

Thieves steal Rex T. Barber plaque from viewpoint

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon State Police (OSP) and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department are seeking the public's help in identifying whoever is responsible for the theft of a valuable bronze plaque that was in tribute to Rex T. Barber at the Peter Skene Ogden State Scenic Viewpoint. The plaque was placed at the viewpoint after the Oregon legislature renamed the new bridge over the Crooked River on U.S. Highway 97 the "Rex T. Barber Veteran's Memorial Bridge". Anyone with information is asked to contact OSP dispatch at (800) 452-7888. Oregon State Parks notified OSP today of the theft after discovering it missing Thursday afternoon. The estimated three-foot by three-foot plaque was glued and mortared to a large rock between two informational displays near the viewpoint's parking lot, and appears to have been chiseled from its mounted location. The value of the plaque is estimated at \$1,800.

Rex T. Barber was born in Culver, Oregon and was a World War II fighter pilot. During a distinguished military career, Barber was credited with shooting down the bomber carrying Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy and leader of the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Barber died at his central Oregon home in 2001 at the age of 84. State Parks personnel notified Barber's son, Rex Jr., of the theft. "He was obviously disappointed and saddened by the acts of the person or persons responsible," they said.

On April 18, 2003, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski proclaimed that day "Rex T. Barber Day." The new bridge, plaque, and information displays honoring Rex T. Barber and veterans were dedicated on August 9, 2003. Metal recyclers in the Bend and Redmond areas were notified of the theft and asked to be on the lookout for the plaque. Anyone with information regarding the plaque's whereabouts and/or the person or persons responsible for its theft is asked to contact OSP Northern Command Center dispatch at (800) 452-7888. Similar thefts of valuable historic bronze plaques occurred in September 2006 in the Columbia River Gorge along the Historic Columbia River Highway. In those two incidents, the plaques were never recovered.

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