



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Revisiting the 80s and 90s



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Clay Webb practiced his lines as David Letterman in the Colby High School freshman class tribute to the 1990s. The tribute will be part of the school system's S.P.I.C.E. presentation on Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. The sixth grade will be paying tribute to the 1980s.

At Chamber luncheon . . .

## Moran lists five areas vital to rural survival

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Congressman Jerry Moran told the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon Saturday that he wanted to keep rural communities strong.

Moran made a stop in Colby at the Ramada Inn, before heading on to Goodland where he helped welcome Navy Lt. Jeff Vignery home after Chinese authorities released he and his crewmates, held when they made an emergency landing in their crippled Orion surveillance plane at a Chinese airbase.

Moran said he was going to try to start his listening tour earlier, especially when the first district expands to 72 counties, adding the northern tier to his district.

Moran said the first district of Kansas and the western district of Nebraska, both with 66 counties, are second in percentage of state area covered behind the five states with only one congressman, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

"My priority is our way of life," said Moran. "I want to keep towns like Colby, Hays and Plainville, where I grew up, around."

Five areas are vital to rural areas, Moran told the group. Agriculture leads the group, "it has a tremendous impact on downtown business."

Second is non-agricultural business. "I tell my colleagues that whether or not a grocery store is in town is the economic development issue in some communities, he said.

Transportation is third, said Moran. "We need to be able to move our products," he said. He also cited the declining rail traffic and increasing need for roads and air travel.

Health care costs and availability were next on Moran's list. With 60-80

percent of hospital costs in the first district being covered by Medicare, Moran said, "Any cuts to Medicare hurts our hospitals."

Health care is also important to future expansion, according to Moran. "People won't move their families here without adequate health care," he said.

Finally, Moran said technology and its availability needed to be high on the list of priorities. "Technology affects the other four," he said. Training and technology need to be available to the smallest cities in the district, Moran told his audience.

Asked about the cost of fuel, Moran said it was the number one question he had been asked on his tour.

"The problem is, we have no policy related to energy in our country," he said.

"With low prices in the mid-90s, Moran said many producers went out of business and dependence on foreign oil skyrocketed.

"In the 1970s, we said we would never let this happen again," he said, "and we were importing about 1/3 of our oil."

"Today, we import 60 percent and by 2010 it will be 80 percent."

While Moran said he isn't looking for any "magic bullet," there are some things we can do.

"There are 26 levels of gasoline refineries must make to meet EPA standards," he said. Adding to that problem is a lack of construction of new refineries.

Ethanol is becoming more competitive and needs to be marketed more aggressively, according to Moran.



Jerry Moran

"We can find new markets for our agriculture products and reduce our dependence at the same time," he said. Solar and wind energy are also options that would reduce both pollution and dependence, he said.

Conservation is also a step. "Just turn out the lights," he said. "It might not do much, but it will help keep the bills down."

Moran also said environmental groups have slowed some of the plans. "Nobody wants to be branded an anti-environmentalist," he said, adding he believes we can protect the environment and use "common sense."

On trade with Cuba, Moran said, "This is a political issue, not an economic one."

Moran told listeners he had been asked several times during his recent visit to Cuba why a small group of Cuban-Americans controlled policy on Cuba.

"It's because, to them, it is the issue," he said. "To most of us, it is just an issue."

Moran said he believes the United States can have more influence by trading with Cuba than by an embargo.

"They are already buying elsewhere, but would prefer to buy from us," he said. Moran said he believes, as the Cuban standard of living increases, the people will demand more freedom from their government.

Also, Moran said he believes trade will increase our influence with Cuba. He told about a senior Chinese official who had visited shortly before the American delegation.

"Do we really want China to have that much influence, so close to our borders?" he asked.

Moran said he needed to stay informed and asked people to continue to call and write.

"I have a job that allows me to make a difference," he said.

## Cleanup campaign underway in Colby and Thomas County

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby's annual city-wide cleanup is now underway and from today through Friday, residents are encouraged to make a special effort to "spruce up their yards."

As an added help, said Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, city crews will pickup small tree limbs and extra trash generated from the cleanup.

"City crews will follow the regularly scheduled routes for yard waste and trash pickup," she said. "However,

there will also be personnel available to handle the extra trash."

For larger items, such as appliances or furniture that are cluttering up yards, people can call Jo Strange at the city office, 462-4410, through Friday, May 11.

"Disposal of large tree branches and entire trees needs to be handled by private contractors," she added.

Along with the city's annual event, the Thomas County Commissioners are also participating with a county-wide cleanup.

Many area service clubs and organizations have committed to cleaning up public areas of the city, officials said, such as the parks, ballfields and all roadsides and entrances throughout the city. For residents who are elderly or infirm, call Strange, to arrange for help.

Volunteers are also still needed to help those needing help, she said.

"We would like to see as many people as possible participate in this special week," Armstrong said, "and share in the pride of having a clean city."

## Hometown turns out to honor Navy hero

GOODLAND (AP) — Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery may not consider himself a hero, but most people in his northwest Kansas hometown are quick to disagree.

On Saturday, about 500 people turned out to honor Vignery at the field house where he played high school basketball and graduated in 1992.

Along the field house walls were signs by grade-school children, including: "Welcome Home Jeff," "We are Proud of You," and "Thank You Jeff for Serving Your Country."

"What better person to have as a role model for our youth," said Cara Daise, one of the event's organizers.

"Jeff is a hero, whether he wants to recognize it or not. We are so proud of him here," she added.

The field house was decorated with yellow ribbons and yellow and blue balloons as family, friends and dignitaries, including U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, paid tribute.

He's a kid whose has consistently done the right thing all his life."

Dale Shields, master of ceremonies at event

"Despite his declaration that he's no hero, he's a hero," the 1st District Republican said.

Along with another pilot, Vignery helped regain control of a Navy EP-3E turboprop spy plane April 1 when it was struck by a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea and forced to land on Hainan island.

Vignery received three standing ovations from the crowd — when he walked to the stage, when he started to speak and again when he finished.

"There's not much I can offer to the community except a thank-you," Vignery said with a smile.

"I knew my faith in God and the government ... would bring me home. It was only a matter of time," he added.

Vignery recounted the ordeal that day: In about 45 seconds, the plane plummeted some 7,500 feet before it could be straightened out and landed.

The 24 crew members were detained 11 days before they were released and returned to their home base at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station in Washington state April 14.

The tall, thin pilot with close-cropped red hair has said repeatedly that he doesn't consider himself a hero — he was just doing his job.

"I would say none of us think we are heroes. The government and the American people are the real heroes," he told reporters after the ceremony.

But there are those who disagree.

"He's got a lot of integrity and heart. He would give the shirt off his back. I would classify him as one of my heroes," said Dan Hayden, who has known Vignery since seventh grade.

Dale Shields, the event's master of ceremonies, watched young Jeff grow from an honor-roll student who played sports to a Navy pilot — fulfilling a lifelong passion for flying.

"He's a kid whose has consistently done the right thing all his life. He wasn't flashy, but when you saw him you knew he was going to be successful," Shields said before the ceremony, his voice filled with pride.

The word "hero" was repeated throughout the ceremony, by those speaking and those who came up to Vignery afterward to talk to him.

## Legislators work toward resolving impasse on budget

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican House leaders were prepared to drop an important element of a budget-balancing plan to end a budget impasse, but the Legislature was unable to end the 2001 session early Monday.

The Senate recessed at 3:30 a.m. and the House a half-hour later — more than 13 hours after both chambers had convened Sunday afternoon. The Senate was to resume work at noon Monday, the House at 1 p.m.

A bill to raise \$10 million by increasing a tax on insurance companies received final approval Sunday night in the House, which had defeated the proposal earlier. That gave legislative leaders hope that adjournment was possible.

But negotiators were unable to close a deal on school finance, a key to finishing work on the year's final spending bill.

That meant legislators would have a 13th day of work since returning from their spring break and a 98th calendar day.

This year's "wrap-up" session is the longest ever, although the 1991 session, with a 12-day wrap-up, lasted a total of 103 days.

The Senate approached chaos before recessing early Monday, with members grumbling openly and snapping at each other as they tried to decide when to reconvene.

President Dave Kerr apologized for keeping them in session.

As they kept the two chambers on standby early Monday, House and Senate leaders kept promising that adjournment was near.

## Briefly

### Weather: Sunny and warmer

More sun and warmer temperatures are in store for the Colby region, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, partly cloudy, low 40-45 and south winds 5-15 mph. Tuesday, partly sunny, high 70-75 and south winds 5-15 mph, becoming light and variable late. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, low 45-50. Wednesday, sunny, high 80-85. Colby's weekend temperatures: highs, 53 Friday, 58 Saturday and 63 Sunday; lows, 45 Saturday, 43 Sunday and 45 this morning. Colby received 2.24 inches of rain over the weekend, bringing the month's total to date to 2.26 inches. The records for May 7: 94 in 1934 and 24 in 1917. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the North-

west Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### College board to meet

The Board of Trustees of Colby Community College will meet today at 5 p.m. in the board room of the Thomas Hall administration building. The agenda includes: Intermountain Benefits representative/medical insurance; discuss purchasing a bus through capital outlay considerations; book bids; discuss the affidavit of residency form approval for free tuition for Thomas County residents; resignation; program review; approve Thomas County Fair Board agreement for use of the fairgrounds by the rodeo program; discuss compliance with House Bill 2188; evaluate the col-

lege president; and discuss comments from the student/trustee dinner. The meeting is open to the public.

### Booster club fund-raiser continues

The Colby Booster Club still has state championship wrestling t-shirts for sale, said Tami Brown, president. For those wanting to purchase a T-shirt in sizes small to extra-large, call her at 462-7903.

### Awards ceremony Tuesday

Colby High School awards, recognitions and scholarship recipients will be honored Tuesday beginning at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

School officials are encouraging everyone to attend. For information, call 465-5300.

### Group needs officers

Colby Secondary Parent Teacher Student Association still need officers for the year 2001-2002. Call 462-7188.

### Applications sought for pageant

Applications are being sent out for the 2001 Thomas County Rodeo queen and princess pageant. The event is planned for Friday, July 27. Anyone interested in receiving a packet is asked to call Trudy Wildeman at (785) 462-2848.

