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Offutt ID lab gets to harder cases

Remains of 242 who died on USS Oklahoma at Pearl Harbor now identified; 152 DNA puzzles still unsolved

By STEVE LIEWER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Four years after they were exhumed from a military cemetery in Hawaii, oil-soaked bones from the sailors and Marines who perished at Pearl Harbor aboard the USS Oklahoma still take up more than half of the exam tables in Offutt Air Force Base's forensic laboratory.

Femurs and tibias, patellas and skulls, radiuses and ulnas, organized into incomplete skeletons.

They are laid out respectfully, feet toward the American flag. Now all they need is names.

"We're not going to stop as long as we can still individually identify anyone," said Carrie LeGarde, the forensic anthropologist who is leading the Defense Department POW/MIA Accounting Agency's USS Oklahoma identification project.

Four years ago, the accounting agency exhumed 61 caskets from a military cemetery in Hawaii containing the bones of as

many as 394 sailors and Marines who died when the battleship was sunk at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. They couldn't be identified and were buried as "unknowns."

They were brought to the accounting agency's then-new lab at Offutt. It is the largest identification of group remains undertaken at the lab.

So far, 242 of the Oklahoma men have been identified, the remains returned to families who were left grieving and scarred by the loss.

Like the family of Gerald Clayton of Central City, Nebraska, who died within minutes of his

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MUD bills to go up about \$6 per month in Omaha starting Jan. 1

By AARON SANDERFORD
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

People who live in the Omaha area will need to squirrel away a little more in 2020 to pay for water, natural gas and sewer service.

Higher costs for those services will start showing up Jan. 1 on bills sent out by the Metropolitan Utilities District.

Average residential customers should plan to pay nearly \$6 more a month, or about \$70 a year. Those who use more water or natural gas face bigger increases.

MUD says it intends to use

about \$20 of the average customer's annual increase to accelerate how quickly it replaces aging water mains.

Officials have said an increasing number of breaks of older water mains are costing the district too much money and interrupting service too often.

That's why the MUD board in 2018 phased in an increase in water rates. Costs increased by 7% in July. They'll jump another 12% Jan. 1.

All but one of the projects

See *Utilities*: Page 3

GLIDING TOWARD A NEW YEAR



Skaters make their way around the Capitol District Ice Rink on Friday. The rink in downtown Omaha will be open until Jan. 21, 2020.

Z LONG/THE WORLD-HERALD

'IGNORANCE AND LAZINESS' WIN

Defender of apostrophe's place concedes defeat

THE WASHINGTON POST

For nearly two decades, John Richards dedicated his life to protecting an endangered species: the correctly placed apostrophe.

As the founder of the Apostrophe Protection Society, he waged war against signs advertising "ladies fashions" or claiming that "Diamond's are forever." But last month, the 96-year-old admitted defeat.

"The ignorance and laziness present in modern times have won!" Richards wrote on the Apostrophe Protection Society's website. Given the lack of interest in correct apostrophe usage and his own advancing age, Richards recently announced that he is shutting down the group.

"When I first set it up, I would get about 40 emails or letters a week from people all over the

world," Richards told the BBC on Friday. "But then two years ago it started to tail off and nowadays I hardly get anything."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Richards previously worked as a copy editor. For years, he was bedeviled by public messages that lacked necessary apostrophes or added gratuitous ones. In 2001, after retiring from his job at a newspaper in eastern England, he founded the Apostrophe Protection Society "with the specific aim of preserving the correct use of this currently much abused punctuation mark," as the group's website puts it.

To kick off his campaign, Richards created a form letter that could be customized and sent to offending businesses, alerting them to their misdeeds. "Dear Sir or Madam," it began.

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2 DAYS LEFT TO DONATE

The Goodfellows 2019 campaign continues through Tuesday. To be part of this year's drive, make your donation online by that day or get your check in the mail in time to be postmarked by Dec. 31.

Online: Omaha.com/goodfellows

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14,000 DEATHS IN 2017

Cocaine overdoses rise as fentanyl is mixed in

KAISER HEALTH NEWS

CINCINNATI — A pain pill prescription for nerve damage revived Gwendolyn Barton's long-dormant addiction last year, awakening fears she would slip back into smoking crack cocaine.

She'd done that drug and others for about 20 years before getting sober in 2008. But things were different back then. This time, the 62-year-old knew she needed to seek treatment before it was too late.

"If I used today," she said, "I'd be dead."

The powerful opioid fentanyl is often mixed into cocaine, turning the stimulant into a much bigger killer than the drug of the past. Cocaine-related overdoses took the lives of nearly 14,000 Americans in 2017, up 34% in just a year, the latest federal figures show. And they're expected

to soar even higher as cocaine's popularity resurges.

Barton, who is African American, is wise to be wary. Deaths are rising most precipitously among African Americans, who are more likely to use cocaine than whites and fatally overdosed at an 80% higher rate.

But the scourge is festering quietly, overshadowed by the larger opioid epidemic that kills tens of thousands each year, the vast majority of them white.

More than 30 states have seen cocaine death rates rise since 2010, with Ohio leading the way. Overdoses from crack and powder cocaine killed 14 of every 100,000 Ohioans of all races in 2017 — seven times more than in 2010, according to the University of Minnesota's State Health Access Data Assistance Center.

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