

# ‘Medical tyranny’ or safety? Mask war goes on

School board gave itself two extra weeks to decide on masks in the classroom.

By Tom Hallberg

With the start of school less than two weeks away, debate over COVID-19 precautions — particularly masks — has intensified.

On Aug. 11 parents gave sometimes emotional comment to the Teton County School District No. 1 Board of Trustees, expected to decide next week whether to mandate face coverings. Public comment is usually a staid affair, but that was not the case last week.

“I understand this is a difficult time, but the masks need to go or we will be pulling all our kids out of that school,” said Jamie Young, who said she was speaking on behalf of a group of Moran Elementary School parents.

School board trustees find themselves on the precipice of a decision almost guaranteed to generate backlash. For most of the contingent that spoke Aug. 11, a mask mandate would be unpalatable. On the opposite end of the spectrum, parents and teachers have expressed a desire for a face covering rule to limit student and educator quarantines.

District officials ultimately delayed making a decision until just before school starts to account for how fast the pandemic situation can change. The board has tentatively set a meeting for Aug. 25 to revisit masking.

See **SCHOOLS MASKS** on 14A

## FANCY DANCER



# Koedt, 106, faced down Nazis

Jackson’s oldest resident lived here 65 years and befriended generations.

By Mark Huffman

Inger Koedt, who has died at age 106, lived here 65 years, was known by generations of residents, skied and climbed, advocated environmental and social issues, recommended that people “eat dark chocolate and drink red wine” for health, eventually became famous just for making it to more birthdays than anyone else around.

But long before she came to Jackson, Koedt lived five years under Nazi occupation during World War II and hid Jews in her house as they were smuggled from Denmark to Sweden to save them from the camps.

She once sat in her kitchen with some of those Nazis and one of those Jews, lying to the Germans that the man was just an innocent visitor.

Koedt died in her sleep at her home in East Jackson this past Saturday, Aug. 14, though over the years it seemed at times that she might live forever. Koedt climbed the Grand Teton when she turned 66 and went camping in the Winds when she was in her 80s. She went on a Snake River raft

trip to note her first century of life. She welcomed friends last year to her 105th birthday. Though there’s no official record, Koedt is believed to have been the oldest person in Teton County.



Koedt

She was active past her mid-90s and brought a big attitude to life.

“We’d go cross-country skiing and I couldn’t keep up with her until she was 90, and she was 26 years older than me,” said friend Ann Smith. “She was asked on her 85th birthday what she wanted to do special, and she said, ‘Well, I want to climb Mount Moran but [son] Peter won’t let me because he said I’d fall off — I said, ‘So what? I’m 85.’ ”

Charlie Craighead, another Koedt friend for decades, noted another side, and said “people relied on Inger to ground them and point them in the right direction.”

In her time in Jackson Hole, Koedt helped launch and was the cook at the Mangy Moose Spaghetti Emporium, which survives today as the Mangy Moose Steakhouse and Saloon, one of the Hole’s landmark gathering places. She

See **KOEDT** on 10A

# ‘All hands on deck,’ the COVID update is here again

St. John’s plans for a single, powerful update to kick virus response in right direction.

By Evan Robinson-Johnson

With the delta variant driving up infections in a tourist-saturated Jackson Hole, and school set to start in a few weeks, community health leaders are putting their heads together to

keep the populace safe.

St. John’s Health COVID-19 Response Director Paul Beaupre said Monday that health officials will bring back community updates to address fears and “get everybody back on the same page.”

“We’ve learned a lot about how to treat this,” he said, emphasizing the efficacy of vaccines and mask-wearing. “[But] we’re seeming to forget that the enemy is the virus, and we’re starting to get mad at each other.”

Beaupre hopes having a communi-

ty update will alleviate concerns. Although the date and logistics are still being decided, the update will feature Beaupre, Dr. Travis Riddell and Teton County Health Department Director Jodie Pond.

“I think there’s a lot of fear right now, and with fear comes anger,” Beaupre said.

“You can see it already,” he added, referring to violent outbursts at school board meetings in Tennessee and Florida, where residents threatened health officials following votes to

mandate masks in schools.

Teton County School District No. 1 Board of Trustees have chosen to wait until Aug. 25 to decide about mandating masks.

On Friday, Dr. Riddell wrote to the superintendent, Gillian Chapman, strongly advising a universal mandate in public schools.

Beaupre said Monday that he supports the same precaution.

“Start the year with masks,” he

See **COMMUNITY COVID** on 15A



KOEDT

Continued from cover

befriended and worked with Mardy Murie, Jackson’s most famous environmentalist and campaigner for the Arctic Wildlilfe Refuge, often serving as her advisor. She and friends founded the Brown Bag Lunch Group, which pushed women’s and kids social programs. With help from her daughter Anne and friend Reade Dornan, she published a book of her recipes when she was 100.

But with all she did in Jackson, it was the story of her wartime resistance work in Denmark that was most impressive and hard to believe — especially when told by a pleasant gray-haired lady who had something baking in the oven.

She was born Inger Kongsted on Jan. 15, 1915, and was married young to Bobs Peschcke-Koedt, California born but Danish raised. The couple lived in a suburb of Copenhagen when the Germans invaded on April 9, 1940, conquering Denmark in a morning.

The Koedts had two daughters, Bonnie in 1937 and Anne in 1939, and added son Peter in 1944. Despite that, they decided it was their moral duty to help Jews escape the Nazis. On one occasion some Germans arrived unannounced to poke around. In what seems like a scene from a black-and-white movie, the family and the invaders and one of the Jews they were sheltering found themselves sitting at the kitchen table.

Daughter Bonnie, maybe 6, knowing they had a secret, asked, “Are these the Nazis we’re supposed to lie to, Mommy?”

“It all depended on the children telling the right lies to the Nazis,” Koedt told an interviewer last year.

Luckily, the comment wasn’t heard or the Germans didn’t have the Danish to understand. Inger Koedt explained to the Germans that the visitor was a relative in town from the country.

Later, she sometimes downplayed the smuggling work: “Everyone was doing it, so you didn’t worry you would get turned in.”

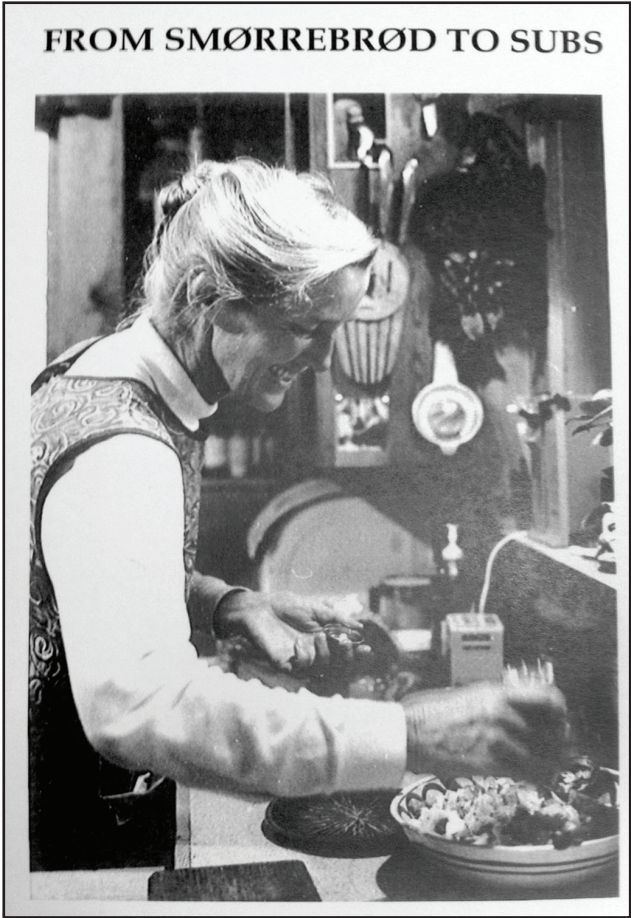


CHARLIE CRAIGHEAD / COURTESY PHOTO

Inger Koedt lived her final years in her East Jackson cabin, a gathering place for friends.

*“Inger was always quick to defend people who were under any sort of authoritarian threat.”*

— Charlie Craighead  
FRIEND OF INGER KOEDT



Koedt published a cookbook of recipes inspired by the mountains, “From Smorrebrod to Subs.” The book can still be found around town and is a favorite with local cooks.

Inger was once arrested, though not for courageous resistance. Passing a German soldier and his Danish girlfriend, she made a show of holding her nose and was seized. Sympathetic Danish cops told the Germans “we’ll take care of this criminal” and after warning her sent her home, Lise Kreps said.

The family immigrated to the U.S. in 1951, and, in 1956, Bobs Peschcke-Koedt — by then Bob Koedt — was hired to help build Jackson Lake Lodge, in Grand Teton National Park. He also designed houses in Jackson Hole and the Mangy Moose building.

Inger Koedt was active in sports and the community. She worked on behalf of a foreign student exchange program and was on the boards of Teton Science Schools and the Jackson Hole Community Housing Trust. During the 2008 campaign she went out with a sign that read “Great-grandmas for Obama.” Koedt spoke to students about the war and helped bring an Anne Frank exhibit to town.

She was an advisor in creation of the Murie Center.

Nancy Shea, who started the center, and is now head of the Jackson Hole Climate Action Collective, said Koedt was an important help for Murie’s conservation work.

“Mardy was older, and I think Inger was a strong ally to Mardy ... she was a solid, solid friend, always there.”

Koedt also had a simpler private life.

She listened to Mozart and Chopin, enjoyed “Gone With the Wind,” favored tulips and liked sandwiches of pickled herring, boiled egg and onion on Danish toast. She cooked for friends, liked dogs.

During the more than 40 years she lived in a cabin at the Murie Ranch, now national park property, she made friends with a porcupine that developed a taste for her homemade bread and turned down store bought. Porky’s children and grandchildren and theirs as well were her wild friends for years.

Koedt was known for telling people to look ahead and not back, urged them not to hold grudges or waste time in self pity.

Niece Nina said she thought that came from an incident in her own life: Inger’s father was shot by a burglar in the 1930s and died as his daughter held him. Nina Koedt remembers Inger telling her that in her depression she found something inside, a faith not religious, that “gave her an inspiration to choose life.” She needed it later: Her husband Bob died of suicide. She survived cancer in her 90s, but it killed her son Peter, a well-known mountaineer in Jackson.

The war and what she did remained important to her.

“She didn’t talk about it unless you asked,” Craighead said. “It was a war memory, and they realized the importance of that kind of force, of Nazism, what it could do in the world, and they never forgot. Inger was always quick to defend people who were under any sort of authoritarian threat.”

In a memoir of her life last year for the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, Inger Koedt said that a difficult choice to do right was a strength that could be needed again.

“The Danes felt that it shouldn’t happen to our Danes, to other human beings, it was just agreed upon,” she said. “I personally think it could happen in any country, like it did in Germany.

“When I was younger I was naive enough to think that the Holocaust couldn’t happen again. But now I think it could. And that’s why we have to prevent it. We have to keep the memories alive.”

When Koedt died, her longtime caretaker, Sylvia Vroman, opened all the windows in her cabin, a Danish tradition that it’s believed lets the soul of the dead person begin its journey.

Inger Koedt’s family is planning a memorial for her in September.

Contact Mark Huffman at 732-5907 or mark@jhnewsandguide.com.a