



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Accident near Colby claims Hill City man

Four others killed on state roads over the weekend

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

A 44-year-old Hill City man was killed and his passenger critically injured in a one-vehicle accident south of Colby Sunday morning.

According to the Kansas Highway Patrol, Gary L. Roeder was driving northbound on K-25 about six miles south of Colby when his 1978 GMC pickup entered the west ditch, struck a guard rail and went into the culvert at about 7:30 a.m.

Roeder was partially trapped under his vehicle and was dead at the scene, according to the Kansas Highway Patrol.

His passenger, David Stephen, 35, of Ness City, was transported by Thomas County ambulance to Citizens Medical Center and airlifted to St. Francis Hospital in Wichita, where he is listed in critical condition, according to Maria Loving, hospital spokesperson.

Neither man was wearing a seatbelt. A Thomas County sheriff's deputy, a Colby police officer and the Colby Fire Department also responded to the scene.

In addition, the Association Press said four other people were killed on Kansas roads during the long Memorial Day weekend.

Hilda Behle, 89, of Abilene, died about 1:30 p.m. Monday when her car collided with a pickup truck at the intersection of a city street and Kansas 15, the Kansas Highway Patrol said today.

Ardella Becker, 58, of Corning, was found dead Sunday morning after her car hit a tree near her home late Saturday or early Sunday, according to Nemaha County authorities.

Arnoldo Fernandez, 22, and Javier Lopez, 20, both of Wichita, were killed Sunday morning when Fernandez's car went off southbound Interstate 235 in the city and overturned, throwing both men out, the Highway Patrol said.

Last year, five people were killed on Kansas roads during the 78-hour Memorial Day holiday period.

The record for a 78-hour counting period is 19, set in 1973.

Memorial Day service attracts large crowd

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

A "larger than usual" crowd turned out to honor fallen veterans at Beulah Cemetery in Colby on Memorial Day, according to American Legion President Dr. Gary Sandon.

Former Colby post and State Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander Dick Weston agreed, "This was the largest crowd I've seen in 10 years."

Veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf conflicts were on hand, as well as veterans from the eras between, to hear retired Air Force Lt. Col. Ron Evans, the guest speaker.

Evans told the assembly that the service of each veteran was important,

regardless of their era.

"I am proud of my two tours in Vietnam," he said.

"I am proud of the World War II veterans and of all of the other veterans," Evans continued.

Evans, Weston and Sandon agreed that remembering the sacrifices of the nations veterans was important.

"We need to remind our young people of what happened," said Weston.

Wreaths were laid by the ladies' auxiliaries of both the American Legion and VFW in honor of all the veterans who died in the nation's wars.

An Army National Guard honor guard presented a 21-gun salute and taps was played by Justin Harms.



TOM BETZ/Goodland Daily News

A fireman walks along the back of a the trailer where a mother and two of her three children were killed when fire engulfed their home early Monday morning in southwest Goodland.

Trailer fire kills three at Goodland

By TOM BETZ

The Goodland Daily News

GOODLAND — An early morning fire Monday destroyed a trailer home in southwest Goodland and killed a mother and two of her three children.

Goodland Fire Chief Dean Jensen said the call came in about 7:45 a.m. and the trailer was fully engulfed in flames when the firemen arrived at the scene at 2810 Commerce Road.

The fire was brought under control in a short time, but the trailer had been gutted by the fire and when the firemen went inside they found three bodies.

The occupants have been identified as Jenny McCurry, 29, her daughter, Amanda, 5, and son James, 6. Another son, Thomas, 8, escaped the fire and was uninjured. The mother was an employee of Goodland Regional Medical Center.

Neighbors reported the fire after their houses filled with smoke, and the oldest boy was found outside the

trailer.

Police Chief Ray Smeed said the fire marshal was called and the bodies were removed after he arrived and inspected the scene.

The bodies were taken to Hays today for autopsies and for positive identification through dental records.

"The fire started in the living room," Smeed said. "The exact reason the fire started remains unknown, and the investigation will continue with some assistance from the Sherman County

Sheriff and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation."

Smeed said that "Dr. Jennings was called to the scene as the coroner and she assisted with the investigation."

The firemen were called back to the scene about 11:30 p.m. Monday, because of a rekindled fire.

Services are pending at Koons Funeral Home.

The father is Dan McCurry of Goodland, and works at Good Samaritan Center.

Five months after ConAgra fire, Garden City is still wondering

GARDEN CITY (AP) — Like the smell of smoke that lingers long after a fire is extinguished, uncertainty hangs over hundreds of Garden City residents affected by the Christmas night blaze at the ConAgra plant.

Officials of the Greeley, Colo.-based company have yet to disclose their plans for the heavily damaged meatpacking plant where 2,300 people had worked until five months ago.

Meanwhile, unemployment benefits are running out for those among the displaced workers who had qualified for the aid, social services officials say. School officials wonder how much

enrollment will drop in future years as families leave town to seek jobs elsewhere. The manager of the local Wal-Mart has noticed a drop in sales.

"We're just plain on hold, like we have been," Carol Meyer, president of the Garden City Area Chamber of Commerce, said last week.

"It's a clear matter of ConAgra running the numbers, and we're waiting patiently to see if ConAgra relocates here," she said. "We hope it's too valuable a property for them to lose, but we're considering what else we could do with 965 acres with original water rights."

For ConAgra, a decision about whether to rebuild the plant — about one-third of which was destroyed — has proved to be as challenging as the fire itself, which took more than 18 hours to extinguish.

"We haven't put any sort of a time frame on it," ConAgra spokesman Bret Fox said last week. "We're not going to."

Fox cited a growing list of questions that have to be answered before ConAgra determines if rebuilding in Garden City makes financial sense.

Factors include the slowness of collecting on insurance, compiling a va-

riety of engineering plans to rebuild the plant and, perhaps most significantly, the probable loss of many of the company's 2,300 workers.

"There are an awful lot of factors going into the insurance side," Fox said. "The claim is a very important part of the process. We have to know what resources we're looking at."

"Then, it takes time to develop all of our options and detailed plans for a variety of rebuild options. They are definitely linked, and each one has its own unique complexities. I know it has taken time, but people should understand that there's a lot going on, that

there's a lot of very talented people working on a solution."

Even if ConAgra announced a rebuilding plan in the next few days, it would be at least another year before the plant would reopen. Around 20 percent of the displaced workers have moved on to other ConAgra plants, Fox said, although some had to return to Garden City because they couldn't find housing. Company officials have focused on retaining a "core group" of managers, supervisors and others whose knowledge and skills would be needed if the business reopened in Garden City, Fox said.

Many families have already left town, some for jobs at other packing companies, and more departures are expected.

"A lot of my kids are planning to leave because their parents can't find a job," said Melissa Sanders, a counselor at Garden City High School.

About 500 ConAgra families have been served so far by United Methodist Western Kansas Mexican American Ministries in Garden City.

"Things are getting a little desperate," executive director Penny Schwab said. "Especially those families where two members worked at ConAgra."

Bill signing clears the way for WW II memorial

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush marked Memorial Day by clearing the way for a long-stalled World War II monument on the National Mall.

Bush signed a bill Monday ending lawsuits and procedural hitches that have held up the start of construction for eight years, allowing organizers to resume the contractor selection process and start building within a couple of months. Congress passed the measure last week.

The World War II monument has been divisive for years. The project has

drawn stiff opposition from an array of organizations, including some veterans, who say the design is too grandiose and would clutter the sweep of open space between the Lincoln Monument and the Washington Memorial.

President Clinton formally dedicated the site in 1995, and in 1997 announced the winner from more than 400 entries in a design competition.

Planned for a 7.4-acre site in the heart of the Mall, a circle of granite pillars will represent the states and territories, and two four-story arches are

to signify victory in Europe and Asia.

Sponsors say the actual monument will take up about one-third of the site and, including planning expenses from 1993 when Clinton signed a bill authorizing the memorial, will cost about \$160 million. Some \$150 million has been received in pledges for private donations, with the rest to come from federal funding and interest payments.

The legislation was in reaction to a lawsuit filed last October by opponents arguing that federal laws had been violated in the review process.

The bill states that the memorial

"shall be constructed expeditiously" at the Rainbow Pool site and that actions by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission last year to move the project forward would not be subject to judicial review.

Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, a World War II veteran and a chief backer of the project, said after the bill passed that it eliminated all judicial challenges.

World War II veterans are dying at the rate of about 1,100 each day, Bush said recently. "It is time to give them the memorial they deserve," he said.

Wichita to spend \$150,000 on air travel study this year

WICHITA (AP) — City and Mid-Continent Airport officials, who estimate Wichita loses thousands of departures every year to nearby airports that offer cheaper flights, are pursuing the numbers to back up that contention.

Data confirming their estimate, they said, would give a boost to Wichita's push for subsidized air service to Kansas City, Mo.

"If we can show literally hundreds of thousands of people are driving

away from this market, then we may be able to get the attention of the existing carriers or some other carrier to provide a higher level of service," said Bailis Bell, Wichita's director of airports.

The city plans to hire Sabre Inc., an airline consulting firm based in Fort Worth, Texas, to provide the statistics at a cost of up to \$150,000.

The study should take six to eight weeks after the contract is signed with Sabre, Bell said.

Briefly

Weather: Nice rainfall

Colby received 0.58 inches of precipitation in the thunderstorm that rolled in during the wee hours of this morning (the measurement was taken at 8 a.m.). Earlier in the weekend, 0.01 inches also fell. Total precipitation for the month is now 2.97 inches. The forecast for the Colby region: tonight, cloudy, 70 percent chance for thunderstorms, low around 50 and east winds 10-20 mph, turning to the northeast; Wednesday, partly sunny, 30 percent chance for thunderstorms, high near 70 and northwest winds 10-20 mph; Wednesday night, clear, low around 50; and Thursday, dry, sunny, low around 50 and high near 80. The weekend temperatures: high, Friday 80, Saturday 79 and Sun-

day 80; low, Saturday 50, Sunday 42 and this morning 54. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 68 degrees. The records for May 29: 100 in 1934 and 32 in 1947. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Crumbaker's condition improving

Paxton Crumbaker is "getting along pretty good," after an accident south of Oakley on May 13 put him in a Denver hospital for a week. Crumbaker, 20, received a broken pelvis, ribs and wrist after his northbound 1998 Dodge Dakota he was driving struck the trailer wheels of a south-

bound semi about three miles south of Oakley on U.S. 83. Crumbaker and his passenger, 19-year-old Sarah Heier, of Colby, were headed to Colby for graduation ceremonies for Colby Community College.

Crumbaker's mother, Linda, said he was "recovering slowly." He was released from Swedish Medical Center on May 21 and has been recovering at the family home south of Brewster.

"They want to let things naturally heal," she said. He is scheduled for a checkup in the middle of next month to see if any further treatments are necessary.

Cards and calls from well-wishers were appreciated. Cards may be sent to 194 C.R. 3, Brewster, Kan. 67732.

College board to meet

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will hold special meetings tonight and Wednesday at 5 p.m. in the board room of the administration building to discuss negotiations and any other item of interest.

Help needed to plant sod

Volunteers are needed to help lay sod at the Fairview Estates Retirement Community east of Dillons. In exchange for helping lay sod, ABC Construction company has donated three sets of portable bleachers. Those interested are asked to report to the job site at 8 a.m. Saturday, June 2. For information, call Rod Williams at 462-8260.

