



COLBY FREE PRESS

Local and area lawmen get their man

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

It took 12 hours, but local law enforcement personnel have their man.

Eric Erickson, who is wanted by the U.S. Marshal Service and was the focus of a manhunt on Wednesday, is now in the custody of the Thomas County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Tom Jones said today that the situation started after a routine traffic stop by one of the Thomas County Deputies, Rod Taylor, near the Interstate 70 and Kansas 25 interchange.

While Taylor was talking to the 54-year-old Erickson, he was unable to produce proper identification and registration verification for the vehicle. After Taylor asked Erickson to get out of the car, he allegedly hit the accelerator, flipped a U-turn and headed south on K-25. Jones said Taylor immediately reported the

chase and pursued Erickson who was driving a 1995 Cadillac at speeds well over 100 miles per hour. Agencies in Logan County were notified of the chase and alerted that they were headed towards the county line.

The chase continued south to the Logan County line, where the road curves between Thomas and Logan Counties. At that point, Erickson reportedly left the roadway and continued to drive west cross-country.

Jones said that once his vehicle stopped near a farmstead, Erickson ran by foot into a tree row. Upon recovery of the car, Jones noted that he had driven through fences and it was evident due to the condition of the car.

"Officers quickly set up a perimeter to confine him to the smallest area possible," said Jones. "They immediately did a cursory search of the area and found the home to be unoccupied."

Logan County Sheriff Pat Parsons said today that home owner, Paul Ritter, and his wife were notified while they were at work in Oakley on Wednesday afternoon of the situation at their farm.

Other nearby residents were also notified of the manhunt and announcements were played over radio stations, warning people that Erickson was considered to be armed and dangerous and not to approach him.

The search continued through the day by officers from Thomas and Logan County Sheriff's Offices, Oakley Police Department, Colby Police Department and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

They were assisted by the Colby Police Department K-9 unit, thermal imaging cameras, and an airplane from Hays that is equipped with special sensors.

Although the farm was searched thoroughly,

Erickson was not found and both Logan County and Thomas County officers were left on duty overnight.

During an interview with Jones this morning, Erickson said he had been hiding in the hayloft above the barn for a good portion of the time.

Jones said the officers had checked the hayloft and it appeared to be unaltered. Because nothing had been recovered by the officers in their search of the loft, the K-9 unit was not taken up into the area, which would have been difficult due to the small ladder that leads up to it.

Taylor, who had been on scene most of the day, had driven back near K-25 and parked with his lights off to observe the countryside, said Jones.

Once he saw movement he turned on his light and found Erickson out in front of him. It

was nearly 2 a.m. when Erickson was taken into custody and returned back to Colby where he was booked into the Thomas County jail.

"I want to give my highest regards to deputy Rod Taylor, who had great perseverance," said Jones. "He wasn't going to give up."

Erickson lists no permanent residence. The car he was driving had Indiana plates and was listed stolen from California. He is wanted by the U.S. Marshal Service out of Arlington, Va. for a probation violation.

Jones said they have been in contact with that office and will be talking to them later today more extensively.

The stolen Cadillac is being held for processing until it is decided which agency will conduct the investigation.

Charges are being filed in Thomas County for numerous traffic violations and possession of stolen property.

Red Cross seeks local support

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

For the first time in its history, the Thomas County American Red Cross Chapter is planning a fund-raising event during the holiday season, said Molly Oliver, chapter chair and coordinator of the activity.

The financial drive for support will be held at Dillons from 9 to 4 p.m., Saturday, with an information table set up, along with the Emergency Response Vehicle on display in the parking lot, she said.

"We hope people will take time to tour the inside of the vehicle, which is only one of seven in Kansas and one of the nation's 237," Oliver said.

There will be volunteers wearing disaster vests and asking for donations to help make sure the local chapter can continue to meet the needs of the community, she said.

"We have had a busy year and have used your private, donated dollars to help many of our neighbors.

"When a disaster strikes," Oliver said, "we are grateful for the money and thankful for all the classes we can offer to help educate and prepare."

Some ways that the local chapter has used contributions in the past year included assisting with three business fires and six single-family fires, along with making various presentations to local government agencies, community representatives, and others.

The local chapter this past year also assisted in the bus accident involving the deaf high school sports team, getting stuffed animals to give to children when fire damaged their homes, and helped in harboring some 400 people in two different storm shelters when weather made it impossible for them to travel.

The organization has also been able to provide blood program information, a tornado preparedness program, community remembrance of "9-11," and much more due to these valuable contributions.

"Your donations have allowed us to give these services," Oliver said, "and you are one of the silent heroes that play a vital role in the American Red Cross."

Most of the local Red Cross board will be available to answer questions or give information about the organization, she said.

Those board members include Molly and Jim Oliver, Kipp Nelson, Fawna Haremza-McFee, Amanda Schmidt, Dr. Walter Barker, Dave Evert, Mary Hurtt, Randy Jones, Terry Keck, Maxine Nelson, Duane Unger, along with Mary Smith, chapter manager.

For those who might not know it, Oliver also said that the American Red Cross is among the top 25 percent of the 100 best charities to give to.

She said that according to the December 2002 issue of *Worth*, which is a well-known charity magazine, the reason for the Red Cross' success in fund raising is primarily due to how the donations are spent.

"For every \$100 in revenue collected by the Red Cross," Oliver said about the article, "\$89 goes to programs; \$4 for fundraising; \$5 in administrative expenses; and \$2 is set aside for future needs."

"It is because of everyone's generosity in the past, that we have been able to provide many important services to our community," she said.

For those unable to attend the Saturday event, Oliver is asking that they might consider mailing in a donation.

"No dollar amount is so small or insignificant," she said.

"Each nickel, dime and dollar helps feed a person needing shelter, giving a stuffed animal to a scared child or helping firefighters and police officers by providing them with a hot cup of coffee."

Oliver, along with other board members, said they are looking forward to seeing people at Dillons on Saturday. "To give well," she said, "give wisely."

Singers sing seasonal songs



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College Concert Choir was among many who performed for a large crowd Tuesday night for the annual winter concert at the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center in Frahm Theater.

Colby College winter concert attracts hundreds

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College Department of Music performed its winter concert Tuesday evening at the Cultural Arts Center. Dr. Philip Shuman conducted the choirs, Dr. David Mruzec conducted the bands, and Pat Ziegelmeier was the accompanist. Performing were the Sun-

flower Singers, the Concert Choir, Concert Band, and the Jazz Ensemble.

The Concert Choir performed four selections: *Die Fledermaus*, *O My Love's Like a Red, Red Rose*, *Holiday Bells*, and *Glory, Glory to the Newborn King*.

The Sunflowers Singers sang *Let the Show Begin*, *Ragtime Choral Selections*, *Here Comes Santa Claus*,

Gloucestershire Wassail, and *Christmas in About Three Minutes*. Choreography was assisted by Jolene Yuhre.

After an intermission, the Jazz Ensemble performed *Duke City Stomp*, *Chili Pepper 101*, *Red Rocket*, and *Jump, Jive, and Walk*.

The Concert Band performed five selections: *High Plains Overture*, *As Summer Was Just Beginning*, *Novena*,

Olympic Spirit, and *Christmas Sing-A-Long*. The band was assisted by members of the Concert Choir.

The Concert Band is made up of 44 students. Twenty students make up the Jazz Ensemble. Seventy-one students comprise the Concert Choir, and the Sunflower Singers number 18.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers

Wednesday's high, 54
Low this morning, 21
Year ago today, 41 & 30
Temperature at 11 today, 41
Soil temperature, 35
Records for Dec. 12: 68 in 1921, -21 in 1932

The forecast

The weather won't be acting very 'Decemberish' for the next few days, according to the National Weather Service. Lows for the Colby-Oakley areas will be in the mid- to upper 20s and highs in the mid-50s. No moisture is anticipated and winds shouldn't be a factor, generally around 10-15 mph.

Briefly

Ziegelmeier recital Saturday

Piano students of Pat Ziegelmeier will perform in a recital on Saturday at 2 p.m. in the sanctuary of the Colby United Methodist Church. The program will be a combination of solos and duets of Christmas music. Everyone is invited to attend.

School board begins earlier Monday

The Colby Board of Education is rescheduling the time for its regular meeting on Monday, said Kirk Nielsen, superintendent. The meeting, which was originally to begin at 7 p.m., has been changed to 6 p.m. due to the Colby High School music concert starting at 8 p.m. The purpose for moving the time up one hour, Nielsen said, was so administrators, staff and the public wanting to attend the concert can do so as well. All school board meetings are held in the administration building board room, 210 S. Range Ave. For questions, call 465-5000.

Duttons take the stage on Sunday

The Western Plains Arts Association will sponsor a concert by the Dutton family on Sunday at 3 p.m. in the Colby High School auditorium. Admission at the door will be \$15 for adults and \$5

for students. Western Plains Arts Association season passes will also be accepted. Funding for this performance has been contributed by the City of Colby Special Law Enforcement Fund at the Thomas County Community Foundation, and also by the Thomas County Community Foundation Kansas Hospital Fund.

This program is also presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Amusement Association meets Monday

The Thomas County Amusement Association will be meeting on Monday at 7 p.m. at the Thomas County Office Complex. This is an open meeting and the public is encouraged to attend and discuss the home-owned carnival.

Hospital Gift Shop drops prices

The Gift Shop at Citizens Medical Center has embarked on a sale now through Dec. 27, with everything 20 percent off — excluding food items and knives.

Pancake Feed to benefit carnival

The Knights of Columbus will have a pancake and sausage feed on Saturday, Jan. 4, from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the Catholic Church

basement. All of the proceeds of the event will go the Thomas County Amusement Association.

Drawing for stockings slated Sunday

The Colby Fire Department is reminding everyone that in less than one week, the "World's Largest Stockings" will be given away to one boy and one girl during the holiday season.

For a \$1 donation, anyone can buy a chance at winning the stockings with tickets available at the Colby Fire Department from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief. For those wanting to see the stockings, there is one at Santa City and also at the fire department, 585 N. Franklin Ave. The drawing will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday at Santa City, he said. For those with questions about the drawing and fund-raising event, call 462-4454.

Fair board meets tonight

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet tonight at the Thomas County 4-H Building at 8 p.m. Kerry Wark, president of the Thomas County Amusement Association is a scheduled guest and the discussion of the contract with the association is on the agenda. The meeting is open to the public.

