



the NEWS

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lane county's people paper

Saturday, December 23, 1989 Copyright (c) 1989 Springfield News

4 Sections, 40 Pages, 35 Cents

Fully charged display of joy for Christmas

By CAMI SWANSON
News Staff Writer

Dan Woodrum's home in Springfield is easy to find. It's the house with more than 5,000 Christmas lights, various holiday displays and a 10-foot "Merry Christmas" sign.

To say that Woodrum has got the Christmas spirit is understating his feelings about the holiday.

"I look forward to it every year," he says, adding that he feels a real "letdown" when it's time to pack up his holiday decorations for another year.

This year, Woodrum decided to go all out in decorating his house at 475 N. 49th St. Christmas lights adorn figures of Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman and numerous other symbols associated with the holiday. Icicles drip sparks of light into a snowbank on the garage. A Christmas tree casts a crimson glow on the left of the one-story house.

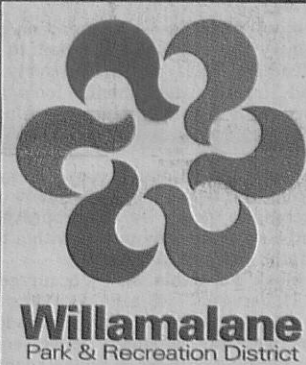
"Nowadays, Christmas means Nintendo and heavy-metal tapes," Woodrum says. "I'd like to try and bring back the old-fashioned Christmas. I'd like to bring it back that it's a special occasion."

Woodrum has planned an evening of refreshments and fun for people who drive by his house on Saturday. Santa Claus, who feels right at home at Woodrum's house, will be on hand to give out candy canes and visit with youngsters, Woodrum says.



News photo by Rob Romig

Turn to Display, Page 3A Dan Woodrum's home at 475 N. 49th St. is decorated with more than 5,000 colored Christmas lights, and he vows next year it'll be even "bigger and better"



New logo signifies diversity

Park district officials hope patrons will see just what they want to see in the new Willamalane logo, making the brightly colored pinwheel a symbol of the diversity of the community's park and recreation offerings.

"You can see waves in the logo," says David Funk of the Eugene-based Funk & Associates design firm, "or the heads of children moving in a circle." It could be a tree as seen from the air, or a circle of ducks.

"We intentionally left the image abstract so that one program wouldn't be emphasized over another," says Funk. "The visual effect we wanted was of fun, movement and color."

Chris Pryor, Willamalane's marketing supervisor, says the district paid Funk \$2,000 for the design. Pryor hopes it can be phased in over about a year's time on letterhead, vehicle designations, park signage, "everywhere the logo comes in contact with the public."

Retail boom keeps jobless rate at 5.2%

Retail employment in Lane County continued to climb in November and once again set an all-time employment record. With 800 more jobs than October's 24,100 jobs, which was the record, retail trade helped keep November unemployment at a low level, according to the Oregon Employment Division.

Although November's jobless rate of 5.2

percent represents an increase from October's 4.4 percent, it remains low for the time of year, according to area economist Ken Rocco. Total employment for November of 137,600 people is 600 higher than October and 400 higher than last November, he said.

Food production and construction each showed losses of 300 jobs while the service

and state and local public administration sectors each dropped 200 jobs. Logging, wholesale trade and transportation lost 100 jobs each.

Increases were reported in plywood and secondary wood products manufacturing, up 200 jobs.

Rocco predicted that the annual unemployment rate for 1989 will be about

5.2 percent, down from 1988's 5.5 percent.

"Overall, it will probably be the best in 20 years," he said.

Across the state, the unemployment rate climbed from 5.3 in October to 5.7 in November, adjusted for seasonal variations. The national rate rose slower, up from 5.3 in October to 5.4 in November.

The day the river gobbled up the toys

By JERRY RHODES
News Staff Writer

Twenty-five years ago, Velma Sandberg expected an ordinary Christmas. On Christmas Eve, Sandberg knew that Santa — or her husband, Sig — would retrieve the packages for their 6-year-old, Pam, from the hiding place in the attic and place them under the tree.

It would be a wet Christmas, not a white one, but that was OK. The Sandberg's home, two cabins and duplex stood on just under a half-acre of land in Blue River, with Rose Street on one side and the river on the other. You don't need to worry about high water there, they were told when they moved to Blue River in 1946. They believed their informant, a 90-year-old who came to Oregon in a wagon train.

On Dec. 19 and 20, 1964, more than three inches of rain fell into the National Weather Service's rain gauge at Mahlon Sweet Airport. More ominous, however, was the increase in temperature. By winter solstice, Dec. 21, the high at Mahlon Sweet jumped to 57 degrees. In the Cascades, the freezing level lifted above the summit of the Three Sisters. The heavy snowpack began to melt and add to the streams, swollen by another 3.25 inches of rain on the 21st.

Concerned about the unrelenting rain, the Army Corps of Engineers stopped releasing water from its dams.

The warm rain continued. On the morning of the 22nd, the low temperatures dropped to only 55 degrees and in a 28-hour period beginning at 6 p.m. Dec. 21, more than four inches of rain fell.

Still, Pat Kellison, the Sandbergs' second-oldest daughter, went to work as usual as a secretary at the U.S. Forest Service's Blue River Ranger Station.

The oldest daughter, Rosie Carver, her husband, Gene, and daughter, Glenna, lived in one of her parent's cabins. Rosie Carver was concerned about the rising water — the McKenzie River at the Coburg Road bridge was climbing steadily toward the 11-foot flood level — and moved into her parents' home just to be safe.

At 10 a.m., the McKenzie River reached its flood level in Eugene and kept climbing. In the southeast corner of the county, the first of dozens of slides damaged Highway 58 and the Southern Pacific Railroad track. The Salem-area community of Keizer was evacuated and Gov. Mark Hatfield declared the state a disaster area.

The rain continued to fall. Upstream from the Sandbergs, rising water washed downstream the debris from where Blue River Reservoir would someday be. Logs jammed against the McKenzie Highway bridge — the bridge that now carries Blue River Drive — then shot out with the power of more water than anyone had ever seen. They slammed into the bank below the Sandberg home, gouging out great chunks of earth to add to the frothy flood.

At lunch, Pat Kellison walked out to look across the river at her parents' home.

"I thought, 'My god, the water is up to the bank,'" Kellison recalls. She raced across the bridge, put in one phone call to her co-workers and with them began carrying everything she could from the house.

"I remember just absolutely being taken off guard," she says. "We were used to high water, rains and snows, but by the time I was first alarmed to the time the first cabin went into the water, 45 minutes had passed."

The other cabin followed soon after, and the bank continued to be worn away under the house and duplex.

The cabins and the duplex were supposed to be for Sig and Velma Sandberg's retirement.

"We started off with nothing," says Velma. "Sig was a builder, a carpenter. He started off building a cabin, then he built another and the house and duplex."

Elsewhere in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California, other families were fighting disaster. Slides trapped a passenger train in the Willamette Pass. Hundreds were homeless on the Siuslaw and Umpqua rivers. Gate Creek Bridge was among those that went out, and Sig Sandberg couldn't come home from his job in Eugene.



News photo by Rob Romig

Turn to Flood, Page 3A Velma Sandberg and her Dec. 28, 1964, edition of The News

Holiday shutdowns start today

Just about everything will be closed Monday for Christmas Day. No news there. But several public services plan to take extended vacations in the next few days.

The Springfield Public Library will be closed today. So will local TCI Cablevision of Oregon offices.

The Knight Library and Law Library at the University of Oregon close at 5 p.m. today, and all university libraries will take Sunday off. Both the Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History on campus will be behind closed

doors on Sunday as well.

The Springfield Museum continues its yuletide closure through Jan. 2. Lane Transit District buses will operate on Sunday schedules on Christmas Eve, and take the day off Monday.

Lowell City Hall will be closed Tuesday.

Not everyone is getting more time off for the holiday however. The state-licensed Northgate Liquor store plans to open an hour early today, at 10 a.m., to handle the holiday rush.

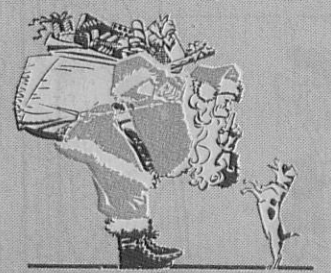


'True Blue' takes you where the action is — in TV Focus

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Photos courtesy Lane County Historical Museum

High waters flooded many homes, including these along the McKenzie River. Although the exact location isn't known, it may be on Deerhorn Road.

Flood Continued from Page 1A

Toward midnight, the house on Rose Street had been cabled to a nearby stand of trees. Velma Sandberg turned to her son-in-law, Bob Kellison, to help save Pam's Christmas.

"I said, 'Bob, I'd love to be able to get those presents,'" Sandberg says. "Anyhow, he said he'd go and get them from me, and that was what he was doing when he heard that crack. He had to jump a couple of feet or he would have been in the river, too. We didn't get the toys."

The cables snapped and the house disappeared into the river. The only trace recovered was a clarinet Pat had played in the McKenzie School band.

The worst was over for the Sandbergs, but the rain continued. At 4 a.m. Dec. 23, the McKenzie crested five feet above flood level. Residents of Seavey Loop Road were among the thousands of people in evacuation centers.

The day after Christmas, the Willamette crested at 24.3 feet and evacuation centers began to close. On the final four days of 1964, 10.2 inches of snow fell in Eugene, nearly doubling the old snowfall record and adding insult to injury, but the major damage was over.

Forty people in four states were killed. Damage in Oregon was estimated at \$244 million. Nearly 21 inches of rain had fallen. More than two miles of Highway 58 had been wiped out, and much more roadway suffered severe damage.

In Blue River, the Red Cross reported that 189 families suffered loss, but none more than the Sandbergs. Only the garage remained untouched, while half of the duplex hung suspended in the air above the new river channel. An appraisal put the loss at more than half of the land and all but \$1,200 of value.

With the help of a Small Business Administration loan, the Sandbergs relocated to Springfield. They returned to the river in 1982, but moved again shortly after when Sig Sandberg's Parkinson's disease required full-time care.

Velma now lives in north Eugene, not far from the confluence of the McKenzie and the Willamette. The Kellisons and the Carvers still live upriver.

"There were so many people who helped," she says, remembering that Christmas 25 years ago. "There were people who just had a little water in their homes and they'd just complain. I couldn't understand that. I guess that's life for you."



(Above) area roads were inundated during the Christmas storm of 1964, and at least one bridge (below) lost its approach to raging floodwaters

Display Continued from Page 1A

In addition, food and money donations will be accepted for the "Love Project" in Veneta, a project that helps out-of-work and homeless people, Woodrum says.

Although Woodrum insists that he just wants to "let people know you don't have to go to a big shopping mall to find neat stuff," he also admits that his Christmas displays may literally pay off. Woodrum recently entered a Eugene radio station's contest that is judging Christmas light displays in the metropolitan area. The person who most creatively displays the station's call letters will receive three free months of electricity plus

\$200, according to station managers.

"Maybe I've got a chance," Woodrum said.

Woodrum, who has worked for 10 years as a mechanic at Christian Logging Co., sometimes get teased about his Christmas enthusiasm by his co-workers.

"They tell me, 'Why don't you grow up,'" Woodrum says.

But Woodrum doesn't intend to scale down his tribute to the holiday. Rather, he says his Christmas displays will be "bigger and better" next year.

"I've got a lot of neat ideas," he says.

Station operator charged with 'fencing' auto parts

A Springfield gas station operator was arrested Thursday on 11 counts of first-degree theft after allegedly buying stolen automotive products in exchange for illegal drugs.

A grand jury indicted Robert Leslie Stevens, 29, of 3033 Gateway St., No. 34, on 11 theft charges and two charges of unlawfully delivering narcotics last week. Eugene police arrested Stevens at the Springfield service station, 2091 Franklin Blvd., on Thursday.

Eugene undercover police had been investigating Stevens since the summer, after product wholesaler Roberts Motor Company in Eugene began reporting that anti-freeze and freon were being continually stolen from its business, according to Eugene police spokesman Tim Birr.

An employee of the company

was arrested for stealing the products, and Stevens was suspected of buying the automotive fluids, knowing they were stolen, in exchange for drugs and money, according to Sgt. David Hanson-Jordan, of the Eugene Police Department.

The grand jury indicted Stevens on the theft and drug charges after he purchased several cases of anti-freeze from an undercover police officer, who told Stevens the cases were stolen, in exchange for narcotics, Hanson-Jordan said.

Stevens was taken to the Lane County jail, where he posted security and was released.

Hanson-Jordan said the property crimes unit is stepping up enforcement against the purchasers of stolen property.

"We're going after the fence," he said, "the people who create a market for stolen property."

Escapee is charged with string of crimes

A man who escaped from the Lane County Courthouse in November and was captured in Tacoma, Wash., last week has been connected to a string of Springfield crimes.

Dennis Alan Harper, 32, formerly of Springfield, was arrested Dec. 15 by Springfield police for allegedly burglarizing a Harlow Road residence, attempting to burglarize a Gateway apartment, and for robbing a Coos Bay man in Springfield. Harper was already in custody at the Lane County jail for earlier crimes.

Police investigated a burglary and an attempted burglary at two Springfield apartments on Nov. 2. At the attempted burglary, which occurred at approximately 11 a.m., neighbors called police after a man was seen suspiciously trying to enter the Gateway apartment. Police were unable to locate the suspect.

Later that day, at about 1 p.m., a Harlow Road apartment was broken into and approximately

\$9,855 worth of belongings were taken, according to police reports.

On Nov. 22, a Coos Bay man had some tools stolen from his vehicle in Springfield. The man chased the suspect, who got into a yellow pickup truck and drove away, according to Detective Don Myers of the Springfield Police Department. Myers said Harper is a suspect in several other crimes.

"He's a one-man crime ring," Myers said.

Harper was identified in a photo lineup shown to witnesses of the attempted burglary and the robbery, according to police reports. He was connected to the Harlow Road burglary after police found a business card with Harper's name among the rummaged items at the apartment.

As he was awaiting a court appearance for theft and drug charges on Nov. 27, Harper escaped from the Lane County Courthouse. He was arrested in Tacoma, Wash., on Dec. 9.

Strong support for youth corps in urban area

By JERRY RHODES
News Staff Writer

At one time, a young person in Lane County had no problem at all finding work. That was "before the Legislature decided the farmers were exploiting us and put a stop to it," says Lane County Commissioner Steve Cornacchia, who started picking beans at the age of 14 and worked his way through every crop from strawberries to filberts.

Now the opportunities aren't as great. That's why Cornacchia is among the business and civic leaders working to place Eugene-Springfield among the cities in the nation that will be granted funding to develop an urban youth corps.

The local efforts have already succeeded in attracting a \$10,000 planning grant from the Urban Corps Expansion Project, a national non-profit effort funded by private foundations. On Thursday, the steering committee and other supporters of a Eugene-Springfield urban youth corps presented evidence of local need and support to officers of the non-profit program.

Linda DeSpain, coordinator of the youth corps project for Looking Glass Job Center, explained that \$15,000 grants will be awarded to put selected program proposals into action. These programs will be eligible to apply for start-up funds of up to \$100,000 a year for two years.

There is a need in Lane County, according to testimony.

"Nationally, half a million young people are living outside the home in some form of foster care," said John Rutledge, deputy chief administrator for the Eugene Department of Public Safety. "It's expected to go to three-quarters of a million in a few years, and it's hap-

pening here, too."

"A more important question is why is there not a youth corps now," said Eugene City Councilor Bobbie Green.

As proposed, the corps would complete work on projects within the metropolitan area for government and non-profit organizations.

The city of Springfield has prepared a list of projects it could steer in the direction of the corps, according to Assistant City Manager Gino Grimaldi. Those projects could include: manual and mechanical removal of vegetation from sidewalk cracks, curbs and gutters; weeding planter boxes and tree wells; tree planting, trimming and maintenance; leaf pick-up and disposal; maintenance of traffic signs and button-type pavement markers; drainage ditch channel and millrace maintenance; Bancroft lot landscaping and maintenance; and street tree inventory.

All projects would be work the city's own staff can't get to, Grimaldi said.

"There's probably a longer list, but this will give them a feeling for the things where we could use the youth corps," he said.

In addition to the work experience, the Eugene-Springfield youth corps would include an education component, allowing participants to receive the equivalent of a high school degree and learn about employability, life skills and citizenship.

The corps proposal — which is being presented to the Urban Corps Expansion Project in conjunction with the city of Portland — has the blessings of the city councils of Eugene and Springfield, the Lane County Board of Commissioners and Gov. Neil Goldschmidt.

Workers' comp rate cuts due

Lower workers' compensation costs should result from a new rate announced this week by the Oregon Workers' Compensation Division. Division Administrator Matt Hennessee announced that a new premium assessment rate charged to insurers for administrative costs will be reduced from 5.5 percent to 4.5 percent effective Jan. 1, 1990. The assessment rate is collected by insurers who pass the cost on to employers.

"Oregon employers will pay \$8.7 million less in 1990 with this

significant reduction," Hennessee said.

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