



# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## Knife pulled on police in local incident Tuesday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A 29-year-old transient, who was released on his own recognizance from the Sherman County jail on Monday, was arrested in Colby Tuesday night after pulling a knife on police officers when he refused to leave the dumpster area behind Taco John's restaurant, according to Colby Police Chief Randy Jones.

The situation Tuesday night was very similar to an incident that happened on June 19 involving the same man, later identified as George Steven Vassel, address unknown, Jones said.

In the Tuesday incident, Colby Police Officer Tom Leavitt was called to investigate the man rummaging through the dumpster at around 7 p.m. "Officer Leavitt asked for identification as Vassel continued to look through the dumpster," Jones said, "and as Leavitt repeatedly asked the man for identification, the man became more verbally abusive."

Within minutes, Colby Police Officer Tom Nickols arrived to assist Leavitt as Vassel continued to get even more angry, Jones said. When Nickols started walking toward Vassel, who at this point was walking away from the police officers, he pulled a knife and began to move toward the police.

Vassel then requested that the two officers shoot him, but before the incident could escalate further, the police

//

**"I ain't done nothing wrong..."**

George Steven Vassel,  
in response to answering a state trooper

were able to apprehend him.

Jones said he is being charged with aggravated assault on law enforcement officers, obstruction of official duty and disorderly conduct. He is currently being held in the Thomas County jail pending action from the Thomas County Attorney's office.

In the June 19 incident, the same person was hitchhiking along Interstate 70 around 2 p.m. In this situation, Kansas Highway Patrol trooper Kevin Winston saw the man and stopped.

"Pedestrians are not allowed to be hitchhiking on the Interstate," said Winston today, "so I stopped to ask for identification and planned on giving him a ride to a more suitable location to find a ride." Winston, who said he has been a trooper for 24 years, thought this would be a fairly routine situation — however, that wasn't going to be the case.

"I asked the man for identification and he immediately got belligerent," Winston said. Attempting to ask again for identification, while explaining that people cannot hitchhike along the interstate, the man became even more

agitated, he said.

In response to Winston's request for identification, Vassel said, "I ain't done nothing wrong..." as he continued to walk away from the officer saying, "Okay, I'm Barney (expletive deleted) Fife." Winston said he tried to stop the man, who turned and hit the officer in the chest, but after wrestling him to the ground, the man was eventually handcuffed and taken to the Sherman County jail on charges of aggravated battery on a law enforcement officer and for hitchhiking.

According to the Sherman County Attorney's office today, Vassel was released from their jail on Monday after a court appearance on charges of one count of battery on a police officer and obstruction. A court date was set for July 30, a spokesperson at the county attorney's office said.

Since the man refused to produce identification in both instances, the police have yet to determine where he originally came from, however, one official noted that he has an extensive criminal record in the St. Louis, Mo., area.

### Just in case . . .



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Colby municipal pool lifeguards, Thomas County Emergency Medical Services and the Colby Police Department took part in a life-saving drill Monday afternoon. Amy McCoy, pool manager at Oakley, played the "victim." Her rescuers were, left to right, Jill Evans, Megan Blatt, Summar Stephens, Becky Lang and Erica Horinek. Recreation director C.W. Cheney said, "They did a good job and we learned some things."

## Proposed budget approved for publication by college board

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees approved a proposed budget for 2001-02 not to exceed \$1,759,905 at their Monday night meeting. The proposed mill levy is 24.75 compared to 25.03 last year, reflecting an increase in county valuation. The budget will be published in the *Colby Free Press* on Aug. 3, and the public hearing is scheduled for 5 p.m., Aug. 13, in the board room of Thomas Hall on campus.

Kenneth Johnson, dean of fiscal affairs said Kansas Statute 345 provided additional state money for tax relief, granting relief of \$91,196 for the general fund.

He said he anticipated \$200,000 relief to Thomas County including the

Thomas County Tuition Grant.

In other business:

- The board discussed negotiations with the Faculty Alliance which are at an impasse. There will be a mediation meeting at 5 p.m. on Aug. 6, of which the principle thrust will be health insurance, according to Dr. Mikel Ary, college president. Representatives of the board and of the Faculty Alliance will occupy different rooms, and the mediator will go from one to the other to present proposals and counter proposals.

- Dr. Richard Groetzinger brought a grievance to the board. He was represented by Bruce Lindskog, former Northwest Kansas Univserv director. Groetzinger had told the college he would not be coming back next year, and had completed his teaching year,

before moving to Nebraska where he will be teaching. Lindskog said the college had not paid his fringe benefits for June, July and August, forcing him to pay his health insurance out of his own pocket. He requested the college pay these fringe benefits, saying Groetzinger had earned these benefits by completing his contract.

The board went into a 15-minute executive session and upon return to open session denied Groetzinger's request. A written response will be drafted and signed by the chairman of the board pursuant to the grievance procedure of the master agreement.

- The board changed coming meetings to be Aug. 13 and 27, and canceled the meeting the first Monday in September. This will permit the time frame for the budget, and avoid meeting on

Labor Day.

- The board heard a presentation from David Shute of Ranson Municipal Consultants LLC. Ranson is a financial advisor and Shute brought financing alternatives and a draft time table of events for the certificates of participation which the college took out in 1996. At that time, the college financed \$2,200,000. The outstanding debt at this time is \$1,840,000. This debt could be refinanced at a lower interest rate, possibly saving \$105,485.58, according to Shute.

The board authorized him to serve as financial advisor and work with bankers and investors for the best deal. He will report back at the Aug. 13 meeting.

- The board accepted a low bid from Woolfer Construction for \$85,886 for

remodeling of Living Center North, the men's dormitory. A bid for \$107,558 from Stephens Construction was rejected. Board member Kurt Stephens abstained from voting. The commons area in Living Center North is being enlarged to make it comparable to the area of the women's dormitory. Ary asked the board what it wanted to do about the proposed vaulted ceiling (cupola) on the living center blueprints. He said the area does not have much aesthetic value and this might affect potential students. He said he still has some money donated by the Dane G. Hansen Foundation to be used at his discretion. The board voted to include the cupola at an additional \$12,127.

- The name Stanley Carr Agriculture Center was approved for the Agricul-

ture and Vet-Tech building, honoring Carr who donated \$1 million from his estate.

- The board approved a contract with Norton County Hospital for \$630 a month for rental of facilities for the nursing program. This was a 5 percent increase from last year.

- The board approved contracts for Walter Yuhre and Susan Mardock. Yuhre will replace Groetzinger in the drama department. He has taught in California and has his bachelor's and master's degrees from Sacramento State. He wants to move here to be able to buy a house, and to raise his family in a safer environment. Mardock will be a business instructor, replacing Bruce Die. She is the wife of the new United Methodist minister, and her degrees are from Montana.

### 'Hey, that bar's too high'



MAXINE NELSON/Colby Free Press

Angie Harris' dog Madison prepares to jump over the hurdles... or contemplates the leap. Dog owners who will be participating in the dog show for the fair practiced Tuesday night on the slab beside the grandstand at the fairgrounds. The dog show will be Saturday in the 4-H Building. Madison and Angie are veteran performers, having participated in the dog show for at several years.

## Waiver is granted to residents affected by Ace contamination

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Pollution, the budget and declining population were on the agenda for the Colby City Council Tuesday night.

The council decided to waive double water rates for county residents affected by the contamination from the old Ace Services site.

The decision came as a result of an Environmental Protection Agency determination that a contamination plume in the groundwater from the site on Convesse Ave. was much larger than first suspected.

Some residents east of Colby are affected. According to Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, the federal

agency is providing the piping and meters to hook up to city water.

"The contamination occurred in the corporate limits (of Colby)," she said. "It isn't our responsibility, but it is only fair." Armstrong and Mayor Warren Hixson emphasized the waiver was only for those affected by the contamination from Ace Services.

Armstrong also presented the proposed budget that will appear in the *Free Press* on July 27. It calls for total expenditures of \$10,579,012, up about \$1.6 million from last year.

Council members also disputed a Kansas Certified Population report that Colby had lost 175 people since 1996. "Does everyone drive two

cars?" asked councilman John Breckenkamp. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures, Thomas County lost 78 people between 1990 and 2000.

In other business, the council:

- Approved a fence in the right-of-way for Ryan Bland at 290 S. Franklin with the understanding that it would be removed at his cost should the city require.

- Adopted the 2001 editions of the Uniform Public Offense Code and Uniform Traffic Ordinances for the state of Kansas.

- Heard the second reading of an ordinance granting a franchise agreement for a telecommunications system to S & T Communications.

### Briefly

#### Weather: 90s and 60s

Middle 90s for the highs and mid-60s to around 70 for the lows will highlight Colby's weather through Sunday, advises the National Weather Service forecast center at Goodland. Thunderstorms can be expected to pop up each day and winds will generally be light out of the south. The temperature on Tuesday climbed to 102 in Colby and the overnight low this morning was 65. There was no precipitation, leaving the total for the month at 0.63 inches. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 87 degrees in Colby. The records for July 18: 107 in 1936 and 51 in 1911. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

#### Dog Show is Saturday

Activities for the Thomas County Free Fair will begin Saturday, July 21, with the 4-H and Open Class Dog Show

to be held in 4-H Building. The activity will begin at 9 a.m. with the 4-H Dog show. The open Dog Show will start at approximately noon. Dogs from all over northwest Kansas are eligible to compete with proof of vaccination. They will be running two rings. The show will start with obedience, novice, and continue through advanced.

#### Queen, princess forms due

Applications for the Thomas County Rodeo Queen and Princess are due no later than Friday, July 20, to Trudy Wildeman, 5245 N. Range, Colby. At that time the girls will be given rodeo tickets to sell. The pageant will be Friday, July 27, beginning at 9 a.m. with the horsemanship competition at the fairgrounds. The fashion and speed competition will be at the noon luncheon at the Ramada Inn. Everyone is welcome to attend. A free-will donation will be accepted. There will be a People's Choice Award chosen by the public. Coronation of the queen and princess will be during the rodeo Monday night, July 30.



