



COLBY FREE PRESS

Highway collision kills one

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A two-vehicle accident at the intersection of U.S. 83 and U.S. 24 on Friday night took the life of a 49-year-old Ponca City, Okla. woman, Kansas Highway Patrol officials said today.

Nancy D. Irion, who died in the crash, was driving a 2002 Honda north on U.S. 83 and at about 8:20 p.m., failed to stop at the stop sign, putting her vehicle in the direct path of an oncoming 1995 Jeep traveling eastbound on U.S. 24.

The driver of the Jeep, Joshua Ellis, 22, of Lawrence, collided into the driver's door of the Honda causing it to spin off the road and ending up in the nearby field facing south.

In addition to Ellis, there were four other passengers in the Jeep to include David L. Atkins, 20, Manhattan; Carter L. Atkins, 15, and Nathan S. Toll, 18, both of Morland; and Johnny L. Maupin, 17 of Hill City.

All five youth were transported by Thomas County ambulance to Citizens Medical Center where they were treated and released.

Occupants in both vehicles were wearing seatbelts, the patrol said.

During the past several years, the U.S. 24 and U.S. 83 intersection, known as Nine Mile Corner, has earned an unfavorable reputation because of the many accidents that have happened there and public demand for solutions has the Kansas Department of Transportation in search of answers, a spokesman said.

About five years ago, the agency conducted a survey to specifically monitor how many people stopped at the intersection and results of those studies will appear in a later edition this week.



Colby Fire Chief Bob McLemore (far left) spoke with other law enforcement and emergency officials shortly after the two-vehicle accident on Friday night resulted in the death of a 49-year-old woman who failed to

stop at the U.S. 83 and U.S. 24 intersection, also known as the nine-mile corner. In the foreground is the aftermath of the accident showing the damage to the driver's side door of the 2002 Honda.

PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Record heat giving way to cool spell

By TOM A. DREILING

Free Press Publisher

A much needed break from the heat has arrived.

Three record-breaking days in Colby have come to a halt today. And if the forecast by the National Weather Service holds up, temperatures for the rest of the week will be in the upper 60s, upper 70s and in the mid-80s. (See the forecast in today's Briefly column.)

Not only were records broken, but in one instance Colby recorded its hottest ever May temperature, according to records maintained at the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby.

Last Friday — May 31 — the mercury climbed to 105 degrees, the hottest ever in May. The previous record high for the month was 102 degrees set on May 17, 1927. Additionally, that 105 degrees far outdistanced the May 31st record of 92 set in 1955.

Saturday — June 1 — brought another sizzler when the mercury stopped at 101 degrees. The old record for the date of was 96 set in 1899.

Sunday — June 2 — brought 105 degrees once again, and that easily melted the old record high for the date of 98 set in 1911.

The heat was accompanied by brisk southerly winds, with crops and lawns and trees and bushes and shrubs, and yes, even weeds, gasping for water. There wasn't a drop coming from above.

The last recorded precipitation was May 24-25 when 0.84 came down. It came down in an unusual way on the morning of the 24th, in the form of a rain/snow mixture when the temperature plunged to 32 degrees. It then rained on and off throughout the day and into the early morning hours Saturday.

The three-day heat wave was an early reminder that this is northwest Kansas where heat and wind and not much moisture are givens during the summer months.

County commissioners act on cost of ambulance calls are going up

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The base cost of an ambulance call will soon go from \$185 to \$230. The Thomas County commissioners made that decision at their Friday meeting when Martin Rinehart, assistant EMS director, said that Medicare will no longer be paying for oxygen and disposables, such as linens and gloves, on ambulance runs.

"They are taking \$45 out of every run," Rinehart said. He said 85 percent of the county's ambulance calls are covered by Medicare, which presently pays 80 percent of the billing. "We'd have to charge \$270 just to stay even," he said. EMS also charges \$7.50 per loaded mile, which will stay the same, he said.

Rinehart said some neighboring counties charge up to \$290 per ambulance call.

Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock said the county could either increase the base rate or add to the tax burden.

Rinehart said most of the calls currently are for residents, as opposed to most calls on the interstate a few years ago. He attributed it to more elderly people staying in their homes.

In other business:

- Jim McGuire presented Kersenbrock, and County Appraiser Mary Cech with certificates of appreciation from the National Guard for being employers supportive of the National Guard and Reserve. Kersenbrock is the owner of Colby Fertilizer. McGuire, who does some work for the appraiser's office, said he had been called back to do six months training with the Army reserves in Wichita, and appreciated Cech's cooperation.

- Dan McKiski, recently appointed East Hale Township board member, discussed a nuisance in Levant. He said there are old abandoned vehicles parked on the shoulder and right-of-way of 4th Street in Levant (old Highway 24), and wanted to know how to go about getting it cleaned up. "We've been battling that for 10 years," said Commissioner Duane Dawes. McKiski said the East Hale board of trustees has met to deal with the problem and they want the commissioners to help them deal with 4th Street, since it is county property.

- Commissioner Evans said the commissioners supported the idea of having the vehicles removed, and asked McKiski to check with the county attorney to see how best to do this legally.

- Thomas County Health Nurse Kathy Ryan

said she was making arrangements to acquire an impounded Nissan van from the sheriff's department and wanted to know how to pay for expenses. The van will be used instead of personal cars to make trips and calls. Evans told her to pay the expenses from the fund used to reimburse for use of personal cars.

- The commissioners approved tax abatements of \$411.19 for personal property sold in August of the tax year, \$1,583, and \$1,481 for investments which defaulted, and the property returned to the seller.

- The commissioners reappointed Warren Reid of Brewster as Thomas County's representative to the Mid-States Port Authority. They also approved Doyle Rahjes and Jerry Meyer to represent Thomas County on the board of directors for four-year terms.

- Evans signed an application for the county to administer a grant for the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority and Kansas Advisory Group to Big Brothers and Sisters of Thomas County.

- Road Department Supervisor Chris Bieker called to say there was a problem with the viaduct detour. The company that is putting on the asphalt wants the shoulder to be wider. Bieker said there had not been an agreement with the state about who was going to do the shoulder.

Evans called the Kansas Department of Transportation and it was decided the contractor would go ahead and lay the asphalt.

The state will be laying six inches of asphalt on a half mile of Country Club and Veteran's Drive, and two inches of overlay on part of North Franklin and Veteran's Drive, to be used for a detour when the viaduct is removed.

Briefly

Nice week forecast

Temperatures will be more to our liking for the rest of the week in the Colby region, reports the National Weather Service. Tonight, mostly cloudy, a 60 percent chance for thunderstorms, lows in the lower 50s and northeast winds 10-20 mph. Tuesday, mostly cloudy, a 40 percent chance for scattered showers, highs only in the upper 60s and north winds around 20 mph. Tuesday night, mostly cloudy until midnight, then becoming mostly clear, lows in the upper 40s. Wednesday, mostly sunny, highs in the upper 70s. Thursday through Sunday, lows in the upper 50s to around 60 and highs in the lower to mid-80s. Thunderstorms reappear Friday and Saturday. Colby's high Sunday was 105 and the overnight low this morning was 62. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is now averaging 80 degrees. No precipitation to report. The records for June 3: 97 in 1953 and 36 in 1951. *The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.*

Varied agenda for school board

The Colby Board of Education will meet today at 7 p.m. in the board room of the administration building, 210 S. Range, for its regular meeting. In addition to routine business and administrative reports, the board plans to discuss next year's budget and alternatives for the administration building. Other items include discussion of the Thomas County Learning Center, moving graduation to Saturday, the house/woods project contract and dues for the Colby Chamber of Commerce and Kansas Association of School Boards. The board will also discuss and take action on employment recommendations, resignations and supplemental contracts. For information or an agenda, call 465-5000.

College board schedules meeting

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. Monday in the board room of the administration building. They will discuss capital outlay, approve an agreement, approve contracts, approve mission and vision statements, hear an Endowment Association report, and discuss any other item of business any member wishes to discuss. The meeting is open to the public.

Weight room schedule announced

With the school year winding down and summer fast-approaching, the summer weight room hours have been scheduled, said Jeff Quenzer, assistant principal/activities director at Colby High School. The weight room will be open starting Monday, June 3 and will run through Friday, Aug. 16. The weight room will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 6 to 9 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. The cost for using the weight room will be \$17.50 for all Colby Public School students; \$22.50 for Colby College students with identification; \$27.50 for adults; and \$45 for families. For questions, call 465-5300.

Long-term care meeting set

The Kansas Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office, the sole mediator and advocate for nursing home residents, will hold its first-ever informational meeting on volunteering in the Northwest Kansas area. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 5, at 6 p.m. in Room 105 at the Student Union of Colby Community College. Attendees will learn how to become certified volunteer ombudsmen, who improve the quality of life for nursing home residents by advocating, problem solving and mediating disputes. For information, call the State of Kansas Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office at 1-877-662-8362.

A bird's eye view



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Colby's Southwind Plaza celebrated its grand opening Saturday with a barbecue, musical entertainment, and store front sidewalk sales. Hundreds of people attended the day-long event to get acquainted with the many different stores and services provided at the site.

