



COLBY FREE PRESS

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The end of the holidays



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mike Brier and Justin Helus took down one of the large wreaths and garland hanging between the stoplights at Fourth and Range in Colby. It took both of the city's bucket trucks to remove the

decorations. The small banners decorating light posts around town came down Monday and weather permitting, the rest of the holiday decorations should be taken down by Wednesday night.

Commissioners discuss medical bill with sheriff

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A medical bill for a man who was shot by law enforcement in Thomas County was one of the items discussed at today's county commissioners' meeting. The bill, for \$37,524.60, was discussed with Sheriff Tom Jones.

Commissioner Ron Evans wanted to know when Gerald Neil Bryant II, 32, of Inyokern, Calif. was actually in custody in Thomas County. Bryant was shot by a trooper from the Kansas Highway Patrol on Sept. 22, 2003, ending a chase that went through Thomas and Logan counties. Bryant was shot and then crashed his car on Interstate-70 near the U.S. Highway 83 overpass.

He was taken to Logan County Hospital and then flown to Via Christi/St. Francis Hospital in Wichita.

The incident started as a routine traffic stop in Thomas County and later turned into a chase involving law enforcement from Thomas, Logan and Gove counties and the highway patrol.

"When the bullet hit he was in custody," Jones said.

Evans said he and his fellow commissioners know they have to pay the bill but they just wanted to have their questions answered.

Jones told the commissioners he talked to the state about possibly

having them pick up half of the tab. He reported he didn't get a solid answer either way.

The commissioners also set the holidays and named appointments for the new year.

There are 10 legal holidays for 2004, including New Year's Day; Presidents Day on Feb. 16; Memorial Day on May 31; July 5 for Independence; Labor Day on Sept. 6; Veterans Day on Nov. 11; Thanksgiving on Nov. 25 and Nov. 26; and Christmas Eve on Dec. 24 and Dec. 27, the Monday after Christmas.

County appointments are Juanita Dewey as head of the Thomas County Health Department; Kathi Wright as emergency medical services and 911 director; Dr. Victor Hildyard II as county health officer and emergency medical services medical advisor; John Lygers as the emergency preparedness director; Ken Ptacek as noxious weed director; Sandy Swobas as household hazardous director; Bob McLemore as LEPC chairman; J.L. Ellis as radiological officer; Clair Schrock as road supervisor; and Larry Jumper as landfill supervisor.

The commissioners also designated the *Colby Free Press* as the official county newspaper and reappointed Evans as chairman of the county commissioners.

They also noted there are three open spots on the Thomas County Fair Board that need to be filled.

Colby postmaster retires after 37 years with postal service

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

You might say he licked his last stamp as postmaster.

After 11 years as Colby postmaster, and a total of 37 years with the United States Postal Service, Jim McDonald retired.

His last day was Wednesday, Dec. 24 — Christmas eve.

He said his service as Colby postmaster was the first time he had held the position.

McDonald started out as a postal clerk in Santa Ana, Ca-



J. McDonald

lif. in 1967, later working at Dodge City and then Colby.

He said in 1967 that the postal service was a good job with good salary and benefits.

Although he will miss some aspects of the work, like working with customers, he won't miss others, like the stress.

There are changes McDonald's

watched over the years, including the volume of mail handled and the number of people doing it.

Mechanization changed all that. McDonald said when he first began working for the post office, 900,000 postal workers in the U.S. processed 10-billion pieces of mail annually.

Now, 700,000 postal workers

process 22-billion pieces of mail a year.

"That's nowhere near the same as when I started," he said.

"It has changed completely." And the change was for the better, he said.

"It'll be changing as much over the next 20 years," McDonald said. "I can't even imagine what it will be

like in 20 years."

He said Linda Smith, the Oberlin postmaster, is filling in until a new postmaster is chosen.

McDonald added the position is open and will be filled by choosing from a pool of applicants.

His wife, Gayonna, also retired from the post office in November of 2003.

Selden man charged with 10 felony counts of fraud

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

HOXIE — Felony charges were filed by Sheridan County and the Kansas Attorney General's office last week on a Selden man accused of insurance fraud, said Scott Holeman, information officer with

the Kansas Insurance Department.

Stephen C. Carman of Selden, with Carman Insurance Agency, is facing 10 felony counts to include 7 counts of failing to pay over consumers' insurance premiums to an insurance company, 2 counts of forgery and 1 count of theft, he said.

"The overwhelming majority of insurance agents in Kansas are honest and dedicated to providing good service for their customers," said Sandy Praeger, the Kansas Insurance Commissioner, on Friday.

"Our department," Praeger said, "will not tolerate agents who break

the law."

Details as to how the commission discovered the discrepancies was not released.

However, Holeman did say that in recent years an insurance fraud unit had been established with Phill Kline, attorney general, appointing

seven lawyers to the state's insurance department for prosecuting insurance crimes.

Holeman also said his office encourages anyone who suspects insurance fraud to contact the state's insurance department consumer hotline toll-free, 1-800-432-2484.

Fingerprinting foreign visitors gets underway at airports

By SUZANNE GAMBOA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Starting this week, foreigners entering U.S. airports and seaports from all but 28 nations will have their fingerprints scanned and their photographs taken as part of a new program to tighten border security.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge scheduled an appearance Monday at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Other top federal officials also planned to be at airports across the nation to help draw attention to the new policy.

All 115 U.S. airports that handle

international flights and 14 major seaports are covered by the program, under which Customs officials can instantly check an immigrant or visitor's criminal background.

Called US-VISIT, or U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology, the program will check an estimated 24 million foreigners each year, though some will be repeat visitors.

The only exceptions will be visitors from 28 countries — mostly European nations whose citizens are allowed to come to the United States for up to 90 days without visas.

Inkless fingerprints will be taken and checked instantly against a national digital database for criminal backgrounds and any terrorist lists. The process will be repeated when the foreigners leave the country as an extra security measure and to ensure they complied with visa limitations.

Homeland Security spokesman Bill Strassberger said that once screeners become proficient, the extra security will take only 10 to 15 seconds per person. Foreign travelers also will continue to pass through regular Customs points and answer questions.

Photographs will be used to help

create a database for law enforcement. The travel data is supposed to be securely stored and made available only to authorized officials on a need-to-know basis.

A similar program is to be installed at 50 land border crossings by the end of next year, Strassberger said.

Brazilian police started fingerprinting and photographing Americans arriving at Sao Paulo's airport last week in response to the new U.S. regulations.

Brazil's Foreign Ministry has requested that Brazilians be removed from the U.S. list.

"At first, most of the Americans

were angered at having to go through all this, but they were usually more understanding once they learned that Brazilians are subjected to the same treatment in the U.S.," Wagner Castilho, press officer for the federal police in Sao Paulo, said of those arriving at Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport last Thursday.

The U.S. system consists of a small box that digitally scans fingerprints and a spherical computer camera that snaps pictures. It will be used for foreign nationals traveling on tourist, business and student visas who enter through an airport or seaport.

Briefly

Brewster Heritage Center to meet

The Brewster Heritage Center's annual meeting will be held Saturday, Jan. 10, at Hunter Hall. Prior to the meeting there will be a potluck meal at noon. Turkey, ham and drinks will be furnished. The Red Barn Gang from Rexford will provide fun and music.

Blood drive planned this month

The next Red Cross blood drive in Colby is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 14, from noon until 6 p.m. at the Colby Community Building. Something new beginning in January of 2004 is that American Red Cross blood donors will be required to provide identification before donating.

To make an appointment for the January drive, call, 1-800-448-3543 or visit the website: www.redcross.org. General

requirements for giving blood include donors needing to be at least 17 years of age, weighing at least 110 lbs., and be in generally good health.

Most medications do not prevent potential donors from giving blood and those planning to participate are asked to drink plenty of water prior to donation.

For other questions, call Jackie Stephens at 462-8122 or Jo Frahm, 462-2082.

College board meets today

The Colby Community College board of trustees will meet at 5 p.m. today in the board room of Thomas Hall. Items on the agenda include a campus tour, resignations and liquidated damages, approval of contracts and agreements, negotiations and the Wellness Center. The meeting is open to the public.

Public hearing planned

The Colby Public Schools Board of Education has scheduled a public hearing at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 13 in the board room of the administration building, 400 W. Third St. The purpose of the hearing is to allow the public an opportunity to review the proposed petition to establish a charter school within the confines of the school district.

Detailed information will be available at the hearing or by request from the district. For questions, call (785) 460-5000.

Workforce Center has new hours

The Colby Workforce Center (formerly the Job Service Center) is now operating under new hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The center is located at 485 N. Chick.



Gradual warming

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area
Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows 2 below. Southeast winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the south around 5 mph after midnight.
Tuesday...Partly cloudy. Warmer. Highs in the upper 20s to around 30. Southwest winds 5 to 10 mph.
Tuesday night...Partly cloudy. Not as cool. Lows around 14. South winds 5 to 10 mph.
Wednesday...Mostly cloudy. Warmer. Highs in the mid 40s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.
Wednesday night and Thursday...Partly cloudy. Lows in the 20s and highs in the lower 50s.

The numbers

Sunday's high, 20
Low this morning, +6
Records for Jan. 5, 72 in 1927 and -22 in 1942
Year ago today, 51 and 21
Weekend precipitation, 0.05
Month's precipitation, 0.05
Weekend snowfall, 1-inch
2003 precipitation to date, trace

Soil temperature, 33

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

