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Wichita Mayor Bob Knight (left) spoke with Darrel Follis, Colby city councilman, on Saturday during a brief stop in Colby announcing his candidacy for governor on the Republican ticket. Knight will first have to face

off against Carla Stovall, attorney general, and Tim Shallenburger, state treasurer, in the August primary. Other stops last weekend included Garden City, Kansas City, and Pittsburg.

PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

A ‘Knight’ in political armor shows up on Colby’s doorstep

Wichita mayor wants to be state’s next governor

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

With the governor’s race gaining momentum, Wichita Mayor Bob Knight, 58, said it’s going to take bold, daring steps to turn Kansas around and he said he’s ready to do just that.

“Our homesteading, pioneering and innovative spirit is gone and we have lost our will in pulling together,” Knight, a Republican, told a handful of people at the airport in Colby on Saturday during a whirlwind news conference announcing his intentions to be the state’s next governor.

Knight, along with his wife, Jane, and daughter, Jennifer, were accompanied by two other campaign officials and greeted by Darrel Follis, city councilman, Bill Adams, chairman of the Thomas County Republican Party and Mark Ostmeyer, airport manager.

Considering himself the underdog in the race, Knight’s first hurdle will be in defeating Republicans Tim Shallenburger, state treasurer, and Carla Stovall, attorney general, in the August primary.

“I know I am the underdog at this point,” Knight said, “but that’s natural in my life.”

During his 30-minute talk, Knight outlined a three-pronged approach in building a strong economy and resurrecting that spirit that he believes is gone. “We need to build the state’s economy by pulling together and strengthening the industrial spine in Wichita and south-central Kansas, by strengthening the commercial-side in the northeast, and agriculture here in the northwestern and western part of the state,” he said.

For too long, Knight said, he believes lawmakers in Topeka have done little to bring about this spirit that will be needed in order to make Kansas the world class place it should rightfully be.

“This isn’t about survival of the fittest, this is about genuine, authentic concern for our neighbors, families and friends,” he said.

“Kansas has been the tail lights and not the head lights of the nation because we have gotten away from that pioneering, innovative spirit,” he said.

For Knight, the campaign trail is like starting a special journey. “One,” that he says “will include the pursuit of excellence in the state’s public school

system. One that will bring back the competitive edge that Kansas needs and one that will bring out the hard work, thrift, perseverance and responsibility of the people.”

As for the budget deficit, Knight said, “We are in a half-billion dollar pickle and when running an \$8 to \$9 billion enterprise — short-term budgets don’t work and during this political season we are in, many politicians will even pull us apart more.”

Come August, Knight said he wants people across the state to consider him as the Republican candidate for governor and will be back many times to build on the values of being a good neighbor, friend, family man and Kansan. Knight also spoke of his background and experiences. Born in Wichita, he attended West High School and graduated with a political science degree from Wichita State University. He has been mayor of Wichita seven times, serving in that capacity for 15 years and prior to that was elected to the Wichita City Commission in 1979 and served as the State Secretary of Commerce from 1992-94. Knight said he credits his hard work and own perseverance to his parents, who he said were good people, but poor.

His father was a laborer and his mother cleaned houses and washed dishes at local establishments.

“Shaped by this background, I know people in this state, and through no fault of their own, are struggling,” he said. “We must focus public attention on growing the economy — it should be our biggest priority.”

Also accompanying Knight on this first tour to Colby, Garden City, Kansas City and Pittsburg were Mike Hill, long-time friend, and Joe Pisciotte, Wichita city council member.

“Mike and I grew up together,” Knight said, “and he served 16 years as the sheriff of Sedgwick County. He’s one of the most decorated men I know.”

Pisciotte is a professor of public administration at Wichita State University. Knight and his wife, Jane, have been married for 35 years and, along with daughter Jennifer, have two other children: Amy, who is married and lives in Prairie Village, and Kristin, who resides in Indianapolis, Ind.

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Olive is 90, Troy is 87

New life begins for area couple

By RACHEL MISCALL

The Goodland Daily News

BREWSTER — A few weeks before turning 90, Olive Thiel wasn’t contemplating her past, she was planning her future.

She was thinking about a wedding dress and a honeymoon, not retirement centers and living wills.

Olive married Troy Dillinger, 87, on Jan. 30 and the newlyweds held a reception and birthday party in Brewster on Sunday (Feb. 10), the day after she turned 90. The reception was planned for Saturday, but it was put off a day because of the wind storm.

The couple, who live in Brewster, said they have known each other for more than 50 years and their children attended Brewster High School together, but they never imagined they would be married. Both had long, happy marriages, and they say they missed the caring and companionship after their mates died. They found comfort in each other, the couple says, as they have a lot in common and enjoy spending time together.

And their friendship quickly grew into something more. Olive said the couple had been “dating” for about a month when Troy popped the question in November. Both said they had reservations about marrying again and wondered what people would say, but then they decided life was too short to worry about that.

It turned out there was no reason to worry, because their family and friends are excited about the marriage and their lawyers sorted out money and property issues.

Clasping each other’s hand at their dining room table, the newlyweds said they believe their former spouses are smiling down on them from heaven.

Luther, Olive’s husband of 64 years, died from a heart attack on Oct. 10, 1995. She said they had a wonderful marriage and she was lonely without his company. Olive said she thought life was over, and she started knitting quilts to keep her mind off her sorrow.

Cancer killed Lottie, Troy’s wife of 65 years, on Oct. 18, 2000. Troy said Lottie was the only sweetheart he had ever had before he married Olive. He said he moved their Sherman County farmhouse to Brewster in 1994, because he didn’t want Lottie to be living alone in the country if he died first.

It was Troy who was left alone. Olive joked that she doesn’t know what she’ll do if Troy leaves, because she doesn’t think she can knit quilts anymore. Caressing her hand, Troy said he’s not going anywhere if he can help it.

After the couple were married at the Levant Community Church, which Olive has attended since 1952, they moved into Olive’s Brewster home — built in 1979 when she and Luther moved off the farm.

Olive said they are even related in a roundabout way. Her daughter-in-law’s aunt is Troy’s cousin.

Of course, they didn’t know that until they started chatting at the post office one day in October. Troy said they started talking often, and one day Olive mentioned that she needed to go to Colby, but didn’t have a ride.

Olive told Troy that her son Dale, who runs the family farm, doesn’t like her traveling alone and will take her anywhere at anytime. But since it was the middle of corn harvest, she said, she didn’t want to bother him.

Troy offered to take her, and said they chatted all the way to Colby and back. By the time they returned, he said, he realized he was falling in love.

“I found out how much we really had in common,” he said, “and I wanted to



Olive and Troy Dillinger

get to know her more.”

Troy said he started to take her everywhere. “Pretty soon I didn’t have anywhere to go,” Olive said, “but he’d think of places to go.”

She said it took her a while to catch on. “I thought at first he was just being a good neighbor, taking me to town,” she said, “but it turned out he had other ideas.”

Troy said they were sitting on the couch visiting one day before Thanksgiving when he decided to propose. He said Olive didn’t say “yes” at first.

She said she didn’t think he would want a wife who was going to be 90.

“If you’re looking for a wife, you should look for a younger woman,” Olive said she told him.

But Troy said that didn’t sway him. “I told her that as old as I was, I didn’t think I could offer much to a younger woman,” he said, “and if someone wanted to marry me for my money, I didn’t want to marry them.”

Olive said she regretted her first response.

“Then after I said that,” she said, “I was kinda wishing that I hadn’t.”

She said she was worried about how their money and property would be handled. Olive said they both wanted to be sure that all of their children would receive inheritances after their deaths.

“We can’t let money stand between us,” Troy said he told her, “because we can manage that.”

Olive said she listened to her heart. “He sounded so sincere,” she said. “I knew he was a wonderful Christian man and I’d been lonely for six years. It all tied together. He made me think we could work it all out.”

She said she’s never regretted saying yes, but she has had to fight away thoughts that she’s being unfaithful to Luther.

“I realized it’s not a case of replacing him,” she said. “It’s starting a whole new life. He’s happy up in heaven. Why not have some happiness down here?”

The courting and engagement lasted only about three months, but Olive said they figured they didn’t have much time to waste.

“If our kids did that, we’d try to stop them,” she said, “but we figured we were old enough to know what we were doing.”

They said they would have gotten married sooner if it hadn’t taken so long for the lawyers to put together a marriage agreement.

“We told them we want her kids to get what her husband made and my kids to get my money,” Troy said.

He said the lawyers needed six to eight pages to say the same thing.

Both Troy and Olive said they’ll be able to survive if they lose another mate.

“We did it before,” Olive said, “and we can do it again.”

Troy said the marriage can only help.

“To put it simply,” he said, “we’ll probably live longer together than apart.”

“And we’ll be a lot happier,” Olive added.

School board meets tonight

The Colby School Board of Education will hear a curriculum presentation on history and English, along with reports and new business, at its regular meeting tonight at 7 p.m. in the board room of the administration building, 210 S. Range.

Other items on the agenda include building level administrative reports, district insurance, school bus discussion and driver’s education proposal.

Briefly

Weather: Shower talk

The National Weather Service is talking about some shower activity for the Colby region tonight and also on Tuesday. Tonight, cloudy, a 30 percent chance for showers, lows in the middle 30s and northwest winds 15 mph. Tuesday, cloudy, another 30 percent chance for showers, a little cooler with highs in the middle 40s and northwest winds 5-15 mph. Tuesday night, becoming partly cloudy,

lows in the middle 20s. Wednesday, the sun comes through and the temperature climbs to the middle 50s. And Thursday, clear skies, lows in the middle 20s and highs in the middle 40s. Sunday’s high in Colby was a comfortable 64 and the overnight low this morning was 30. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth has climbed to 37 degrees. There was no additional precipitation, leaving the month’s total at 0.19 inches and the snowfall at 2.5 inches. The records for Feb. 18: 81 in 1970 and —10 in 1978. Today’s

high is expected to top out at around 53. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Senior Center closes Wednesday

The Senior Progress Center in Colby will be closed on Wednesday so that staff members can attend a funeral. There will be no transportation or meals served that day, said Deb Koon, director.

