



COLBY FREE PRESS

Welcome visitor

Weathermaker makes all northwest Kansans happy with needed snowfall

By TOM (TD) DREILING
Free Press Publisher

If it looks like winter and it feels like winter, it must be winter.

And although many Thomas Countians and other northwest Kansans were beginning to wonder, it was all laid to rest over the weekend.

Old Man Winter came to visit. His stay wasn't long. But the result was certainly welcome.

Colby's official point of measurement — the Northwest Research-Extension Center on the west side of town — reports 3 inches of snow in the weekend weathermaker, breaking down into 0.10 inches of moisture.

For Colby, for the month, 5 inches of snow has been recorded and total precipitation is 0.36 inches, with 0.14 inches of that coming in the form of rain on Feb. 15.

The National Weather Service at Goodland said this morning that their weekend snow depth was 4

inches and resulted in 0.17 inches of moisture.

Overall, the northwest Kansas snowfall averaged out to be just slightly more than 4 inches, according to figures given by Peggy Alander, hydro meteorological technician at the National Weather Service.

Snowfall amounts in northwest Kansas were:

- Colby, 3 inches
- Goodland, 4
- St. Francis, 4
- Atwood, 4
- Oberlin, 3
- Hoxie, 6
- Oakley 5
- Quinter 4

In eastern Colorado, Burlington reported 2 inches of snow and in southwest Nebraska McCook came in with a report of 3 inches.

Goodland was the coldest place in northwest Kansas overnight with a reading of -8 at the weather service.

The Northwest Research-Exten-

sion Center said Colby's overnight low was +4.

Winds weren't much of a factor with around 15 miles per hour pretty much the norm for most areas of the northwest.

Again, southwest and southcentral Kansas were in the path of heaviest snowfalls with Wichita getting slightly more than 10 inches.

Some areas in southwest Kansas reported up to 14 inches of snow and blizzard conditions brought a halt to some southwest traffic with the closing of a couple of highways on Sunday.

Along with the snow and cold, came driving woes. Highways in most areas of the state were snowpacked, and these conditions prevailed on streets in most communities.

Kansans, for most part, woke up to sunny skies today, but the forecast calls for more snow (see the weather box elsewhere on page 1).

Pep rally is set for the Trojans

A public send-off for the nationally top-ranked Colby Community College Trojan wrestlers has been scheduled for Tuesday.

The rally, to which everybody is invited and urged to attend, will begin at 12:10 p.m. in the student

union on the campus.

The Trojans qualified all 10 members to compete in the National Junior College Athletic Association tournament scheduled for Friday and Saturday in Rochester, Minn.

I-70 wreck sends five to hospital

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

A two-car crash about eight miles east of Colby on Interstate 70 sent both drivers and three other passengers to Colby's hospital earlier today and both eastbound lanes were shut down for an hour, said a Kansas Highway Patrol official in Norton.

The accident happened at 7:25 a.m. Both cars were eastbound in the right hand lane when a 1998 Ford Taurus, driven by Lorenda T.

Smith, 26, of Lawrence attempted to pass a 1990 Accura driven by Rosalie F. Langley, 65, of Colby.

As Smith started to go into the left lane, her car rear-ended Langley's, sending her car into the south ditch and Smith's car stayed on the roadway, officials said. The other three passengers in Smith's car, along with Smith and Langley, were all taken by Thomas County ambulance to the hospital.

The other passengers in Smith's car were Linda P. Gaines, 46,

Lawrence, Shundrea S. Scott, 18, of Tularc, Calif., and Janane M. Williams, 22, of Kansas City, Kan. Gaines was transferred to St. Francis Hospital in Wichita and the other four were treated and released. Citizens Medical Center officials said. Damage was over \$500 and all five were wearing seatbelts. Road conditions were snowpacked, but officials said this was not a contributing factor. No citations were issued yet, but the accident is still being investigated, officials said.

Oil, gas producers keeping busy

WICHITA (AP)—A boom in the oil and natural gas industry means Kansas rig operators are doing well — for now.

Far from certain, however, is how long today's prices — \$28.77 in January for Kansas crude and \$5.12 a unit for the February natural gas index — will last.

"The last time we had a little boom like this, the price went right back down again," said Jim Molz, owner of Molz Oil at Kiowa and a 28-year veteran of the oil business. "That was the end of the line for a lot of operators."

For contractors, a prolonged slump in oil prices in the 1990s, meant the erosion of labor crews as operators quit drilling, and there wasn't enough work for everybody.

Ralph Hamilton, who manages Duke Drilling of Wichita, said all of his rigs are busy. He has jobs booked well into the future.

"The hardest thing last year was finding people to work when you did get jobs. It had been so spotty that people left for steady work. Now, with prices coming up and all the layoffs in the factories, we're starting to see some people coming back to the oil field. It's fairly good pay, lots of overtime. It can be hard and nasty, but it pays good."

Like Duke, Tim Sanders, with Big A Drilling at Great Bend, is a contractor for operators wanting wells drilled.

He operates mostly in the Hugoton field near Liberal and said the demand for drilling rises and falls with the price.

An increase in the price of oil generally translates into an increase in the price of natural gas, Hamilton said. The prices of both are high right now, and people are encouraged to drill.

Most of the profit in Kansas is in

natural gas, he said.

"Kansas oil wells generally aren't big producers," he said. "The new money here is in natural gas."

While being in business now is good, Sanders and Keen worry that the price of oil and gas may be headed too high.

"You want a good price, but too high a price starts to hurt the economy as a whole," he said. "It starts costing you more to operate, and it hurts other businesses."

Sanders would like the price of oil to hover around \$25, so he could make plans.

"But it goes up and down like a yo-yo. The price may be \$40, but by the time you drill the well, it's down to \$18. That's what hurts," he said.

A natural gas price in the \$3.50 per unit range encourages drilling, contractors say.

Prices now are now reportedly well above \$4.

Rain ralliers turn to God

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

God works in mysterious ways and Saturday's overcast skies might have been his way of answering a lot of people's prayers — or at least that was the hope for one Brewster couple responsible for organizing the "Northwest Kansas Pray For Rain Rally" this weekend.

In spite of the cold, gloomy weather outside, more than 75 people attended the three-hour rally held at the 4-H Building on the Thomas County Fairgrounds and planned by Leonard and Zelma Kinkade, who live south of Brewster.

Some might even say it worked with Sunday's snowfall accumulations of 3 inches to 6 inches in

northwest Kansas, with the forecast calling for more snow this week.

A cardboard map of the 18 northwest Kansas counties was used to pinpoint everyone attending the rally. Mrs. Kinkade said she also had a map of Kansas available so that people outside the area were included.

Standing before the group, Mr. Kinkade used a cellular telephone to call God, saying that "God's telephone number is Jeremiah 33:3."

In addition to calling God, other scriptures related to rain were read. For example, Mr. Kinkade read from Zechariah 10:1 asking God for rain in the springtime.

"It is the Lord who makes the storm clouds," he read, "and he gives showers of rain to men and plants of the field to everyone."

Scripture readings included Elijah's drought from 1 Kings 17 and 18, Love Your Neighbor from Matthew 5:43-48, God's Invitation to the Living Water, John 7:37-38, along with many others.

During the three-hour rally, participants either stayed the entire time or came and went.

"We made this a 'come and go' rally because we understood that some might have prior commitments," Mrs. Kinkade said.

While many continued to pray throughout the rally, Mr. Kinkade talked and read from the Bible.

"Many times in the Bible, drought (physical dryness) accompanies spiritual dryness," he said. "God even says at times that the purpose of hardship is to get people to turn to him."

Autopsy planned to see what claimed girl's life

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—Family and friends planned private and public memorial services for the Mexican teenager who survived a botched heart-lung transplant but died two days after receiving a second set of organs.

Meanwhile, medical examiners are trying to determine what ultimately killed Jessica Santillan.

A lawyer for the 17-year-old's family said an autopsy planned today was appropriate.

"We just want to make sure we know what the cause of death was," attorney Kurt Dixon said Sunday.

"If there's going to be legal action down the road, you want to have a definite cause of death. You don't want to speculate about that."

Two memorial services — one public and another private — were scheduled for Tuesday, said Mack Mahoney, a family friend and Jessica's chief benefactor.

He said he believed the family would return her body to Mexico for burial.

On Sunday, family, friends and strangers gathered at a church prayer service and at a vigil outside the hospital where Jessica died.

Briefly

Wellness center to be discussed

Colby Community College will meet today at 5 p.m. and then again on Tuesday, at 5 p.m. in the board room of Thomas Hall. Trustees to listen to presentations by architects for the new wellness center. The meetings are open to the public and college officials are encouraging attendance.

Sacred Heart plans enrollment

Sacred Heart School will be holding kindergarten and pre-school enrollment on Wednesday, March 5, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the school lobby at 1150 W. 6th St. School officials ask that parents or guardians bring a copy of their child's birth certificate, immunization records, social security number, and physical. For questions, call 462-2813.

Kindergarten pre-enrollment set

Kindergarten pre-enrollment for the 2003-04 school year at Colby Grade School is from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday in

the conference room at the school. For questions or what paperwork is necessary, call 465-5100.

Childbirth education series to begin

The next Colby Childbirth Education series will start on Thursday, March 6 will subsequent classes scheduled on March 20 and 27, and April 3. They will be held in the Health Science Building on the Colby Community College Campus. More information is available at 462-6845, ask for Tina Schrick.

Red Cross classes planned

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross announces the following classes: a first aid course from 6 to 10 p.m., Thursday, and a two-day instructor training course on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 11 and 12, with times to be announced. Classes will also be offered by arrangement for a "Ready, Set, Roll" class to train drivers in the emergency response vehicle drivers and an introductory class to

disaster services. To enroll, call the Red Cross office at (785) 462-7161. Courses are held at the Thomas County Office Complex.

Cemetery board meets Thursdays

The Colby Cemetery District board meetings will be held on Thursdays for the next couple of months, reminded Relda Galli, board member. The meetings will continue to be held at the Thomas County Courthouse beginning at 2 p.m. Board members should note that Thursday meetings include March 20 and April 24. For questions, call Galli at 462-3670.

Sweet Thunder sign-up announced

Sweet Thunder will hold its annual sign-up/informational meeting on Sunday, March 9 in Room 106, Student Union, Colby Community College, at 3 p.m. Players and parents, and others interested, are urged to attend. Call Barb Wieland, Manuel Rubio, Susan Wark, Donna Augustine or Tanya Staats for additional information. Additional information is available on their website at www.colbysweetthunder.org.



More snow in the forecast

Tonight...cloudy. A slight chance of snow after midnight. Cold with lows near zero. South wind 5 to 15 mph. Chance of snow 20 percent. Tuesday...cloudy with a slight chance of snow. Not as cold with highs near 20. South wind 10 to 15 mph. Chance of snow 20 percent. Tuesday night...snow likely. Lows 10 to 15. Chance of snow 60 percent. Wednesday...snow likely. Continued cold. Highs in the mid 20s. Chance of snow 60 percent. Wednesday night...cloudy with a slight chance of snow. Lows in the mid teens. Chance of snow 20 percent.

The numbers

Sunday's high, 35
Low this morning, +4
Soil temperature, 34
Year ago, 40 and 30
Weekend snowfall, 3 inches
Weekend precipitation, 0.10 inches
Month's snowfall, 5 inches
Month's precipitation, 0.36
Records, 76 in 1958 and -12 in 1960

