

THE NORTON TELEGRAM



WEBSITE: nwkansas.com

8 PAGES

Tuesday
May 13, 2008

Norton priest's family safe

Cyclone in Myanmar left homes with some damage

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Father Vincent Thu Laing stands in front of the altar at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Norton and thanks God for the deliverance of his family in Burma.

In Oberlin Father Henry Saw Lone also prays for his family without knowing if they are homeless, sick, hungry or even alive.

Both men are from Burma, also known as Myanmar, which was hit in the early morning hours of May 3 by Cyclone Nargis, a category 4 hurricane packing winds of 120 miles per hour.

Father Saw Lone is from Karen in the north. His people are farmers and small businessmen. They live in a rural area, where it is difficult to communicate with them in the best of circumstances.

Father Thu Laing is from the Delta area, one of the hardest hit sections of the country, but while there has been damage to his parents' and brothers' and sisters' homes and property, everyone is fine, he said, during an interview on Monday.

News from Myanmar, more commonly known as Burma, has been sketchy but it is believed that more than 10,000 people are dead and another 100,000 missing.

The military junta, which runs Burma, has been reluctant to allow foreign aid into the country. At first the government seized all aid saying that it would distribute the supplies. However in the last few days, with pressure from the United Nations, aid is slowly flowing into the mostly rural, agrarian country.

Father Thu Laing has been in the U.S. since 1999 and in Norton since 2002. He has gone home three times since moving here — in 2003, 2006 and again in February.

Since getting anything into Burma to help the people was difficult even before the cyclone, Father Thu Laing said when he goes home he takes what he can to help out including money, clothes, medicines

and vitamins plus caps, pens and beauty supplies for his nieces and nephews. And that got him in trouble on his first trip.

On his first trip, he said, he took money to help out his family and the community and carried money from other people for their relatives.

Unfortunately, he said, he didn't count the cash and he had more than the \$10,000 the U.S. government allows. The money was taken away he said, and it took four months and payment of a \$500 fine to get it back.

Since then, he said, he has been very careful to not carry more than the 50 pounds of luggage the airlines allow or more cash than the government allows.

Father Thu Laing said that his father Reny, a retired farmer, his mother Nita, his sister Maria and brothers Cyril and Gregory all live in the Delta region. His sister Christina, an ice cream factory worker, lives in Yangon, the capital city. He has four nieces and four nephews ranging in age from 4 to 19.

When the cyclone hit, he said, his mother and brother Cyril were in Yangon visiting his sister and going to the doctor.

Both of his brothers are rice farmers, who use oxen instead of tractors to till the soil, he said. Since most of the family lives in the country and they don't have a phone or Internet access, it is difficult to call them, he said. However, the priest said, he has a friend with a phone and was able to contact him to find out how the family fared after the storm.

There was some property damage, he said, but no one was injured.

Father Thu Laing said that he has been offered help for his family but there is little that can be done right now. Bishop Paul Coakley is gathering money, he said, which will be sent to help the Burmese people as soon as possible.

There are five Burmese priests serving in the Salina Diocese, which includes all of northwest Kansas.



Father Vincent Thu Laing sat in the midst of his family in Burma in 1999. His brothers and sisters are behind him (from left) Maria, Gregory, Christina and Cyril. His parents Reny and Nita are seated beside him.



Briefly Long Island plans big alumni event

Long Island Alumni Covered Dish Dinner and Annal Meeting will be held Saturday, May 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the Long Island School gym.

Those planning to attend are asked to bring two covered dishes and their own table service. Coffee and tea will be furnished.

The school will be open earlier for social time or touring through the building before the dinner.

All Long Island and Northern Valley former students, graduates and their spouses are invited.

The honored classes will be 1938, 1948 and 1958.

Final meeting for Jay Booster Club

All fans of Norton Community High School sports are invited to the final Norton Blue Jay Booster Club meeting of the spring at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday in the high school cafeteria.

Featured speakers will be golf coach David Stover and track coach Jason Jones. They will update fans on recent competitions by their teams and preview upcoming tournaments and meets.

Postage stamps climb to 42 cents

If you haven't mailed a first class letter for a spell, keep in mind the 41 cent stamp is now 42 cents. The new rate went into effect Monday. Any questions you might have about the increase, and the status of other mailing rates, please call the Norton Post Office at 877-3212.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Mostly cloudy with a low around 40. **Wednesday** — Mostly sunny with a high near 68. **Wednesday Night** — A 40 percent chance of showers, mainly after 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy. **Thursday** — A 30 percent chance of showers, mainly before 1 p.m. **Thursday Night** — Mostly cloudy with a low around 41. **Friday** — Mostly sunny with a high near 72.

Kingham report:

Friday Low 42, High 70
Saturday Low 50, High 59, .25 Rain
Sunday Low 30, High 70
Monday Low 47, High 84
(Readings taken at the Kingham farm 9 miles northwest of Norton)

Prayer

Teach us, O God, that by giving to those in need, we give to you. Open our eyes to the needy around us.
Amen

Plane crash puts injured pilot in hospital

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkansas.com

Decatur County sheriff's officers, the ambulance director, firemen and the emergency preparedness director joined searchers Saturday afternoon and night to try to find the pilot of a small plane that had crashed.

The pilot called 911 on his cell phone, reaching the Phillips County dispatch office. He told dispatchers both his legs were broken, and he couldn't move. The man was unable to say where he was, though, and searchers had a hard time finding him.

While the search spread to at least five counties, including Norton, the man

eventually was found at 1:15 a.m. Sunday in Phillips County.

Decatur County Sheriff Ken Badsy said he received a call around 4:50 p.m. about a downed plane, apparently somewhere along highway K-9 in the south end of Decatur, Norton or Phillips counties.

He said he and Undersheriff Randy McHugh and Deputy Barry Richards went out immediately to start searching in the southeast part of the county south of Clayton and Jennings and into Norton County. Sheriff Badsy said the Norton County sheriff also had people out searching from the Norton line to Sebelius Lake.

Patti Skubal, Decatur County emer-

gency preparedness director, said she was at her house coordinating air and ground support and keeping everyone in the loop. She said she notified the state Division of Emergency Management to let them know what was going on.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that the pilot, Michael Wade Westendorf, 42, Olathe, took off from Atwood and was on his way to Lee's Summit, Mo., a Kansas City suburb, when he started to see and smell smoke. The cockpit filled and as Mr. Westendorf tried to make an emergency landing, the plane flipped, breaking both wings off.

The patrol said the plane is a 1990 VariEze, a lightweight, single-engine

design built from a kit, with composite, forward-sweeping wings. Mr. Westendorf was taken to a hospital in Phillipsburg, then flown to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Neb.

Sheriff Badsy said the Decatur County crew looked until about 8 p.m., when some came in and others stayed in the field. All of the crew went back out about 10 p.m.

Throughout the search, Mr. Westendorf was calling in by cell phone, describing what he could see.

At 12:30 a.m., though, the search was called off and the Decatur County contingent went home.

(Continued on Page 5)

He's the last guy you want to miss

Norton County Sheriff Troy Thomson has every reason to form a posse and have them pay a visit to *The Norton Telegram*.

It seems the sheriff filed some time back for re-election, but for some reason his name never seems to show up in *The Telegram* when the newspaper updates the filings.

After being informed of this oversight, the newspaper's intention was to save the name until the next report appears, scheduled Friday.

"But after some thought, and just to play it safe, we'll have it in Tuesday's edition," Tom Dreiling, the newspaper's editor/publisher, said Monday.

So, if you're keeping a running tab, be sure to put Sheriff Troy Thomson in the *filed for re-election* category.

Whoa, posse!

Chloramines next for water

By TOM DREILING
tom.d@nwkansas.com

The word now is chloramines. That word will be popping up more frequently as the city moves toward its use in the disinfection process of the city's water supply.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recently issued Norton a consent order to rectify the elevated levels of what they call TTHMs and HAA5s produced in the city's water plant and distribution system.

In laymen's terms, a little too much of not a good thing, but on the other hand necessary.

The water quality provided to residences and businesses is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency and enforced by the state's department of health and environment.

Rob Lawson, city administrator, said

the city has completed several water studies and determined the best option to comply with the revised standards was to perform the final disinfection with the use of chloramines, and to comply with increasingly stringent federal and state regulations.

Mr. Lawson explained that while chlorine has traditionally been used as a disinfecting agent in the water supply industry due to its effectiveness, the disinfection by-products are now being recognized by federal and state agencies as a possible health risk over a lifetime of exposure.

"To reduce this risk and to continue to provide high quality drinking water, the city must make this change," he said.

"We are in the final process of implementing this solution and using chloramines in the disinfection process," the city administrator said.

A public notice on Page 2 in today's paper says the new process of using chloramines will begin after May 15.

It is very important to note, as the city administrator pointed out, that *anyone utilizing kidney dialysis or raising fish* will be particularly affected and should read the questions and answers accompanying this report carefully.

Mr. Lawson said the city's primary water source is the Norton Reservoir, and that approximately 60 percent of the city's daily water needs come from that source.

On a year around basis, he said, the city augments its surface water with water from alluvial wells. So what are *alluvial wells*? Webster's New World College Dictionary defines them as wells made up of alluvium, which is "sand, clay, silt, etc. gradually deposited by moving water."
(Continued on Page 5)