



# COLBY FREE PRESS

Two sections  
34 pages

## Hoxie couple pondering recovery of stolen vehicle

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

For Gus and Patty Ochs of Hoxie it was a relief to learn about last week's capture of the couple involved in a high-speed chase through Thomas County last August.

But for the Ochs family, the nightmare isn't quite over. They were just one of many victims who happened to cross paths back in August with Christopher Aaron Lambert, 21, and Tina Janice Pearce, 23, who allegedly stole their white Jeep Cherokee parked at Hoxie Grain Co., after eluding authorities earlier that day.

At first, the Ochs family thought the Jeep wasn't ever going to show up again, but then they received word from Tremonton, Utah authorities in late August that it had been recovered — with a price tag of more than \$500 owing on storage and towing.

"We have, for the most part, ended up with the bill," said Gus late last week, since the expenses and the deductible on their comprehensive insurance are nearly the same.

The Jeep has been sitting in a storage facility since the end of August and Gus said it's not an easy time of the year for his family to just pack up and take a 1,000 mile trip to northern Utah.

So, for now, the Ochs are looking at options and trying to figure out the best way to handle the situation.

**"At first, we were in total disbelief that our Jeep had been stolen...then we were angry..."**

Patty Ochs, Hoxie

"The one positive thing that Patty and I have talked about with this whole ordeal is that we are glad these people just took our vehicle rather than harm anyone else," he said.

"At first," Patty said, "we were both in total disbelief that our Jeep had been stolen and then we were angry that this couple just waltzed into our town and took something without any regard for another's property."

She added that they were both glad the two were caught in Texas.

"Our restitution lies in the fact that they were caught and justice has been served — whatever happens from here on out with our Jeep — we will get it back somehow," Patty said.

As of today, C.D. Hopper, an investigator with the Thomas County Sheriff's office said that the paperwork is in order to extradite the female accomplice, Pearce, back to Colby.

"If all goes well," he said, "she should be back here by Wednesday night and charged with aggravated burglary, kidnapping, felony theft and

misdemeanor theft, along with two counts of misdemeanor criminal damage to property."

As for Lambert, Hopper said he is still facing charges in Texas and an extradition date back to Thomas County is pending.

The couple was apprehended in Angelton, Texas, on Monday, Oct. 8, after police were called to a motel on a domestic dispute.

Pearce surrendered immediately at the scene, but her companion, Lambert, fled on foot.

He was eventually taken into custody after a 20-year Air Force veteran became suspicious of Lambert and took off after him with a 12-inch wire brush used for cleaning his barbecue grill.

The veteran, Rudy Karen, 59, according to Angelton police, beat Lambert with the brush as Lambert tried to escape capture.

Within minutes, authorities arrested Lambert without further incident.

## No. 1 visits Colby



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Richard Santos, right, National Commander of the American Legion visited the Colby American Legion Post Wednesday as part of his national tour. Also pictured are Elgin Wahlborg, State Commander for Kansas, and Russell Shughart, State Vice-Commander. Santos told about 20 Legion members about an assistance hotline for family members of deployed servicemen and a Legion program to help servicemen return to civilian life.

## Navy band concert set in Goodland

GOODLAND — The "Commodores," the United States Navy Band's jazz ensemble from Washington, D.C. will present a free concert at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5, at Max Jones Fieldhouse in Goodland.

This special performance by the Navy's premier jazz ensemble is part

of a national tour, and are being sponsored by the Goodland School District and *The Goodland Daily News*.

The Navy Band Commodores feature 19 top jazz and "big band" musicians offering a mixture of styles ranging from authentic sounds of the swing era to the contemporary high-energy

music. The concert is free, but tickets are required. These are available by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Navy Band Commodores Concert, c/o The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main, Goodland, Kan. 67735. Tickets may also be picked up beginning Friday at *The Daily News*.

## Fire's aftermath

# Uncertain future for Colby businessmen following last week's fire

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

A fire last Thursday that destroyed a Colby business left the owners uncertain about their future.

Pat Sumner and David Bixenman say they are waiting to hear from their insurance company before they will

know if they can rebuild or not.

Their building was heavily damaged the morning of Oct. 11 when a pilot light apparently ignited fumes from a gasoline spill.

Firefighters were able to bring the blaze under control in about an hour, but the building was damaged beyond

repair. "The beams in the back are bent and twisted from the heat," said Sumner. The fire started in the rear of the building, where Bixenman and Tony Wagoner were removing a fuel tank.

The tank spilled its contents and flashed into fire while Bixenman and

Wagoner were trying clean up the spill. Although both were in the center of the flash fire, they were treated for only minor injuries and released by Citizens Medical Center.

"It could have been a lot worse," said Bixenman. Both said they would like to be able to get back to work, but they

won't know whether they can until the insurance is settled.

"I'm too old to go to the bank and borrow a bunch of money," said Sumner. They also have to replace thousands of dollars worth of diagnostic equipment, destroyed by heat and smoke. In addition, personal tools be-

longing to them and their four employees were also destroyed.

They say they would like to rebuild on the site of the old building, but they are afraid a new building might not be feasible. For now, all they can do is wait, but Bixenman said, "It will all work out, it always does."

## Council reviews viaduct removal plans at Tuesday meeting

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council reviewed plans from the state for removing the viaduct and at-grade crossing on N. Range Ave. at its meeting Tuesday night. The maps provide detailed information on the preliminary proposal by the Kansas Department of Transportation, said Carolyn Armstrong, city

manager. "These documents will be available for people to review here at city hall during regular hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)," she said.

Rex Fleming, Topeka, who is the road design leader for the viaduct project in Colby, said today that the plans are in the very early stages of development and prior to any final plans, a series of meetings will be held.

The preliminary plans at city hall, he said, show design for the bridge being removed and how the road will be brought down to an at-grade crossing with the railroad tracks. It also details widening of the road at the railroad tracks and temporary easements with properties that will be affected.

In addition, Fleming said the state is considering purchasing right of way

north of the railroad tracks and west of the road north on Seventh St.

"I think it's important to emphasize, though, that these are very preliminary plans of what the state is proposing," he said. Along with the removal of the viaduct, Fleming said the state is looking at a separate detour project.

"This is another phase of preparing for the work prior to the bridge (via-

duct) removal," he said.

The first of many meetings about the proposed plans for removing the viaduct are expected to begin near the end of October, he said. However, a date was not yet scheduled.

"This will be a design-related and very technical meeting," Fleming said. "We will be planning other activities in November as well."

## Shawnee County official wants changes in criminal threat law

TOPEKA (AP) — A northeast Kansas district attorney wants to strengthen the state's criminal threat statutes following recent anthrax hoaxes.

Nationwide, a Florida man died of anthrax and preliminary tests have discovered at least traces of anthrax in New York, Nevada and Washington, D.C. Tests indicate that at least 13

people either have anthrax or were exposed to anthrax spores.

But since the Sept. 11 attacks, fire and police officials nationwide have responded to numerous false reports of the deadly bacteria. Each case is taken seriously, but responding is expensive for police and the institution or business targeted by the scare.

In Littleton, Colo., a maintenance

supervisor who said he left an envelope of white powder for co-workers at an apartment complex as a joke was arrested Monday and charged with menacing and harassment. The powder was laundry detergent, police said.

Currently in Kansas, someone who makes a false threat could be charged under the felony criminal threat statute for requiring the evacuation of a build-

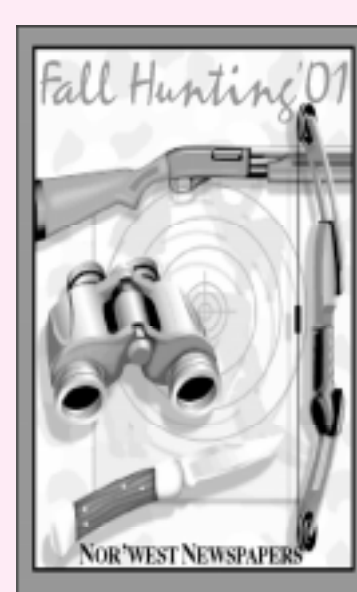
ing, said attorney general spokesman Mark Ohlemeier.

Penalties vary depending on the defendant's criminal record, said Shawnee County District Attorney Robert Hecht.

Defendants without previous felony on their record would face probation if convicted of the least serious level of aggravated criminal threat, Hecht said.

The same defendant would face more than three years in prison if convicted of the most serious level of criminal threat.

In addition, Hecht said, a defendant with a previous non-person felony on his record would face probation or two years in prison for the least serious offense or four years and two months for the most serious.



In today's  
Free Press

## Briefly

### Weather: No changes seen

No major weather changes are expected for the Colby region anytime soon, said the National Weather Service in its forecast this morning. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the lower 40s and southeast winds 5-15 mph, turning to the north late. Thursday, partly sunny, highs in the lower 60s and north winds 10-20 mph. Thursday night, partly cloudy, lows 30-35. Friday through Sunday, partly cloudy, lows in the 30s and highs in the 60s to around 70. Colby's high Tuesday was 70 and the overnight low this morning was a very cool 27. Precipitation remains at 0.45 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is now averaging 52 degrees. The records for Oct. 17: 96 in 1926 and 19 in 1922. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Children's Theatre in area

The Wichita Children's Theatre Professional Touring Company will perform the *Tortoise and Hare* at area schools Thursday and Friday. The age-old story pits the lightning-fast but overconfident hare against the slow but patient tortoise. Thursday performances will be in Winona at 9:30 a.m. and Oakley at 1:30 p.m. Friday performances will be in Atwood at 9:30 a.m. and Goodland at 1:30 MDT. The performance is made possible by the Western Plains Art Association with additional funding from the Kansas Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### 'After Five' site announced

Business After Five will be held from 5-7 p.m. Thursday at Farm Credit of Western Kansas, 375 S. Range. Chamber members and their guests are encouraged to attend.

### Youth to collect food

The United Methodist Church Middle School Youth group and the Catholic Youth Organization will be assisting Colby Girl Scouts in doing *Trick or Treat so Others Can Eat* from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 21, weather permitting. If the weather is bad, it will be held Oct. 28. The girls will be collecting non-perishable food items for the Genesis Food Bank. Donors are asked to put the food on their porch in a bag marked "Girl Scouts." For more information contact Jo Frahm, 462-2082.

### Genesis gears up for holiday project

Genesis-Thomas County, which is the area food bank, is again planning to help families during the holiday season, said Marcy Wasson, chairperson of the Christmas basket project. Families in need and who are interested in receiving

food and services during this special time are asked to pick up forms at the Genesis-Thomas County office, 350 S. Range, Colby, or call, (785) 462-7930 for information or questions. All applications must be returned to the office by Friday, Nov. 2.

### Holiday items needed for sale

Citizens Medical Center Auxiliary is planning its second annual recycled holiday sales and is looking for donations of new or good used holiday items, said Carolyn Miller, one of the organizers. Donations can be left at 545 Woofter Ave. between Saturday, Oct. 27 and Thursday, Nov. 1. For those with questions or to make other arrangements, call 462-7777 or 462-6898. The actual sale will begin on Friday, Nov. 2 from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday, Nov. 3, from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at 545 Woofter Ave.

