Land Communities' Fair selected the "Stirrup Some Fun" theme. The Ritzville Area Chamber of Commerce selected Bill and Karen Curtis as the Ritzville Community Parade grand marshals in recognition of their involvement with starting and supporting the Ritzville Rodeo.

"We are blessed that our community enjoys the sport of rodeo," Scott says. "I think our rodeo announcer, Bob Garrett, is one of the top announcers that keeps our crowd involved and always tries not to have any lull times. We have a great community that supports a lot of organizations and we are lucky to support them as well.

"It is becoming harder and harder for us little communities to put on a rodeo due to costs, but with our continued support from our sponsors, spectators, community, competitors and members, we have been successful in doing just that."

Now that the dust has settled for the year in the Ritzville Rodeo Arena, the board members have shifted their focus to next year's event, as well as upcoming fundraisers for the organization.

The next fundraiser is in January at the annual banquet, where 2020 Queen Julia Klein will be crowned. The funds raised at the banquet will help support the queen's costs during the upcoming year. ■

A Tale of Two Turbines

A pair of behind-the-scenes powerhouses generate consistent, dependable power

By Rodger Nichols

Deep inside The Dalles Dam, a turbine—what might be thought of as a 25-ton top—spins at 200 rpm day and night, 24/7/365.

Except for periods of maintenance, it has spun for more than a quarter-century, generating a steady, dependable stream of renewable power for Northern Wasco County PUD.

One hundred miles upriver, an even larger unit inside McNary Dam operates jointly with Klickitat PUD.

The units are there as a result of fish ladders. To attract migrating fish onto a ladder, a channel of water—separate from the dam's spillways—must provide an encouraging flow at the base of that ladder.

In the late 1980s, it was the vision of former NWCPUD Manager Harold Haake and the PUD board that this separate stream could pass through a turbine on its way to the fish ladder and provide a source of additional electricity. The turbine first spun in 1991.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the dams, did not take advantage of the opportunity due to its small scale. The output of the PUD's unit is rated at a maximum of 6.5 megawatts, compared to the maximum 2,100 MW for the dam as a whole.

Derrick Mauritson, chief operator of The Dalles hydro project, says the facility generates a steady 5 MW.

Greg Hendricks, his counterpart at McNary, says the facility there came online in 1997. It's a larger setup that delivers just more than 10 MW. Half of that goes to Klickitat PUD, which jointly finances the project with Northern Wasco County PUD.

A distant view of the turbine housing at McNary Dam.

Between the 5 MW generated at The Dalles and an equal amount from their share of the McNary output, the two sources account for about 10% of the energy distributed by NWPUD. Assistant General Manager Kurt Conger says that

equals about 80,000 MW hours per year.

"The key is they provide renewable energy around the clock, with little variation between winter and summer or day and night," he says.

That base load is what provides stability when mixed with wind or solar. The wind does not always blow and the sun does not always shine, but the river always runs.

When the projects began, the output of power was contracted to other utilities and the revenues used to pay off the bonds. Since then, the power has been available locally. With a lower cost than the power bought from the Bonneville Power Association, it helps keep down the cost to local ratepayers.

The units each have 50-year licenses from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The Dalles will be up for renewal in 2041 and McNary in 2047.

Nonelectrical systems are needed to keep the turbines turning. These systems include hydraulics, CO_2 fire control and a compressed nitrogen system that can shut down the system mechanically in the event of an electrical failure. Everything is backed up with multiple redundancies.

But the operation of the two sites is more than just equipment. A five-person crew works standard Monday through Friday hours at both locations. All are on-call around the clock if there are any interruptions or problems.

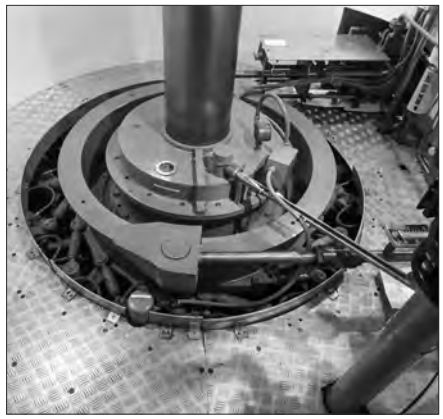
Automatic systems generate text messages and phone calls for any out-of-normal operations.

There is dedication and camaraderie among the crews.

"This is the best work community I've ever had experience with, hands down," says Cherish Southard, who began as a trainee at The Dalles operation and now works full time. She studied electro-mechanical technology at Columbia Gorge Community College.

That message is echoed by several workers at each site, praising management as supportive and caring while maintaining high standards.

The Dalles Dam crew, from left, are Nicholas Atchley, Bob McBain, Cherish Southard, Derrick Mauritson and Nathaniel Brunoe.



The shaft of the turbine at The Dalles Dam.

Kurt returns the compliment.

"It's a real comfort knowing that every day we have a solid, professional crew on the job," he says.

Two nickels sit on edge on top of the housing that holds the turbine at The Dalles. One was set there decades ago. A second was added recently after most of the original crew retired, and the new crew wanted a representation of its own.

The turbine is so well balanced that the nickels remain on edge. They are fitting symbols for the PUD itself: sturdy, dependable and well-balanced. ■

NORTHERN WASCO COUNTY PUD

Community Calendar

- **November 11: Veterans Day parade, The Dalles**
- **November 23: St. Peter's 41st annual holiday bazaar, 1112 Cherry Heights Road, The Dalles**
- **The Dalles City Council meets the second and fourth Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m, with the exception of August and holidays, at City Hall.**
- **The Board of County Commissioners meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Wasco County Courthouse.**

Things That Make You Go Vroom

Restored prize-winning vintage vehicles and hot rods trigger sentimental memories

By Dianna Troyer

Sometimes a car is more than just a car. For Mick Hoover of Mackay and Jamie Hjelm of Arco, their restored vintage vehicles and hot rods are tangible reminders of loved ones who have died, yet still have a lingering presence in their lives.

Their cars trigger sentimental memories not only for themselves, but for spectators who see them at car shows, national auctions and parades.

To celebrate the joy the cars bring, Mick organized the first Mackay Car Show and Rally in late August. The event attracted like-minded car lovers who brought about 30 restorations to Tank Park for a Saturday afternoon.

"We had a good turnout with people from Blackfoot, Arco, Challis and Mackay bringing their cars or walking through," Mick says. "We'll do it again next summer."

He showed four vehicles and attributes his love of vintage cars to his father, Robert, a 44-year employee of the Ford Motor Co. in Dearborn, Michigan, where Mick grew up.

"To surprise my mom one day, he bought a new 1962 Mercury Monterey convertible off the assembly line and drove it home," Mick says. "Growing up, I loved that car but had no idea of its backstory until a few years ago."

Mick says he daydreamed of one day driving a car just like his dad's. The sleek Pacific blue sports car, with its white convertible top, turned heads. Powered by a high-performance engine, it had a shiny chrome concave grill and dual headlights. Inside, its glimmering silver dashboard was designed with space-aged styling of the day and even had the luxury of a clock. Blue bucket seats matched the exterior color.

When Mick moved to Idaho, he restored cars in his spare time while working as assistant manager at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's fish hatchery north of Mackay. After work, he kept searching the internet for a car like his dad's. In 2013, he finally found one in Vale, Oregon.

"It was just like my dad's—same color and a one-owner survivor with only 80,000 original miles," Mick says. "I didn't tell Mom I was buying it until I pulled up to her house. That's when she told me what my dad had done."

Mick says his Mercury reminds him of his father's grit and perseverance.

"He worked his way up through Ford's vocational school after World War II," he says. "He started as a tool and die maker, then became an industrial machine repairman, a draftsman and finally a design engineer supervisor."

Recently retired, Mick, 63, is a Fish and Game volunteer and historian. He is also caretaker of another popular vehicle at the show. A bright turquoise 1957 Chevrolet half-ton pickup was used to stock fish

at the department's hatcheries near Sandpoint and Hagerman. Restored at Mick's suggestion in 2002, it has a 200-gallon fish tank on its bed.

Mick also restored a 1962 Ford Falcon, a homely yet reliable work car he found on a farm south of town.

"It got me to work every day," Mick says. "When I retired a few months ago, I thought it deserved to look pretty."

Jamie enjoys the restoration process for another reason.

Whenever Jamie, 60, makes a car look pretty again, he is honoring his mentor Milo Jacobsen, a quadriplegic neighbor who taught him to do auto bodywork during high school.

"Milo took me under his wing because he saw how much I loved cars," says Jamie, who brought three hot rods to the show.

Paralyzed from a diving accident in a swimming pool, Milo hired Jamie to care for him.

"From my freshman to junior years in high school, every morning and evening, I'd get him dressed, and bathe and feed him," says Jamie, who grew up in the Basalt area near Firth. "After school and on weekends, I'd put him in his wheelchair, and we'd go out to his garage. He taught me what to do."

Proficient enough at age 17 for his first job, Jamie painted a neighbor's 1964 Chevy pickup for $20.

"It all started there," he says.

Jamie owns Lost River Auto Body north of Arco. Whatever car he restores, he is meticulous about installing modern mechanical parts and doing all the bodywork himself.

His most recent restoration is a rare 1929 Model A Ford Woody. A five-year project in his spare time, Jamie customized it with suicide doors, chrome engine parts, and ash and maple side panels. The blonde-colored wood, varnished to a mirror shine, complements the red exterior.

"It was exciting to finally drive it for the first time this summer," Jamie says. "I bought the frame from a friend, Dick Brooks in Idaho Falls, who was another mentor. He passed away before he could finish it, so restoring it was a tribute to him."

When he takes his hot rods to shows, Jamie says he cares more about what spectators—not judges—think of his creations.

"I build with presentation in mind," he says. "My cars should draw an audience, or I'm not happy. I put in features that make people want to stop and look further—whether it's chrome in the engine compartment or other details."

Continues on page 8

Opposite page,coming home from a car show in Challis, Jamie and Kathy Hjelm stopped near Mount Borah to photograph their hot rods. From left, a 1936 Ford Coupe, a 1932 Ford truck and a 1929 Model A Ford Woody. Above, for the first time this summer, the Hjelms drove their 1929 Model A Ford Woody.

Hot Rods and Vintage Cars

Continued from page 5

He is rarely disappointed. Of the countless awards he has won during the past three decades, Jamie is proudest of winning Rodder's Choice twice at the Jackson Rod Run in Wyoming for his rare cherry-red three-window 1936 Ford Coupe.

After finding only its frame on eBay, he hauled it home from South Dakota and transformed it into a showstopper.

"The award was special because spectators voted," he says. "The show attracts the best of the best, and work on most cars is subbed out. The cars I enter in shows are all homebuilt. Every bit is done right at our shop, except the upholstery, which I hire out."

One unforgettable restoration was a 1940 Ford Coupe that sold at the renowned Mecum Auctions in Kansas City. Jamie painted it a split two-tone of burgundy and champagne with candy flames along the sides. Candy refers to a translucent color coat that shines in the sunlight to create a candy-like sheen.

"Someone saw it in Jackson and offered me cash on the spot, then later sold it through Mecum," Jamie says.

While Jamie likes to see spectators' reactions at shows, his wife, Kathy, says people's comments resonate with her.

"Jamie's cars bring back memories for so many," she says. "People tell me, 'We used to have this growing up, or a relative had one just like it. I wish it had stayed in the family.' "

Along with the Woody and coupe, the Hjelms have a 1932 canary yellow Ford pickup truck.

"It's the only one I didn't restore," he says. "It was an impulse buy at a show in Salmon 18 years ago. I saw it was for sale and knew Kathy would like it."

The Hjelms have passed their love of cars to their son Randy, 25. After graduating from the College for Creative Studies, he was hired two years ago as an advanced exterior designer at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles in Auburn Hills, Michigan.

Randy remembers sketching cars as a child and discovering his passion at age 13.

"My whim of curiosity and growing up with my parents' hot rods turned into a life-changing career choice," he says. "We're hurtling into an era of electrification and autonomous transportation, so it's the responsibility of designers to turn futuristic products into beautiful and innovative sculptures for the road."

To Jamie, an innovative and attractive car for its time was a 1964 Impala Super Sport—the first car he bought in 1979 when he was 19.

Although people have asked Jamie if he would sell his customized cars, he declines their offers.

"They're all fun to drive," he says.

He is uncertain what his next project will be, but whatever it is, he says he plans to make it another people's choice winner. ■

From top, Kathy drives a bright canary yellow truck in a parade in Arco. The hood ornament of the 1936 Ford Coupe is popular with car show spectators. Mick Hoover bought a head-turner car like his dad drove: a Pacific blue 1962 Mercury Monterey convertible.

A Sense of Place
Through Serving Others

Tillamook woman looks for ways to help her hometown thrive

By Denise Porter

Ashley Christensen recalls feeling a deep pull to invest in her community after her oldest daughter, Harlow, was born three-and-a-half years ago.

Ashley graduated from Tillamook High School in 2008. Both she and her husband, Ty, come from large families in Tillamook County.

Ty and Ashley had contemplated leaving the area, but after Harlow was born, they wanted to raise their child near both families.

As Ashley was juggling the roles of wife, employee and newly minted mother, she felt a pull to volunteer and become a deeper part of her hometown, too.

"I told myself if I don't love all of the things about my town, instead of complaining I should get involved and navigate it in a direction I want it to go," Ashley says.

That's how Ashley found herself at a Rotary International meeting one Tuesday when Harlow was 4 months old. Since then, she has become an active Rotary member.

Members of the Tillamook Rotary Club display "go bags" they assembled for children transitioning to foster homes. From left are Ashley Christensen, Brett Hurliman, Ken Haltiner, Kris Lachenmeier and Judy Mammano.

Photos courtesy of the Tillamook Rotary Club

"There are so many projects going on with Rotary," she says. "The projects can be local or international, and there are projects with kids. Rotarians have so many passions that if you join, something is just going to click."

Ashley now has two daughters. She says many people her age with young children worry they won't have time for volunteer work.

"I have little kids," she says. "Sometimes I have time to give and sometimes I don't. That's OK."

Rotary International is a 110-year-old international service group boasting 1.2 million members in local chapters worldwide. Its mission is to "provide service to others, promote integrity and advance world understanding, goodwill and peace through our fellowship of business, professional and community leaders."

None of Ashley's family had been Rotary members. She confesses to not knowing what Rotary members did. She had heard about the local organization from a friend, Adam Schwend, who at that time was the group's president. Adam suggested

Tropical Fundraiser

Rotary hosts a fundraising event, "Sandals and Sunsets: a Rotary Retreat to Paradise" Saturday, November 23, at 6:30 p.m. at Pacific Restaurant. The evening is open to anyone in the community and will feature hors d'oeuvres, beverages and music. Tickets are $45 each, or four for $160.

Part of the funds raised will go to the chapter's Rotary Community Fund, which helps the Go Bag project. Ashley' Christensen's goal is to distribute 50 go bags to the Department of Human Services around Christmas, and another 50 bags at the annual Homeless Connect event in January 2020.

"Many fundraisers are auction-oriented," Ashley says. "With this, we just want people to come out and have fun. It's something you can dress up for, and we wanted it to have a tropical feel. Imagine helping the community by simply coming out on a Saturday night for a fun evening with friends."

The Tillamook Rotary Club hosts an annual prom for senior citizens in the community.

Ashley attend one of the group's weekly meetings.

"I went and felt uplifted," Ashley says.

She knew no one at the meeting except for Adam, but the group atmosphere was positive.

"So I went back the following Tuesday, and that's when Nick Troxel talked," she says.

Nick, a Rotary member, is a detective with the Tillamook Police Department. At the meeting, he spoke about children who needed to be temporarily or permanently removed from their homes and placed into the foster care system.

Nick said there was a need for personal care items for the children to use while the Department of Human Services matched a child with a foster home.

Ashley says she thought to herself, "I can help with this. How can I help make this better?"

She joined Rotary and teamed up with Nick and other Rotarians to create "go bags" for foster children. Each bag has a 24- to 48-hour supply of age-appropriate necessities for a child to use while transitioning to a foster home.

Entering its third year, the Go Bag project has helped 200 local children during traumatic times in their lives.

Many local Rotarians help with the Go Bag project. Other Rotarians work on different local, state or even international projects.

"Rotary is a group for people who maybe want to get involved, but they aren't knowing how to, or for people who want to give back, but can't make volunteering their sole purpose," Ashley says. "It's an avenue to get involved in your community."

Lisa Anderson is the current Rotary president.

"The term, 'people of action' is a big deal right now for Rotary," she says. "It's not about giving money, per se. It's more about rolling up your sleeves and building your community."

Ashley agrees, and says Lisa's leadership is invigorating.

"She is just the most giving and amazing human," she says.

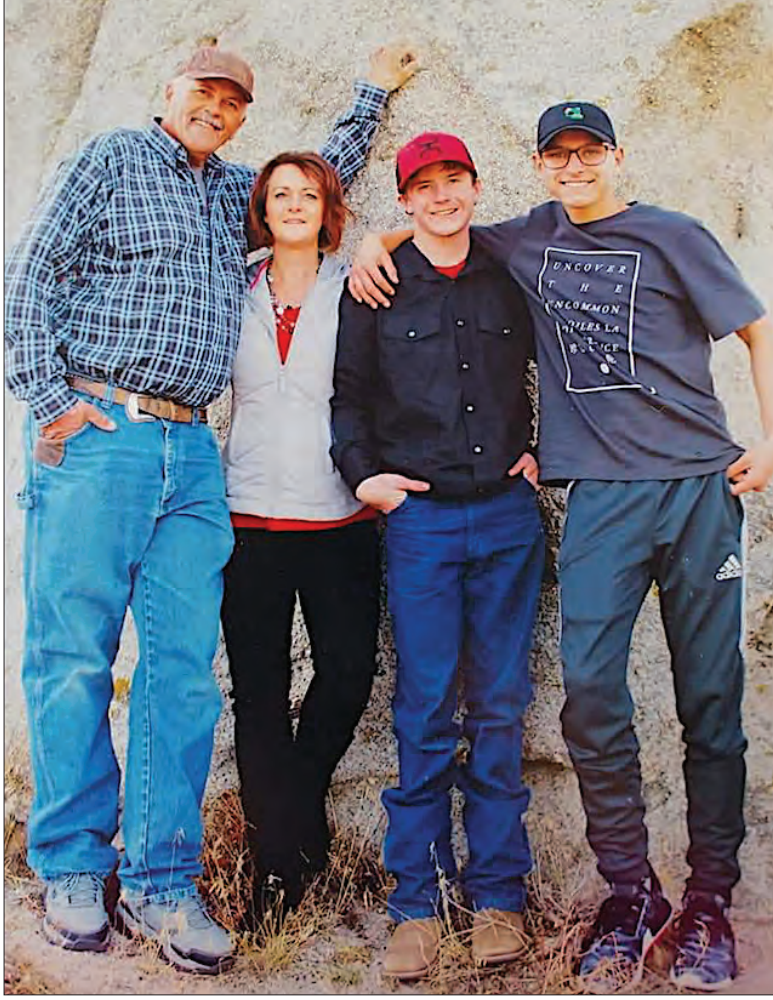
The Tillamook Rotarians are comprised of people of all ages.

"One thing that's been really wonderful is that the new membership is a younger generation, so there's people in my age group, but there's a nice age variety," Ashley says. "The seasoned Rotary members are there for guidance and knowledge. It's really fun to see people who may not have much in common come together."

Ashley says she realized she had become a behind-the-scenes person making her community a brighter place when she was picking up her niece from school.

"A child at the school was wearing a backpack that Rotary had given to DHS," she says. ■

For more information on Rotary, join the group for lunch Tuesdays at the Tillamook Elks Lodge from noon to 1 p.m.



Bill and Tonya Collins adopted their sons, Howie, left, and Druzton after being their foster parents. Photos courtesy of Bill Collins

Fostering a Loving Home

Bloodlines have little to do with family for Elko foster parents

By Dianna Troyer

Unanswerable questions nagged at Bill Collins as he waited at Elko Regional Airport to deliver 16-month-old Janice to her biological father.

"She was our first foster child and the sweetest girl," Bill says. "My wife and the social worker couldn't take her because they felt it would be too sad for them. I thought it wouldn't be an issue for me, but it was. It was heartbreaking, hearing her cry and seeing her expression. She couldn't understand what was going on, why I was giving her to a stranger."

Bill says he wondered if Janice would have a good home and whether he and his wife, Tonya, would ever see her again.

As foster parents in Elko County, Bill, 60, and Tonya, 45, have cared for 33 children from newborns to 10-year-olds. At the time they cared for Janice, they were living in Carlin, where Bill worked as a lineman for Wells Rural Electric Co., and Tonya was a cosmetologist.

"We still keep in touch with many of them as if they were our own kids," Tonya says. "We couldn't have kids of our own, so we were determined to have a family one way or another. Our journey started in 1998 and eventually led us to adopt our two sons."

Social workers at the county's Division of Child and Family Services often referred children to the couple because they welcomed those with special needs.

"Some foster parents aren't comfortable being responsible for special needs kids, but not us," Bill says. "We took care of kids with epilepsy and asthma. It didn't bother us. My family and friends have had epileptic seizures. Tonya has asthma, so we knew what we were getting into."

One of the Collins' other strengths was their willingness to support a foster child's reunification with biological parents, says Brandy Holbrook, DCFS District 1 social services manager in Elko.

"They often established relationships with the birth family to ensure the foster children had familiar contact with them, in some cases even after adoption," Brandy says.

More foster parents like Bill and Tonya are needed in Elko County, Brandy says. She relies on 15 licensed foster care families in West Wendover, Elko and Spring Creek.

"There is a foster home crisis in Elko County much like the statewide need for foster homes," she says. "When children can't stay safely in their care provider's home, they're moved to the nearest available foster home, which may remove them from their community and school. It's traumatic, so if they can remain in their community it lessens the trauma."

Some foster parents, like Bill and Tonya, adopt the children they care for. To raise awareness about adoption, especially for those in foster care, Elko County celebrates National Adoption Awareness Month every November.

This year, Elko judges

picked November 15 as the day to devote their courtrooms to legalizing adoptions for kids coming from foster care or private situations involving extended family or stepparents.

"For us, celebrating our sons' adoption day is as important as their birthday," Tonya says. "Every year, we have two parties."

Howie, 19, was adopted September 2, 2003. Druzton, 16, legally became part of the family December 19, 2005. Before Bill and Tonya could adopt, the boys' biological parents had to relinquish custody.

"Howie was in Fallon with his dad out of the picture due to drugs and his mom unable to care for him," Tonya says. "We've kept in touch with his dad's side of the family. They came to his high school graduation."

Howie works for Pilot Thomas Logistics in Carlin.

Druzton was 5 weeks old when a social worker called to see if Bill and Tonya would foster him.

"I told her I didn't even want to know the details and asked her how soon she would bring him," Tonya says. "It was a Friday in December with the busyness of the holidays, but we had his room ready with a crib by Monday."

With his parents' encouragement, Druzton has become an accomplished wrestler. A sophomore, he competes for the Spring Creek High School Spartans. Last year, he won a USA Wrestling Nevada state championship at 119 pounds.

Druzton celebrates with his coach after winning the 2018 USA Wrestling Nevada state championship title.

The Spartans' wrestling team has won the North 3A Division state title the past three years.

"We moved to Spring Creek to give him the opportunity to be part of their program," says Bill, an engineering technician and lineman who works in WREC's Wells office.

While providing a forever home for Howie and Dru, the Collins always wondered about their first foster child, Janice. Nearly two decades after Bill took her to the airport, his question of whether she would even remember them was finally answered.

"About 18 months ago, she found us on Facebook," Bill says. "She lives in Arkansas and has two kids. We're figuring out a time to get together."

Bill and Tonya encourage others to become foster parents.

"It's challenging," Bill says, "but the rewards are worth it." ■

To become a foster parent, call DCFS in Elko at 775-753-1300 or 888-423-2659.

Howie's extended biological family and the Collinses celebrate his 2018 graduation from Carlin High School.

Transmission towers at John Day Dam help carry power across the Northwest. Mount Hood is in the background.

Photos courtesy of Army Corps of Engineers

The State of Dams Today

We flip a switch and the lights come on. Where does that power come from?

By Lisa Jacoby

The story of power in the Pacific Northwest traces back to the 1930s with the building of Bonneville Dam. The Bonneville Power Administration was created in 1937 to market the electricity created at that dam and subsequent federal dams.

Today, BPA markets power generated at 31 federal dams in the Northwest.

The dams generate power using water, but BPA had to build transmission lines to deliver the electricity. Today, that system includes more than 15,000 miles of lines.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative buys power from BPA, which is required by law to give preference to Northwest utilities owned and operated by the people they serve. These include public utility districts, city-owned utilities and electric cooperatives.

According to an article in Forbes Magazine March 8, 2018, more than 20 million consumers are served by BPA in the Pacific Northwest and Tennessee Valley Authority in the Southeast. Both provide the nation's cheapest and most reliable power.

The dam system, however, hasn't avoided controversy during the past 82 years.

Ted Case, executive director of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, theorizes one reason dams are under scrutiny is simply the age of the hydro projects.

"Over time they have lost the 'shiny penny' status," he says.

Now the focus is on harnessing power through wind and solar.

"Lost in that newness are the very large federal hydro projects," Ted says. "We have to do a better job telling the story."

Younger generations are especially focused on green and renewable energy, which describes both wind and solar projects—and hydropower.

Finding a solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a priority. Although cap-and-trade legislation didn't pass in the 2019 session, Ted says Oregon legislators intend to revisit a version of that bill.

Solar and wind power earn most of the credit for being renewable energy. However, hydropower and the dams are an important part of that equation.

Hydropower is 100% emission-free. Power from BPA is

Riggers and mechanics attach a lifting device for a generator at Bonneville Dam.

approximately 95% emission-free due to a mixture of natural gas-powered generation plants.

"When you are 95% emission-free, you are doing your part," Ted says. "Very few utilities have that kind of clean energy profile anywhere in the world."

In his role with ORECA, Ted often visits the Oregon state Capitol to speak with legislators and explains how hydropower fits their clean energy goal.

"I try to be proactive and tell the story because it is a good story," he says.

Reliability of hydropower is part of that story. When a dam is built, it creates a reservoir behind it that acts as a storage for potential energy. If more electricity is needed, more water can flow through the turbines to create it.

Compare this with other sources of renewable energy. Solar power depends on the sun. Cloudy days and darkness interfere with power generation. The wind must blow for wind power.

Hydropower can complement these sources.

"There is absolutely no way they will get to carbon-free without the federal hydro system," Ted says.

Kurt Miller agrees. He is executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses.

"If we want more solar and more wind, hydro is the way to get there," Kurt says. "Hydropower can quickly adjust to match the minute-to-minute changes in solar and wind output. The grid has to remain in almost perfect balance."

In his work, Kurt emphasizes the carbon-free attributes of hydropower—especially with the eventual retirement of coal plants on the horizon, which could create an energy shortfall and the risk of blackouts.

The Issue of Fish

In his work at ORECA, Ted has seen proposals to breach the dams and proposals to sell the dams to private business.

How that power will be replaced if even a few dams are removed is unknown.

"If you take out enough power to light the city of Seattle, how do you replace that?" Ted asks.

A big concern is fish, particularly salmon that migrate up and down the Snake and Columbia rivers.

"They were all built with fish-passage facilities," Kurt says of the eight dams on the lower Columbia and Snake rivers.

Work has continued to help boost the salmon population. Since 1981, BPA has spent nearly $17 billion on fish and wildlife-related activities funded through rates charged to utilities.

For customers who buy power from a BPA-sourced utility, approximately 15% of the bill goes toward these programs. Those billions of dollars have created fish bypass systems such as removable spillway weirs, which increased the survival of juvenile salmon to as much as 99%.

Dams are just one part of the salmon's life cycle, which includes a journey to and from the ocean.

"The ocean itself is fraught with peril," Kurt says.

Climate change also can affect salmon by raising the water temperature.

"We are facing a legitimate climate crisis, and we have an important opportunity to do more by understanding the critical capabilities of the hydropower system," Kurt says. "The Northwest is already a leader in clean, renewable energy, with almost 50% of the region's electricity coming from hydropower. We need to continue to use hydropower to integrate more renewables in a completely carbon-free way."

According to Northwest RiverPartners, many electric utilities in the Pacific Northwest already use hydropower paired with wind and solar to balance the grid and combine renewable energy sources.

For the four dams under scrutiny, their ability to support the addition of intermittent renewables, such as wind and solar power, will be critical to combatting the devastating effects of climate change on orcas and salmon.

"We need the clean, carbon-free energy produced by the dams today and in the future," says Sandra Ghormley, OTEC's director of member services. "We should not underestimate the value and important role the dams in the Columbia River basin have in solving emission problems.

"Wind and solar definitely have an important role in the energy solutions market, but they do not work all the time," she says. "Clean hydropower systems can fill in the gaps so electrical service remains dependable, accessible and affordable to all consumers in the Pacific Northwest." ■

Baker City veterinarian Brett Hamilton examines Honey, a Shetland sheepdog, after she spent six cold days outdoors.

Photos courtesy of Lise Madson

Protect Your Pets in Harsh Winter Weather

Make sure your animal friends stay warm during the season's colder temperatures

By Susan Parrish

During a bitter cold spell last winter, Lise Madson's Shetland sheepdog, Honey, escaped her enclosure on Lise's ranch between Baker and Richland, wandered off and was lost. Lise worried. Honey is not a ranch dog and stands only 15 inches tall. The snow was 3 feet deep.

Lise called an expert in finding lost dogs, who instructed her to take one of her old T-shirts with her scent on it, cut it into 1-inch squares and scatter them in a broad area where her dog might be.

Lise also called a drone operator, who spotted blood in the snow and sign of a scuffle.

When Lise drove to that bloody spot in the snow, she found small dog tracks nearby. About a half-mile from there, she found Honey huddled under a tree, one of the places Lise had put a T-shirt square with her scent.

Veterinarian Brett Hamilton of Baker Veterinary Hospital examined Honey. She was cold, hungry and running a fever, but unharmed. The dog had been missing for six days.

"I was about ready to give up that I'd find her," Lise says. "It was a very happy ending."

How cold will it get?

There's no denying it: Winter is coming. "The Old Farmer's Almanac" warns Eastern Oregonians, "Prepare to shiver with below-normal winter temperatures."

Exactly how cold it will get is anybody's guess. Oregon's coldest temperature on record was February 10, 1933, when both Seneca and Ukiah recorded minus 54 degrees. In January 2017, the temperature in Seneca dipped to minus 33.

How cold is too cold for pets?

"The temperature pets can tolerate depends on the critter, from the husky dogs who like the cold weather to kitties and short-haired dogs who don't," says veterinarian Colleen Robertson of John Day River Veterinary Center. "It also depends on the pet's health condition. Dogs with heart conditions and old critters tend to need more cover."

"If it's cold for you, a human being, it will be cold for your pet," adds John

Eastern Oregon Animal Experts Offer Tips to Keep Pets Safe

Eastern Oregonians are used to protecting themselves in cold weather, but what about their pets? Local veterinarians and animal shelters offer the following tips.

John Brinlee, director, Animal Rescue and Adoption Center of Eastern Oregon/Blue Mountain Humane Association, La Grande

- Animals that are left outside need shelter. Animals in the wild can find shelter and get out of the elements. If pets are tied up or in a fenced yard, they rely on humans to provide that shelter.
- Add warmth to the shelter. If a dog isn't allowed in the house, put blankets or a dog bed in the dog house, and warm the dog house with a lightbulb. Another option is to put the dog in a barn, shop or shed to keep them out of the weather.

Christina Danforth, DVM, Animal Health Center, La Grande

- If you're going cross-country skiing or snowshoeing and bringing your dog, protect its pads from cuts and frostbite with insulated snow boots.
- If they're going to spend lots of time outdoors, short-haired dogs can wear a coat to keep warm.
- Provide extra food. Pets burn more calories during the winter to keep warm, so they need more calories.
- Be cautious if applying de-icer to your porch. A pet can track it onto its feet and then licks its paws. It's toxic.
- Cats like to curl up inside the hoods of vehicles because they're warm. Some cats crawl underneath vehicles for warmth. Check your car before you start your engine. Honk the horn.
- Provide an insulated shelter that's off the cold ground for barn cats and feral cats to prevent them from getting frostbite on their ears and paws.

Colleen Robertson, DVM, John Day River Veterinary Center, John Day

- Provide drinking water. One of the biggest winter concerns for pets is not drinking enough water and not having access to potable water. This leads to pets with urinary problems. In subfreezing weather, it doesn't take long for a pet's water dish to freeze. The solution is a heated bowl, which can be bought at feed and hardware stores.
- Put some kind of identification on your pets, especially dogs. Hunting season is here. When a dog doesn't have a microchip or ID tag, it is difficult to figure out where the animal belongs.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia in your pet, which is more frequent than frostbite. As with people, hypothermia is seen in both young and old pets. Dogs suffering from hypothermia shiver. Cats will roll up into a ball because they are trying to conserve their body heat. Look for pets that are lethargic, moving slowly and not eating.

Lise Madson turned to an expert to help find her dog, Honey, who disappeared duiring cold and snowy weather.

Brinlee, director of the Animal Rescue and Adoption Center of Eastern Oregon/Blue Mountain Humane Association. "Even with fur, animals still get cold—especially dogs that are short haired."

Every year, the center rescues hundreds of animals—mostly cats and dogs—but also rabbits, snakes, horses, sheep and goats. The center sometimes sees more lost dogs during the winter when snowdrifts reach to the top of fences and animals climb out and wander away from home.

It is better to be safe and prepared, rather than sorry later. Your life and your furry friend's may depend upon it. ■

Scan this code with your phone or device to learn more tips on pet safety this holiday season.

The Spirit of the Season Awaits

Both male and female reindeer grow antlers. Palmer, shown here, is the only steer in the herd at Santa's Reindeer Farm in Eatonville.

Santa's reindeer farm offers family fun

By Rick Stedman

Living with a bit of holiday spirit year-round is a side benefit if you own reindeer.

From November through December, Santa's Reindeer Co., a family-owned business in Eatonville, shares its Christmas spirit with everyone it can.

In addition to the five reindeer that visitors love to feed, pet and pose with for photos, this Eatonville menagerie provides a magical and memorable holiday spirit for many who visit.

The business, a USDA-licensed facility, includes Cheryl and Stan Osborne, their daughter Kelli and her husband Brad and Kelli's teenaged-grandchildren Chace and Chaeley.

"We just love the holidays and love sharing these docile animals with the public," Cheryl says. "They bring such joy to everyone who comes to see them in person. It's like this is a real connection with the holidays, and the spirit of the holidays, too.

"The kids really love the animals and realize how special it is to have reindeer living at their 5-acre farm. They also participate in events with us and help with tours here at the farm. It's not every day you can say you have a pet reindeer that you take for a walk!"

A Magical Accident

It was by mere happenstance that the reindeers flew into the Osborne family. Several years ago, Cheryl was searching the internet looking for a new puppy she

came across a reindeer for sale ad. Cheryl asked Stan if he wanted to buy a few reindeer and thier new lives raising the antlered pets began.

The stars of Santa's Reindeer Co. are Sprinkles, Holly, Palmer, Willow and Jingle Belle, and two Mediterranean miniature donkeys named Lucy Lou and Daisy Duke.

"Each of the donkeys stands about 30 inches high at the shoulder, and they kind of act like big playful puppies," Stan says.

Palmer, the only steer in the reindeer herd, was born in Palmer, Alaska. He has become close friends with Chief, a rambunctious and playful shepherd/ Norwegian elkhound mix. Together, they run up and down the field next to their home, and enjoy each other's company. According to Kelli, Chief begins looking out the window from inside the house as soon as the sun rises, searching for his pal outside.

"He can't wait to get down to the field each morning to run with Palmer," she says.

Reindeer Facts

Most Americans are familiar with the stories of clicking sounds as Santa's reindeer walk across thousands of rooftops on Christmas Eve. According to Stan, there is more truth than fiction in those tales.

"Reindeer hoofs create that clicking sound with almost every step," he says.

Here are a few more reindeer facts, according to the National Wildlife Federation:

- In North America, reindeer are also called caribou.
- Both males and females grow antlers.
- Their noses are specially designed to warm the air before it gets to their lungs.
- Reindeer hooves expand in summer when the ground is soft and shrink in winter when the ground is hard.

The Osbornes invite everyone to experience Christmas at Santa's Reindeer Farm November 16 - 17 and November 23-24. There will be a photo studio to capture special moments with Santa, the reindeer, and mini donkeys.

Visitors can also catch up with the reindeer and donkeys at several tree lighting ceremonies, including the Old Cannery in Sumner Bridge, Proctor District and Maple Valley. Other special visits will include Sunrise Village on South Hill and the Victorian Country Christmas, both in Puyallup. Cheryl reminds visitors, they require reservations if patrons wish to visit the animals, and payment is required at the time of the reservation .

"We're a small family business, and we're not making any money in this uncharted territory," Stan says. "We just love what we're doing — sharing the spirit of Christmas with visitors. We've met some incredible individuals who love the reindeer and the spirit of the holidays as much as we do. We also help them better understand reindeer and enjoy the Christmas season." ■

The full event schedule can be found on their website, www.santasreindeercompany.

During the holidays, families enjoy mingling with Santa's reindeer and the miniature donkeys, too.

Gillnetting on the Columbia River

Hans Hurula with his gillnet. Hans drowned while fishing on the Columbia River in 1956.

Elmer Hurula on his fishing boat— the Marjorie—which was named for his eldest daughter.

Photos courtesy of the Hurula family

A Clatskanie family has a rich history in a celebrated profession

By Scott Laird

Commercial fishing on the Columbia River has a long and storied history. It was a traditional way of life for several generations of families, with gillnetters leading the way and adapting their profession as conditions, techniques and equipment changed and became modernized.

The industry flourished for a full century, starting in the late 1800s, with communities such as Clatskanie taking root along the river and families earning their living through the trade.

One of those families was the Hurulas. Three members of the Hurula family still call Clatskanie home: siblings Donna Hurula Garlock, Sharon Hurula Krause and Larry Hurula.

"In the early 1900s when Clatskanie was just getting started, gillnetting and the timber industry were the mainstays for this town," Sharon says.

Gillnetting on the Columbia River started with drift fishing in the early 1850s. Early fishing boats were powered by oars and then sails. Fishermen drifted down river and then drifted back up river with the tides. Around 1900, they started using gasoline-powered engines.

The growing industry required laborers for fishing and canning. Immigrants from Scandinavia, the Mediterranean and Asian countries filled much of the need, and year-round fishing communities sprang up along the Columbia River. Astoria became a major cannery center, and the industry flourished.

Immigrants brought the tradition of gillnetting with them, and it became the method of choice from the mouth of the

From left, Donna Hurula Garlock, Larry Hurula and Sharon Hurula Krause, all still residents of Clatskanie, remember the days of gillnet fishing fondly.

Columbia up river to Celilo Falls.

Donna, Sharon and Larry's grandfather, Arvid, came to the United States in 1904 from Finland when he was 17 years old. Their grandmother arrived earlier in 1896. Donna says they always thought their grandfather left Finland to find better economic opportunities in America, but there is also a family story about some trouble with the law that involved poaching a moose in Finland.

Arvid did carpentry work and raised a family of six girls and two boys. He also became a fisherman to feed the family, and gillnetting became the family's livelihood. His son Elmer—Donna, Sharon and Larry's father—left school in the eighth grade to help his father during the May fishing season in 1923 and never returned to school.

Arvid's older son, Hans, also became a fisherman. Hans drowned while gillnetting on the Columbia in 1956.

The Hurula family lived on a 14-acre farm on Wallace Slough, west of Clatskanie on River Front Road, with an orchard and a big garden, where they also raised mint.

Elmer died in 1996. Larry and his brother, Gordon, who died in 2012, became the third generation of Hurulas to earn their living by fishing.

The Hurulas didn't just fish on the Columbia River. Larry spent 49 years in Bristol Bay, Alaska, along with time on Puget Sound.

"On the Columbia, we'd start in January, fishing for smelt with a dip net, and then start fishing for winter salmon in February," Larry says. "In May, we'd fish for salmon and then fish for blueback salmon in June. In August, we'd gillnet for Chinook salmon, and in September there would be silvers and salmon at the same time."

Some years, he would head to Alaska in May to fish for king and sockeye salmon.

Gillnetting involves a variety of skills that have been learned over generations, mostly through experience. It takes an understanding of the fish's habits, knowing the drifts and currents of the river, and understanding the tides.

Gillnetters experimented with their nets and adapted their equipment, changing the sizes of the mesh and the material of their nets to best meet the conditions where they fished.

One of the most important skills was making gillnets, known as "knitting net." Elmer was known for knitting and mending his own nets. The family has a number of his wooden net needles, all hand carved by Elmer.

A gillnet has a cork line sewn into the top of the net to keep it floating. A line of lead weights is sewn into the bottom so the net sinks and opens to catch the fish.

"The art of it was knowing how many corks and leads to put on your net so you could catch the fish," Donna explains. "It was amazing to watch him making those nets, because he was so efficient and knew just when to make the knots."

Old-time gillnetters hauled in—or "picked"—their nets full of fish by hand, before boats added a reel to pull in the nets. Originally the nets were hauled in from the stern, or rear, of the boat, but when engines were added, nets were picked from the bow. Known as Columbia River bow pickers, that style of boat was made famous by the gillnetters.

Fishermen on the Columbia River would draw numbers from a hat each day to see who would get to go first, and in which location they got to fish to make their drifts. Donna remembers riding her bike to the drawing to find out what number their father got and then reporting back to their mother.

As new materials became available, the gillnet industry evolved. Power rollers made it easier to pick the nets. Larry says he was one of the last fishermen picking his nets by hand in 1986. Nets were made from nylon instead of linen. Boats, originally made from Port Orford cedar or oak, were made from fiberglass.
Larry says there are just a few days left each year when commercial fishermen can still work on the main stem of the Columbia River.

"We've lost most of it," Larry says. "There's still a few terminals left at Youngs Bay, Big Creek and Knappa."

Larry doesn't fish now, but says it was a great life.

"It provided a good living," Sharon says. "We never went hungry." ■

Couple Hopes to Expand 'Loving Care' Pet Charity

By Dianna Troyer

Some coincidences in life defy logic. For Panaca residents Susan and Max Austgen, a series of unusual events guided them in their quest to open a veterinary clinic in Lincoln County.

Since launching Loving Care Animal Society in 2012 in Panaca, Max, 62, and Susan, 60, agree it's easier to go with the flow than try to make sense of the countless can-this-really-be-happening moments of the past several years.

"So many God-things have happened with specific timing of events, we just have to laugh," Susan says. "In hindsight, we see how one thing has led to another. After we moved here, we knew we wanted to help dogs and cats but had no idea how we would do that."

Twenty years ago, Max and Susan moved from Las Vegas to Panaca to be near family. In 2001, they bought an acre of bare ground on Main Street as an investment, not knowing what they would one day build on it. Plying their skills as carpenters, they began buying, remodeling and selling or renting homes.

As they worked, they were saddened to see stray cats and dogs roaming around because county officials could not afford to build or staff an animal shelter. They were also surprised to learn the nearest veterinary clinic was 80 miles away in Cedar City, Utah.

"We never had children, so our pets are the loves of our life," Susan says of their six dogs, nine indoor cats and about 15 spayed and neutered outdoor cats.

While providing care and finding homes for stray cats and dogs on their own time, the Austgens envisioned one day opening a veterinary clinic and eventually an animal shelter.

"We were brainstorming about starting a nonprofit and decided on a name that reflected what we hoped to provide," Susan says.

After naming their organization Loving Care Animal Society, they needed a building. School bus drivers since 2010, Max and Susan were acquainted with local educators who were familiar with the couple's goals for Loving Care. In September 2013, Lincoln County High School administrators offered them an unused 25-foot-by-70-foot building that once housed art classes and a weight room.

The Austgens hired a contractor to dig and pour a basement for it on their Main Street property. Needing stairs to access the basement, they happened to find exactly what they wanted while visiting family in Sandy Valley.

"We couldn't believe it; there was a flight of commercial-grade metal stairs in a field," Max says. "We asked the landowner why it was there, and he told us to just take it because it was there when he bought the place. The run and rise of the steps and its length were perfect for our basement."

With a building for Loving Care, they applied to the Internal Revenue Service for nonprofit status and received approval in 2014.

To generate income for low-cost spays and neuters and pet food, they opened a thrift store in the building.

"All the money raised at the store goes back into Loving Care," Susan says. "We don't take a salary."

Last year, they helped provide for 125 spays and neuters.

Susan says the thrift store has benefited local residents as well as pets. With community donations, they have provided free clothes to teenagers who served their court sentences at Caliente Youth Center nearby and needed suitable attire for jobs. Other residents have done their court-ordered community service at the thrift store.

"We're grateful to have tremendous community support and donations for the store,"

Susan says.

While pleased to have developed the spay-and-neuter program, Max and Susan still hope to eventually open a vet clinic.

"We wondered how we could afford to equip it," Susan says. "Then one day a woman who was passing through town stopped by the thrift store and told us about Humane Network."

The Reno-based organization supports animal welfare organizations in Nevada and

is affiliated with Maddie's Pet Project, which was established by software entrepreneurs Dave and Cheryl Duffield to honor their dog, Maddie, a miniature schnauzer. The Duffields contracted with Humane Network to implement programs in Nevada to benefit pets.

Susan contacted the network and described what they had accomplished and their goals.

"They sent a rep out and pledged to help us through grants and fundraisers," Susan says. "Once the clinic is equipped—and we hope to do that within the next year—we'll be looking for a veterinarian. We can't wait to see how that will unfold."

As their search for a veterinarian progresses, Susan says she will post updates to lovingcareanimalsociety.org

The thrift store is open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations may be dropped off at 1285B Main St. in Panaca or mailed to P.O. Box 284, Panaca, NV 89042.

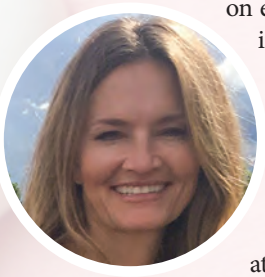
Above, Max and Susan Austgen painted the Loving Care building John Deere yellow and green as a tribute to agriculture in Lincoln County. Left, Scobby Doo fetches a ball in a dog park Max and Susan built next to the Loving Care building. They adopted Scooby after he was found on Panaca Summit.

Photos by Kristy Shoup

KEEP SMILING

Tooth BUDDS program brings dental care to area schools

MiQuel McRae, as a registered dental hygienist from Pima, was in a continuing education class in 2016 when she suddenly thought to herself, "How can I help my community?"



MiQuel McRae

She learned that Greenlee County ranked lowest in the state for children who had received dental care in the past year.

Having worked in private practice in the region, MiQuel didn't know that outside the walls of her dental office was a population in dire need of professional dental services. She was interested in public health, but because her community lacked a public dental health clinic, she didn't know how she could make a difference.

MiQuel's direction came from a new program offered by the American Dental Association called the Community Dental Health Coordinator. As part of the completion of this year-long course, MiQuel put her ideas into a class project. She wrote her first start-up grant to provide dental education and screenings to underserved children in Greenlee and Graham counties.

Today, her class project has blossomed into a nonprofit organization called Tooth BUDDS (Bringing Understanding of Dental Disease to Schools), focused on ensuring children in southern rural Arizona receive free professional preventive dental care services in their schools.

Staffed by affiliated practice dental hygienists, Tooth BUDDS provides dental screenings, cleanings, sealants, fluoride varnish, silver diamine fluoride applications and silver, modified, atraumatic, restorative, or SMART, therapy restorations, to students in both Graham and Greenlee counties.

Along with preventive measures, the organization's primary goal is to connect patients with providers.

Dr. Stacy Williams of Safford is the affiliated dentist on the team and provides dental care beyond the scope of the hygienists' practice.

Tooth BUDDS uses teledentistry to communicate urgent needs students may have so treatment can be expedited. Roughly 65% of the children seen through the program have active decay, and at least 20 to 30 students per school have never been to a dentist. With early childhood cavities being the most rampant yet preventable childhood disease, Tooth BUDDS is doing its part to ensure no child turns to drugs because of a toothache.

The program started as a one-person operation and has grown to four licensed dental hygienists and an assistant. Making visits to local schools such as Discovery Plus Academy in Pima, Tooth BUDDS team members make a 20-minute oral health presentation to classrooms to draw the connection between a healthy mouth and a healthy body. A packet of information and goodies, along with a permission slip, goes home with students.

On a return trip, Karen Turnidge and Amy Fulps, both registered dental hygienists-affiliated practice, along with Office Manager Destini Munoz, arrive at the school early to set up a portable dental office, dental chairs, sterilized dental tools, inventory, material and office supplies.

Partnering with Delta Dental Foundation of Arizona, United Way of Graham and Greenlee Counties, Arizona Community Foundation and Freeport McMoRan, the Tooth BUDDS staff takes each student participant through a professional dental hygiene appointment similar to that in a private practice. Each child receives one-on-one brushing instructions followed with a dental screening, dental cleaning and fluoride varnish. Teeth are evaluated to determine if they qualify for additional services such as sealants, silver diamine fluoride or SMART restoration.

The World Health Organization has endorsed the SMART technique as a means of restoring and preventing cavities in populations with limited access to traditional dental care. SMART restoration is a quick, painless alternative to the traditional "drill and fill" for parents of young, apprehensive children with cavities who wish to avoid or delay drills, shots, sedation or general anesthesia for their treatment. This technique halts further decay and seals the tooth using silver diamine fluoride and glass ionomer sealant in a single appointment. This technique is ideal for baby teeth that may soon fall out.

This restoration is considered temporary and only ensures the decay does not get worse. Students who receive SMART restorations are encouraged to follow up with their dentist for a complete exam with X-rays.

Students are sent home with a referral detailing the services provided during the appointment, any decay or concerns found, and a list of local dentists for further

Karen Turnidge prepares a student for a sealant treatment during a visit to an elementary school. The Tooth BUDDS program focuses on improving dental hygiene for underserved school children.

follow-up.

"Parents may not have the time or means to take their children to the dentist," Karen says. "This makes it so important that we educate the students about their oral health and do all we can to stop any visible decay that has started. Silver diamine fluoride is a game-changer for these young children who may never see a dentist in their youth."

Amy says the goal is to make a difference in the community.

"We want to prevent tooth decay and protect the teeth when they are young," she says. "It's been proven that a child experiencing a toothache will turn to drugs to alleviate the pain. Our goal is to ensure no child turns to drugs because of a toothache."

The program is working. Tooth BUDDS is already making an impact on dental health in Gila Valley.

In 2017, the first year the program went to Solomon Elementary, 68% of children had tooth decay with 193 individual cavities. In 2018, the decay rate fell to 30% with 76 cavities among students, a 50% reduction in decay through education and the preventive services. ■

Tooth BUDDS is completely grant funded. Donations help accomplish its vision that no child should suffer from dental decay. To make a donation, visit toothbudds.org or contact miquel@toothbudds.org. All donations go directly to providing free dental hygiene services to children in Graham and Greenlee counties.

Consumers Power Inc. Director of Operations Billy Terry leads the co-op's fire mitigation effort. "The key is to have a plan, act on the plan and review it annually," he said.

Photo by Brent ten Pas

Getting Ahead of the Blaze

As the Oregon Legislature considers wildfire mitigation measures, Oregon electric co-ops are implementing plans to protect their communities

By Ted Case

For Billy Terry, director of operations at Philomath-based Consumers Power Inc., wildfire is not just something that worries him as he oversees the co-op's vast utility infrastructure crossing forestland. It's something that keeps him up at night.

As a former line crew foreman with California's beleaguered Pacific Gas & Electric, Terry witnessed firsthand the devastation fire can unleash on rural communities.

"I've seen families return to their home with nothing left standing except the chimneys," Terry said. "It's an experience you will never forget."

Oregon's electric cooperatives are industry leaders when it comes to taking measures to reduce the risk of wildfires. Their proximity to state and federal forestlands has made this a priority for decades. But there is no doubt 2018's Camp Fire—California's most destructive and deadly blaze—has brought utility wildfire preparedness to the forefront of policy debates in Oregon's Capitol.

"The way we have done business in the past won't work in this new landscape, and with this

new and changing level of risk," said Leetha Tawney of Oregon Public Utilities Commission at a recent meeting on wildfire mitigation.

Gov. Kate Brown convened a governor's council on wildfire response that looks closely at the intersection of wildfire and the electric utility industry. The Oregon Legislature likely will develop legislation based on the council's recommendations during the 2020 February short session.

While Oregon's electric cooperatives will be at the table for such discussions, they haven't waited for legislation or regulations to take steps to ensure a Camp Fire-type event never occurs here.

For CPI, which has a heavily forested service territory that runs from the coast to the Cascade mountains, mitigating wildfire hazards is as fundamental as providing safe and reliable power to their members.

"The key is to have a plan, act on the plan and then review it annually," Terry said.

CPI's wildfire mitigation plan was developed based on information from state and local fire agencies, the PUC and internal risk analysis, as well as other industry-accepted practices. It consists of three main components: vegetation management, system hardening and system coordination.

CPI's vegetation management plan includes hazard tree assessment and removal, and trimming and mowing in the right-of-way. Technology plays a vital role with drone patrols and lidar (light detection and ranging). While CPI also deploys helicopters to enhance its transmission line inspection, Terry believes that in extreme fire areas there is no substitute for boots on the ground.

"We're going to increase our foot patrols of the lines prior to fire season," he said.

System hardening—building an infrastructure that can withstand a fire—includes measures such as selective wood pole replacement with alternative materials in high fire areas as well as strategically converting overhead lines to underground.

The system coordination component is what occasionally keeps Terry and his crew up at night as they alternate 24-hour monitoring of their system during red flag warnings—conditions that are ideal for wildland fire combustion.

From their dispatch center, they rely on their SCADA system to constantly monitor CPI's infrastructure in six counties and implement measures to mitigate any potential fire. These measures include isolating line not necessary for power delivery. CPI deenergized miles of non-critical power lines to help limit their fire exposure.

California's 2018 Camp Fire burned at rate of a football field every second.

Photo by kcapaldo/ Adobe Stock

CPI's hypervigilance about wildfire mitigation is based on its understanding of how a simple spark can race out of control.

"The Camp Fire burned the equivalent of a football field per second," Terry said.

Some of the highest fire risk areas identified by the state of Oregon were in CPI's service territory in the Cascade Mountains.

"It was as if they overlaid the high fire areas right on our system map," Terry said.

One of the more controversial measures that Oregon's electric cooperatives are not contemplating are public safety power shutoffs. In October, California's PG&E cut off power to hundreds of thousands of customers to prevent wildfires amid high winds and dry conditions in Northern California.

As Terry pointed out, if Oregon electric co-ops execute their comprehensive wildfire plans, they will not have to resort to more extreme—and potentially life-threatening—measures such as public safety power shutoffs to mitigate wildfire risks.

"Our job is to safely keep the lights on," Terry said. "The last thing we want to do is shut them off." ■