



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Thank you veterans!



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Many area veterans turned out for the annual parade Saturday in downtown Colby. In addition to vets walking, riding and carrying the flag, above, the Colby High School band, Colby Promotion Committee, and other businesses took part. Following the parade, a recognition ceremony was held at the Thomas County Courthouse, followed by a meal at the Veterans of Foreign Wars post

Colby superintendent outlines winter strategy

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Winter will soon be here, and when it comes, it could mean school closings and then changes in routes for buses.

Colby Schools Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said the decision to close school depends on more than how much snowfall the area receives.

"Snow usually isn't a problem, but when wind is added in, it proves to be a deciding factor when it comes to closing school," he said. Drifting snow creates bad conditions for buses.

If snow has fallen overnight Nielsen said he and district transportation director Alan Wade meet at about 5 a.m. to drive roads in the county to gauge conditions. They will then make a choice.

"We'll always make a decision by 6 a.m.," Nielsen said.

Closing the public schools also means closing for Sacred Heart, too. Nielsen contacts media outlets that broadcast school closings by 6 a.m. to get the word out to

parents. When the buses will run and where, is up to Wade. If the roads are too muddy after heavy rains or snow melt, buses won't run on the dirt roads.

Another issue with mud is the condition of the roads themselves. A heavy bus on a muddy country road could damage the road.

Wade also said the buses are inspected at least once a day, sometimes two, depending on how much they are used. Drivers have daily checklists they must go through, and all of the bus maintenance is done by the district. Buses are also inspected once a year by the Kansas Highway Patrol.

"With so many people dependent on the buses," Wade said "they have to be dependable, and receive the necessary attention."

Snow days usually are not a problem when it comes to the school schedule. Students are required to have 1,116 hours of school.

There are and additional five days in the schedule.

Mail driver honored after 40 years

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The old slogan about the weather and the postal service applies to Ed Miller of Colby. Not much has kept him from delivering mail from Colby to other post offices around the area.

Miller, 77, was awarded the United States Postal Service's Eagle Spirit Award because of his 40 years of service as a highway contractor. He drives mail from Colby to other post offices around the area.

"I haul mail town to town," Ed said.

There is probably not a town in the region Miller does not know.

"Over time I had all the routes except the Quinter route," he said.

One of his present routes takes him from Colby to McCook, Neb., and Oberlin; The other route is from Colby to Brewster, Edson, Goodland and Kanorado. He also drives to Burlington, Colo., once a week. Work keeps him on the road six days a week.

"We have Sunday off," Ed said.

"When I first started, we drove 365 days a year."

One of those working days in-



Ed Miller receives special award.

cluded Christmas

Inclement weather isn't much of a deterrent, either. When the roads were impassable, another attempt would be made the next day. Today, closed roads mean no travel.

"When the roads are closed you can't go through no more," he said.

Bad weather has forced him to stay overnight in Kanorado, Weskan and St. Francis over the years.

Miller divides his work among three trucks, and a part-time driver from Kanorado helps. Miller remembers those who have helped him over the years, including Jerry Downing, Marvin Lovenstein, Henry Moses, Roy Bielser and many others.

Wife Joann, said he has driven mail the longest of any of the other driver in Colby

"Six of them drove all the time — religiously," Joann said. "I drove too. I didn't really mind it."

Ed's day starts at 1 a.m. with a drive to McCook. He usually finishes by 7:15 p.m. at night. However, all of his day isn't spent in the truck. Part of his day is spent waiting for the mail.

He first drove for his father-in-law, and eventually took over the last three years of his four-year contract. In 1969, Miller began his own contract with the postal service and gave up farming.

This was all before the days of FedEx and UPS.

"We handled all the mail," Ed said.

That included packages, cards and letters. "Sometimes it was hard to find room in the truck to get everything in," he said.

Ed saw many changes at the postal service over the years.

"The changes have all been for the good," he said. "The service has improved, thanks to the use of the zip code and the use of sorting machines. Both increased efficiency and the promptness of mail delivery," he said.

Clay Davis was the first postmaster he worked for, Kenton Krehbiel, Colby's current postmaster.

Miller provided for his family while providing mail to other towns.

"He raised his family doing this," Joann said.

They had eight children, and some of them drove the mail trucks, along with Joann, when necessary. She also does the books for the business. Ed was born and raised in Dresden. Joann was born north of Rexford and graduated from Oberlin High School. They will celebrate their 51st wedding anniversary in December. When not in the mail truck, Ed enjoys restoring antique tractors and cars.

"The good Lord's been good to me," he said. He signed his last four-year contract in July, good through 2010.

"That'll be the last one," Ed said.

Veteran lawmakers seek House speaker

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican Reps. Melvin Neufeld, Mike O'Neal and Kenny Wilk all have something in common — they want to be the next House speaker.

However, only one will wield the gavel when the Legislature convenes Jan. 8.

The 79 Republican members will decide which one gets his wish on Dec. 4, when they meet to pick their choice for the top job. It doesn't become official until the session's opening day when, if tradition is followed, the entire chamber ratifies the choice.

The leader of 125-member chamber holds the most powerful position in the Legislature and second in political clout only to the governor. He will oversee the handling of such key issues as education, health care, the economy and the state budget.

The speaker can be overruled only if 70 legislators disagree with him. He decides who's on which committees and who heads them; chooses which committees will consider what bills and when the chamber votes on them. He parcels out office and staff assignments and even decides where legislators sit in the chamber.

"We've got a lot of young talent and I would like to be in the position to develop and nurture young leadership."

Mike O'Neal of Hutchinson

experience, proven leadership skills and the ability to work within the system and across party lines. It's a hard race to handicap with 18 new Republicans and veterans divided among the three candidates.

Outgoing Speaker Doug Mays is staying neutral in what he sees as an open contest. Traditionally, the speaker holds the post four years — two terms — and then retires from the Legislature. But as with all politics, nothing is certain.

Rep. Kent Glasscock, of Manhattan, was elected speaker in 2000, after a record four ballots to defeat Mays. But he left after one term to make a primary run for lieutenant governor, which was unsuccessful. Mays then won in 2002 on the first ballot, defeating O'Neal and Wilk, and was re-elected two years later.

"I think they all are qualified to be speaker."

"We will let the members figure

it out," said Mays, R-Topeka. "I'll be leaving it in good hands whoever is speaker. Hopefully the cordial atmosphere will continue."

Mays' advice to his successor: "Get ready to do a lot of listening. You won't be spending a lot of time alone."

Neufeld, of Ingalls, is chairman of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee and regarded as a wizard with numbers and a crafty negotiator.

"I will always work to do what is best for the people of the state," Neufeld said. "I have this compulsive behavior that I think things ought to work."

O'Neal, of Hutchinson, heads the Judiciary Committee and is widely respected for his negotiating skills and knowledge of the law.

"It's not about winning or losing. It's about getting the best policy," O'Neal said. "We've got a lot of

young talent and I would like to be in the position to develop and nurture young leadership."

Wilk, of Lansing, heads the Taxation Committee, has a strong pro-business record, a keen interest in economic development and good personal rapport with colleagues.

"I view state government as being a massive facilitator. We need to turn the Legislature into an incubator of ideas," Wilk said.

Neufeld and O'Neal are viewed as conservatives who can work with moderates and Wilk as a moderate who can work with conservatives. How much the labels matter is problematic.

"I think moderate-conservative isn't the sole deciding factor in a speaker's race.

"There's a tendency to vote for people who think more like you," said GOP State Chairman Tim Shallenburger, a former speaker. "I don't think you can say if 16 people are conservative, 16 people are going to vote conservative."

He said geography also is a factor, with rural supporting rural and urban backing urban. While political philosophy is a factor, so is personal involvement.

The speaker will work with Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

First performance



PATTY DECKER/Free Press Editor

Meghann Elling of Colby, daughter of James and Shauna Elling, was one of many young "Twisters" to perform during halftime at the Ambassador Classic Saturday night in the Colby Community Building. This was the first performance the youngsters did in front of an audience, said Denita Rodgers, coach.