



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

Colby man will once again be B-17 bound

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

After 57 years, some memories never die.

Jay Donelan, Colby, took his last ride in a B-17 "Flying Fortress" bomber over Germany in 1944. His next will be in Broomfield, Colo. on June 29.



Jay Donelan

After finishing the required 35 missions, Donelan was ordered back to the states to train on B-29s, a larger plane, for the invasion of Japan.

"Then they dropped the bomb, the war ended, and they sent us home," he said. Donelan came home to Colby in 1945 and settled down, opening Donelan Jewelers and marrying the former Marilyn Hunt in 1951.

Donelan has never forgotten his time in the flying fortresses or the men who flew with him.

"Our tail-gunner was killed in action and the pilot, co-pilot and navigator have since died. Donelan, along with the ball-turret gunner, bombardier and engineer are the only ones left of his crew.

Donelan's wife heard the plane would be in Broomfield and allowing rides, so she signed him up.

The cost of the 30-minute ride, a 50th anniversary present from his wife, is \$375.

"They paid me to ride in them then," Donelan said. "But they didn't pay me that much!"

Donelan joined the Army Air Corps in 1943 at the age of 18. He served as a waist and tail-gunner on the plane, *Ole Miss Destry*, for most of his missions with the Eighth Army Air Force, 305th Bomb Group in Chelveston, England.

Donelan said he didn't know where the name came from, the plane already had it when he arrived.

"That old B-17 sure could take a lot of punishment," he said. Donelan said one time, after D-Day, they had to land in Brussels.

"Flak took out the (number) three and four engines," he said. Later, the strain caused another engine to overheat.

"We were throwing everything overboard to lighten the plane," Donelan said.

Donelan's brother Bill also flew B-17s, as a pilot starting in 1942. Donelan said his brother used to tell him they both had fighter escorts. "We had the Germans and you had the P-51 Mustangs!" Donelan recounted.

Donelan also recalls that he was nearly the ball-turret gunner, one of the most dangerous assignments on the plane. There is only room for a small person, with no parachute.

"Your head was between the two .50s (machine guns)," he said. "The engineer had to crank you up if the

Last ride was in 1944



Jay Donelan (front, left) was a member of the crew of *Ole Miss Destry* in 1943. Donelan will ride in a B-17 "Flying Fortress" again for the first time in 57 years in Bloomfield, Colo. on June 29.

hydraulics went out."

When he arrived in England, the crew had a man smaller than him, "so he got the job instead of me!"

The B-17 Donelan flew in finished 138 missions, the second most of any B-17.

"After 12 missions, we became a lead crew," he said. They got some time off in England, and were told "have fun, your chances of surviving are less than 15 percent."

Lead crews flew with the command staff. "We flew with the colonel,"

Donelan said. The crew almost got to fly with Gen. Curtis LeMay, commander of the group.

"We called him 'Iron Pants,'" said Donelan. "If a target was overcast, he would circle until it was visible."

Donelan's wife said she didn't have any desire to fly in the plane, but she thought it would be a good idea for him.

"I had a slight stroke on May 3 and our anniversary was May 6," he said. "I'm all over it now, but we didn't get to do anything."

Judge rules youth to be tried as adult

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A Colby youth is being prosecuted as an adult for his part in a two-vehicle collision that claimed the lives of two other people in January of 2000, according to a ruling handed down in the Thomas County District Court on Friday, June 15.

District Magistrate Judge Richard Ress, after hearing arguments at a hearing in late May, said that Michael Thompson, who at the time of the alleged offenses was 17, would be tried as an adult.

"The alleged offenses are serious," Ress wrote in his findings last week. "Two people lost their lives and three persons, including the respondent (Thompson), were seriously injured as a result of the acts giving rise to this case."

Ress also wrote in his decision that the court must also consider whether the protection of the community requires that Thompson be prosecuted as an adult.

Thompson, a juvenile, was driving a motor vehicle while violating the alcohol laws of the State of Kansas, according to the journal entry filed last week.

"It is not in the best interest of the community to allow juveniles or adults to drive cars when they are violating the alcohol laws of our state," he wrote.

Other reasons Ress cited for his decision included the fact that Thompson was alleged to have run the stop sign in a "willful manner."

"No skid marks were left on the road

or no attempt to turn the vehicle was made based on the trooper's report," he wrote.

In addition, people were both killed and injured for life as the result of these alleged offenses — this alleged offense constitutes a crime against people.

Although evidence was presented through testimony by physicians that Thompson has severe permanent injuries to his brain and difficulty with thinking, memory and learning, the court still ruled that the interests of the community would be served by prosecuting Thompson as an adult.

"The purpose of the criminal law is to set extreme outside limits or boundaries for acceptable human behavior in our society," Ress wrote. "If those boundaries are crossed, a crime is committed and consequences or accountability must attach to the person who committed the act for the well-being of the community."

Ress' decision stems from the accident that occurred on Jan. 29, 2000, when Thompson's vehicle failed to stop at a crossroad as he was headed northbound on Thomas County Road 27.

The other vehicle, driven by Angela Duden of Colby, which was westbound on Highway 24, collided right front to left front at the intersection.

Duden and Justin Shaw, both 17, died from injuries as a result of the accident. Shaw was a passenger in Thompson's 1976 Cadillac. Other passengers in Duden's 1995 Ford Probe included William Pederson and Brice Reynolds.

Poll says Americans see economic divide in haves and have-nots

WASHINGTON (AP) — The economic boom of the 1990s improved the financial outlook for upper middle class and wealthy Americans, but it had little impact on the outlook or financial condition of those who make less money, a poll says.

"The boom has passed these people by," said pollster Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

Americans increasingly see an economic divide between the haves and have-nots, according to the poll, released Thursday.

Overall satisfaction with the

country's direction has fallen in the past six months, with 43 percent now saying they're satisfied and 52 percent saying they're dissatisfied. That drop-off from a 55-41 positive split in January was led by a decline among women and minorities.

The number of people who think the country is divided between those who have enough and those who don't has grown steadily and now is at 44 percent — up from 26 percent in 1988.

Just over four in 10 in the new poll thought President Bush was mostly concerned with helping those who have enough, while one in 20 said he

was interested in helping those who don't. Four in 10 said he was treating both groups about the same.

The president has pitched his recently passed tax cut as a way to help all Americans, but six in 10 said they hadn't thought about getting their income tax refunds. Just over a third said they were looking forward to it.

Less than half, 44 percent, now say they are in good or excellent financial shape personally, a drop of 8 percentage points from a year ago.

"The economic gains the middle class have made seem to be very much threatened by the credit crunch and by

energy costs," said Kohut.

The number of people who say they have more debt than they can afford to owe has grown from a fifth of Americans in 1992 to almost three in 10 in 2001. More than a third of those who have family incomes of less than \$50,000 said they have credit card and loan debts that are more than they can afford.

A fourth of people in the survey said not having enough money to make ends meet was the biggest problem facing them and their families. High prices were right behind that.

The poll of 1,200 people was taken

last Wednesday through Sunday and had an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Those at the lower end of the economy saw few signs of economic progress.

"The survey gives a lot of evidence that poor people remain about as poor as they were in the early 1990s," Kohut said.

The numbers who said they didn't have enough money for food, clothes and health care were all up slightly from other polls taken over the past two decades. However, middle-income and wealthy people said it is now easier

for them to afford housing, appliances and vacations.

Some other findings from the poll:

—Women were more concerned about rising prices than men.

—Four in 10 Americans now say there are plenty of jobs available, up from one in 10 who felt that way eight years ago. Those from wealthy households were twice as likely to feel that way as those with low incomes.

—Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities were more likely than whites to struggle with economic issues, even when compared with whites in the same economic ranges.

Carroll O'Connor, TV's indelible Archie Bunker, dies of heart attack

CULVER CITY, Calif. (AP) — Carroll O'Connor, whose gruff charm as the cranky bigot Archie Bunker on "All in the Family" pioneered a new era of TV comedies that brought race relations into America's living rooms, has died of a heart attack. He was 76.

O'Connor collapsed at his home and was rushed to Brotman Medical

Center, publicist Frank Tobin said. His wife of nearly 50 years, Nancy, was at his side.

Despite declining health, O'Connor remained active until the end of his life. He had a toe amputated last year because of circulatory troubles related to diabetes and underwent coronary bypass surgery in 1989.

Personal tragedy darkened O'Connor's later years. His only child, Hugh, a co-star with his father on the TV series "In The Heat of The Night," shot himself in a drug-related suicide in 1995.

A talented actor who appeared on stage and in many movies, O'Connor's image was forever branded in the

public's consciousness as Archie Bunker, the outspoken, blue-collar bigot who railed against a changing world he no longer understood.

Actor-director Rob Reiner, who played Archie's outspoken and steadfastly liberal son-in-law, said that O'Connor was an intellectual who shared only one trait with Bunker.

"He was stubborn, just like Archie. But stubborn for the right things, to push for quality in the shows and to make sure that certain ideas were exposed in a meaningful way," Reiner said Thursday night.

"He was much more soft-spoken, a much gentler person. "All in the Family" producer Norman Lear has said he considered

other actors for the role but that O'Connor brought just the right combination of "bombast and sweetness" to Archie.

"Carroll O'Connor as Archie Bunker was a genius at work, God's gift to the world," Lear told KABC-TV. "He is etched permanently in our memories."

Legislative committee to investigate gas prices

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Still suspicious that someone may have made large profits from high natural gas prices last winter, legislative leaders plan to have a committee investigate.

Leaders decided Thursday to appoint an 11-member Special Committee on Utilities to study energy issues in seven days of meetings this summer and fall. One of its topics will be natural gas prices.

The leaders' charge to the commit-

tee includes finding "what parties gained the windfall of dramatically higher prices."

"We frankly don't know who got the mega-millions from the Kansas economy," said Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson. In December and January, natural gas prices were double and sometimes triple what they were the previous year. Legislators had been warned a problem was coming because temperatures were expected to be colder and gas supplies were said to be tight. But many were caught off guard

by how much gas prices spiked.

House Minority Leader Jim Garner, D-Coffeyville, noted some Kansans still are paying off their winter heating bills. "Somewhere, there is a windfall of money being made by someone or something," Garner said.

"It'd be nice to know where all those consumer dollars are going."

Industry officials have insisted that market forces — supply and demand — drove gas prices and that excessive profits weren't being captured. However, legislators and Gov. Bill Graves

have suggested otherwise for months, though they haven't pinpointed blame.

Senate Majority Leader Lana Oleen said legislators simply need more information about, for example, the natural gas supply. She said some Kansans were frustrated about high prices and a seemingly tight supply because southwest Kansas is home to the giant Hugoton gas field. Also, Oleen said, a legislative investigation may tell lawmakers whether there's any action the state can take to prevent prices from spiking as much this winter.

Here's to you . . .

- ✓Karen Hodson — new administrator at Fairview Estates.
 - ✓Prairie Heritage Day organizers — good luck with Saturday's activities.
 - ✓Becky Donelan — recently named executive director of the Thomas County Community Foundation.
 - ✓Amy Wilson — Miss Beef Empire Days Rodeo Princess.
 - ✓Great Race participants — welcome to Colby and Thomas County!
 - ✓Ken Mitchell — on your mural project at Colby Community College.
 - ✓Scott Cameron and the Western Dream — on your first CD.
 - ✓Jay Donelan — enjoy the ride!
- Call the Free Press at 462-3963 to submit the name of an individual or group for inclusion in this weekly salute. Birthday and anniversary greetings appear in the My Turn column on page 2 today.

Briefly

Weather: Warm

Clear skies and warm temperatures can be expected to prevail in the Colby region on into next week, advises the National Weather Service.

Today's high is expected to top out around 90. Fro tonight, clear skies, low 55-60 and south winds 10-20 mph. Saturday, all sun, high 90 and south winds 10-20 mph. Saturday night, low 60-65, and Sunday and Monday, high in the 90s and the low in the 60s. Thursday's high in Colby was 87 and the overnight low this morning was a one-blanket 49 degrees. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 74 degrees. Precipitation remains at 0.41 inches for the month, a very dry month. The records for June 22: 106 in 1988 and 43 in 1985.

(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Class establishes memorial

Donations are being sought for the purchase of a tree in memory of JR Mattson. The memorial from his classmates of the Class of 1998 will be located at Colby High School. Trudi Hansen will serve as the contact person. Donations can be sent to or dropped off at 935 Brookside, Colby. Hansen can be reached at 462-2710 for more information.

Heritage/Great Race here Saturday

This year's theme for Prairie Heritage Day is "Sod Buster to Crop Duster" and activities will start Saturday with a biscuit and gravy breakfast, sponsored by the retired senior volunteers, at the Colby Community Building at 7 a.m., followed by coffee and cinnamon rolls at the Senior Progress Center. At 11:15 a.m., the Great Race Stage Show will begin at Fourth and Franklin and will open with a performance from the Navy (Ceremonial) Band. Great Race

cars will be arriving through the lunch hour. Colby is a lunch and fuel stop this year for the annual precision race across America.

Other highlights include a watermelon feed sponsored by Farmers and Merchants Bank at Fike Park, musical entertainment from the Power Praise Kid's Choir, Shannon Myers, Jeff Wagoner Family, Marj & Gordon, McLemore Family and Off Limits.

Radio Club training Saturday

Members of the Trojan Amateur Radio Club will be combining fun with training on Saturday beginning at 1 p.m. and ending Sunday at 1 p.m.. This is the second consecutive year the local club will assemble at the Colby airport terminal to set up and operate radios under field disaster conditions, organizers said. Everyone is invited to come out and see the activities any time during the 24-hour period.

Big for a Day scheduled

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Thomas County will sponsor *Big for a Day*, Saturday, June 30, at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. Registration will be from 3-3:30 p.m.; with a museum tour and activities from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Activities will include bobbing for apples, sack race, 3-legged race, cow crafts, cow milking and feeding the animals. There will be a picnic meal at 5:30 with checkout from 6-6:30 p.m.

This is an opportunity to 'test drive' the Big/Little friendship according to organizers. There are 17 boys and five girls waiting — 21 kids who need volunteers for the day. RSVP by June 26 to 465-9125.

Group needs officers

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

