



COLBY FREE PRESS

Extensive loss in area barn fire

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A Thomas County family lost their barn in a Wednesday night fire.

Larry Maxwell, property owner, said the fire department in Colby got the call shortly after 9 p.m.

He said they lost a tractor, baler, their complete shop, a large supply of grass hay and a horse. The hay, he said, made the heat from the fire very intense, which was a problem.

Maxwell said the fire was still smoldering this morning, adding they were lucky they didn't lose anything else.

They live approximately five miles southwest of Colby.

"The fire department did an excellent job," he said, thanking the fire department, neighbors and the Red Cross for helping them out.

Maxwell said he and his family appreciated the help. He said they weren't home when the fire started and neighbors moved their trailers and vehicles to keep them from being lost also.

Two firefighters stayed the night and the Red Cross had also been out to lend a hand.

Maxwell said no cause for the fire has been determined yet and he had no estimate yet of the value of the damage.



This was the scene this morning following a fire at the Larry Maxwell farm southwest of Colby on Wednesday night. The cause and

an estimate of the loss weren't known this morning; however, state fire officials were at the site today.

County commissioners get peek at 2005 budget

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners got a glimpse of the 2005 budget at their Monday meeting.

County Clerk Tracey Perkins said Brian Staats of Adams, Brown,

Beran and Ball gave a preliminary report to the commissioners.

"They did an estimated budget," Perkins said. "The audit will be presented at a later date"

She said the report showed numbers that had been plugged in and

also showed funds that had gone over their budget amounts for 2004. Perkins said the commissioners will discuss it further at the June 30 meeting.

The commissioners also heard a presentation on 911 funding and

training from dispatcher Marlene Pfeifer and Thomas County Emergency Medical Services Director Kathi Wright.

Perkins said Pfeifer attended a 911 training session in Topeka and talked about a cell phone tax the

state will be collecting in the near future to help fund 911.

She said the state will get 25 cents and the other half will go to the county.

Perkins said the zip code plus four digits will determine where the

money goes.

The commissioners also approved a resolution from the Mid-States Port Authority to establish rail service and named Norman Nelson and Mary Jo Downey to the board of directors.

Road work nears completion



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

City and county crews in Colby continued working on the intersection at Pine and Franklin this morning as the city moves ahead with its chip sealing project. Bill Mariman, a county employee, was among those involved in the project. A number of streets are being resurfaced and residents are asked to remove their vehicles from the following streets before 9 a.m. each day: Smith Drive; Fifth Street (from Smith Drive to Walker Avenue); Franklin Avenue (from Webster Street to College Drive); Pine Street (from Range Avenue to Country Club Drive); and College Drive (from Range Avenue to Country Club Drive).

Northwest Kansas declining

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — Most of the fastest-growing cities in Kansas last year were outside either the Kansas City or Wichita metropolitan area, according to new estimates from the Census Bureau.

Meanwhile, a majority of the fastest-declining cities are small towns in northwest Kansas, according to the census estimates.

The figures, released Thursday, suggest a continuation of two trends in Kansas: the growth of bedroom communities near the two largest metro areas and the decline of some small towns, particularly in the northwest part of the state.

"The migration from west to east, in a lot of cases, raises a number of questions about service delivery, the economics of units of government throughout the western two-thirds of Kansas," Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said Wednesday. "I think the short-term, the shift in population is of some concern."

Spring Hill, along the border of Johnson and Miami counties, was the fastest-growing city in the state,

the Census Bureau said in comparing its 2002 and 2003 population estimates. The census estimated the city gained 392 residents last year, growing to 3,745 from 3,353, or by 11.7 percent.

State Rep. John Ballou, whose district includes Spring Hill, noted that the city is along U.S. 169, only a few minutes away from Interstate 35 and Johnson County's large suburbs.

"They're offering the amenities that young families are looking for," said Ballou, R-Gardner. "You can live in Spring Hill and work in Corporate Woods (office park), and you're only 25 minutes away."

Ballou's hometown was the third-fastest growing city last year, according to the census estimates. Its population rose 8.6 percent to 11,670 from 10,748.

In all, according to the Census Bureau, the populations of 17 cities grew 3 percent or more last year. Including Spring Hill and Gardner, six of them are near the Kansas City metro area. The other four are: Basehor, Lansing, Tonganoxie and Louisburg. Olathe, the Johnson

County seat, saw its population grow 4 percent, to more than 105,000, according to estimates.

Six communities in which the population grew more than 3 percent are near the Wichita metro area: Goddard, Park City, Andover, Bentley, Maize and Kechi.

Meanwhile, 11 of the 16 cities that saw their populations drop 3 percent or more sit along Kansas 96 or north of it and west of U.S. 183. According to the census figures, they included four cities in Ness County alone: Bazine, Ransom, Ness City and Utica.

Another four such cities are in north-central Kansas. They are Cedar, Gaylord, Scandia and Natoma.

However, the community showing the largest percentage decline is tiny Waldron, along the Oklahoma border in Harper County. The census bureau estimated that its population dropped from 17 to 16, or by 5.9 percent. The Census Bureau released figures for the state and its 105 counties in April, estimating that Kansas' overall population grew by about 0.4 percent in 2003, to 2,723,507.

Insurgents launch series of attacks in Iraq

BAQOUBA, Iraq (AP)—Insurgents launched coordinated attacks against police and government buildings across Sunni Muslim areas of Iraq Thursday, killing 66 Iraqis and three U.S. soldiers less than a week before the handover of power.

The Iraqi Health Ministry said 268 people were wounded in the attack, but that tally did not include American injured.

The large number of attacks,

mostly directed at Iraqi security services, was a clear sign of just how powerful the insurgency in Iraq remains — and could be the start of a new push to torpedo the June 30 transfer of sovereignty to an interim transitional government.

Some of the heaviest fighting was reported in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, where two American soldiers were killed and seven wounded, the U.S. 1st Infantry Division said. Attackers also tar-

geted police stations in Ramadi, Mahaweel, and the northern city of Mosul, where car bombs rocked the Iraqi Police Academy, two police stations and the al-Jumhuri hospital.

Khalid Mohammed, an official at the hospital, said dozens of injured were brought there. At least 50 people died and 170 were wounded there, he said.

A U.S. soldier was also killed and three were wounded in Mosul.

In other attacks, four Iraqi soldiers were killed in an explosion near a checkpoint manned by Iraqi and American soldiers in the southern Baghdad district of Dora. Three U.S. soldiers tended to what appeared to be a wounded American soldier on the road.

The soldier's helmet lay nearby. Black smoke and flames shot up from a burning pickup truck.

It was not immediately clear what caused the blast.

Briefly

Community play group continues

A play group was recently formed for mothers and young toddler-age children to give them all a chance for interaction. Known as *Community Play Group* the moms and children are meeting once a week, said Michelle Mettlen, one of the coordinators. The group meets at 10 a.m., Friday, at the Colby United Methodist Church nursery. For questions, call Mettlen at 460-3310.

Donations sought for fireworks

The Colby Kiwanis Club is reminding all businesses that it's once again looking for "shell" sponsors to defray costs on this year's fireworks display. All \$20 shell donations will go toward the celebration. If interested, call the Thomas County/Colby Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401.

Girl Scouts seek help

Donations are needed for Girl Scouts in Colby who will be attending summer camp in July at Camp Hansen, Kirwin Lake, said Brette Pfeifer, coordinating activities.

Items requested include one and three pound coffee cans with lids; pillow cases (whites and light pastels); clear fingernail polish; rubber O-rings (for making water bottle holders); clear sealant spray, bubble gum,

and old 45s (records) and 33 long play record album covers. Pfeifer said she would be glad to pick these items up by calling her at 460-6006 or toll-free at 1-877-280-9836.

For those wanting to drop items off to her, they can do so between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., weekdays, at the Girl Scout Office, or the Kansas Country Store in Southwind Plaza.

Heartland SHARE delivery Saturday

Heartland SHARE delivery is at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at the Sacred Heart School gym. A share is \$17.50 plus two hours of volunteer community service. The menu for this delivery is ham and cheese Hot Pockets, mesquite chicken breasts, ground beef patties, corn dogs, deli sliced cooked ham, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, red peppers, peaches, nectarines, cantaloupe, fruit cups and spaghetti. There are few shares left. If anyone is interested in ordering, they should call Gene Griffin at 460-3579.

Class reunion scheduled

The Colby High School Class of 1984 has scheduled its 20th reunion for July 2, 3, and 4, coordinators of the event said. In an effort to communicate with others in that class, a website has been set up for registration and other information. The address is: www.colbyhigh-1984.com

Colby Gem Mingo



They're still talking about rain

Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows in the 50s. A 50 percent chance for thunderstorms and/or rain. Northeast winds 15-25 mph and gusty, switching to the east and easing off to 5 mph. **Friday...**Cloudy. Highs in the 70s. Southeast winds 5-15 mph. A 30 percent chance for thunderstorms and/or rain showers. **Friday night...**Cloudy. Lows in the 50s. A 40 percent chance for rain and/or thunderstorms. Southeast winds 5-15 mph. **Saturday...**Cloudy. A 30 percent chance for rain and/or thunderstorms. Highs around 70. East winds 5-15 mph.

The numbers

Wednesday's high, 87
Low this morning, 60
Records for June 24, 107 in 1943 and 43 in 1940
Year ago today, 97 and 67
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
June's total, 3.20
Soil temperature, 70

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.

Water use

• June 23 = 1,442 million gallons.

Water advisories

• Water **Watch** is 3.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.
• Water **Warning** is 4.0 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.
• Water **Emergency** is 4.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.

