



Colby man pleads guilty in theft case

By Kevin Bottrell
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A Thomas County man pleaded guilty Thursday to stealing more than \$1 million in farm equipment, most of which has been stored in a city lot here since September.

Matthew Jones, 31, who owns a farm north Colby, entered the guilty plea in the U.S. District Court in Wichita on Thursday. He admitted to three of 12 charges.

In September, the farm equipment was seized from Jones' property and impounded in Colby. Jones was charged with 12 federal counts of transportation of stolen equipment in early March. Ryan Hanzlick, 33, Colby, was arrested at same time and is still awaiting trial.

In his plea, Jones detailed his involvement in each of the counts brought against him. Jones said Hanzlick was involved in all of the thefts and helped bring the equipment back to his Thomas County

farm, some for his use. Jones' plea said he knew these items were stolen when they were brought to his farm. Jones admitted he was personally involved in several of the thefts.

He pleaded guilty to three of the counts. On July 1, 2006, Jones and Hanzlick stole a Gleaner combine from Alma, Okla. Jones said they had gone to Oklahoma to look for a combine to steal. When they found this combine, they loaded it on a trailer and trucked it back to Jones' property north of Colby. On April 26, 2008, the pair stole a John Deere tractor and planter from a property near Elsie, Neb., and brought them back to Thomas County.

For these three counts, Jones could get up to 30 years in prison, nine years' probation and a fine of up to \$750,000. Jones also agreed to pay more than \$1.1 million in restitution, the total value of all the stolen property.

See "THEFT," Page 3

Herndon ox roast big draw for town

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Small towns just seem to hang onto their traditions, and the little town of Herndon in Rawlins County is no exception.

What started in 1914 as an ox roast for the close-knit German community will take place again this year, as it has every five years since, on Saturday, June 12.

The day will start with a parade in the morning, the traditional barbecue at noon, mud volleyball, outhouse races, cow-patty bingo, games for the kids and a kiddie train. The day will end with a street dance and fire works.

Long time Herndonites come from as far away as California, New York, Arizona and Hawaii,

and places in between, to return to their roots and celebrate an event they grew up with, right down to the six-foot-by-eight-foot hand-made pan used to cook the oxen.

"It's not unusual for the crowd to reach 3,000 people to take in the once-every-five-years celebration, to have a taste of the wonderful food and join in the fun," said Herndon resident Nadine Green.

Green said the first celebration in 1914 drew 2,500 people to a feast that involved barrels of lemonade, 60 gallons of ice cream and a party that lasted 'till dawn.

"The same recipe for the barbecue is used today as it was then," Green said. "The barbecue takes three cows, carrots, apples, green peppers, tomatoes, onions and

See "ROAST," Page 3

Thomas County native still teaching after 42 years in classroom

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Sister Rita Ann Mazanec is living proof that retirement doesn't always mean you're retired.

Although she retired from teaching over 10 years ago, Sister Rita Ann is still teaching, showing 90-something-year-old nuns how to run a computer, of all things.

Sister Rita Ann, born in 1930 and raised on a farm seven miles north of Colby, said she had a strong desire as a child to become a nun, but there was a lot of school

to go to before she could fulfill that ambition.

After completing her degree at Marymount College in Salina, she joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia and was soon teaching, a job she never tired of during her 42 years in the classroom. She said she considered it a privilege to teach, especially to prepare kids for first communion and reconciliation.

"My first assignment as a teacher was in a very large school with a room full of 52 second graders in Aurora, Ill., up near Chicago," she said, "an unheard of number of students compared to today's classrooms."

She said she taught all subjects, even music, and although she didn't play piano, she used a pitch pipe, drew the notes on the chalk board and taught the students how to read music.

"They were such good kids," she said. "They all listened, the parents were supportive, and we had no discipline problems."

She stayed for five years. From Illinois, Sister Rita Ann made what she called an "extreme" change to the small town of Tipton, near Salina, where she spent what she called her favorite years of teaching.

"The students, again second graders,

all studied diligently, their parents were behind them, and I loved how quiet it was there compared to the big school," she said, "and I just loved those kids."

Her next move was to Aurora, Kansas, another small town, this time near Concordia, where she taught first and second graders.

She said at one time the principal came into her classroom to talk to the students and asked them how the teacher was doing, and whether they liked her.

"One little girl on the front row said, 'She is just perfect.'" Sister Rita Ann chuckled, "but one little boy, who wanted to talk all the time, said, 'She's too per-

fect!'"

After only two years in Aurora, her next stop was Fairbury, Neb., where she stayed for 10 years, and then it was on to Beloit. She noted that the parents in Beloit backed the teachers a hundred percent. The only drawback she saw there was what seemed like an epidemic: In her class of 15, all products of divorced parents except one.

Sister Rita Ann said that one day the child of the only two-parent family went home and asked her mother, "Just when are you and Dad getting a divorce?"

See "TEACHER," Page 3



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A truck carrying dry nitrogen fertilizer lost control and overturned into a ditch on the K-25 curves by the Thomas-Logan county line Saturday evening. The driver was uninjured but the fertilizer spilled on the road and into the ditch.

Fertilizer truck overturns Saturday

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The Logan County undersheriff and emergency management director were left scratching their heads after a semi-trailer truck rolled Saturday evening on K-25 near the Thomas County line, wondering what to do with 3,000 gallons of fertilizer spilled on the road.

The truck, hauling a semitrailer with two tanks of nitrogen fertilizer, rolled off K-25 about 6:30 p.m. Saturday. The truck was heading north when it rounded the curves at the Thomas County line and rolled off the road, coming to rest on its side north of the road. K-25 has two 90-degree turns at the county lines.

The two tanks broke, spilling the fertilizer on the road and surrounding grass. Undersheriff David See and emergency Director George "Pappy" Lies responded. Lies said they washed the fertilizer off the road contacted the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, which will determine how much of the soil to dig up to keep the concentrated fertilizer out of the water supply.

See said the driver, Konnel Keller, 20, Oakley, was uninjured, but was taken to the Logan County Hospital to be checked out. He had not been wearing a seat belt.



Logan County Undersheriff David See and Emergency Management Coordinator George "Pappy" Lies took pictures of the wreck while waiting for a tow truck to haul the semi out of the ditch.

Briefly

Band concert moves indoors
With rain today, the Colby High School band concert scheduled for Fike Park has been moved to the high school auditorium. It will begin at 7:30 p.m. For information, call director Joey Nichols at 460-5300.

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday
The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. The building may be accessed by an elevator near the east doors. For information, call the church at 462-6342.

Treasurer to close at 3:30
The Thomas County treasurer's office will close at 3:30 p.m. until Monday, May 31, while employees

work on software conversion. Treasurer Donita Applebury said the office will go back to the regular 4 p.m. closing time earlier if possible. For information, call the office at 460-4520.

Red Cross needs your blood
The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive from noon to 6 p.m. Thursday at the Community Building. To schedule an appointment, call (800) 733-2767.

Methodists plan youth camp
The Colby United Methodist Church will have enrollment for its Summer Youth Program from 4 to 6 p.m. next Monday and Tuesday, May 17 and 18, at the church. The program, for children age 3 through sixth grade, will run Monday to Wednesday each week from June 7 to July 7. For information, call the

church at 460-2761.
Expert to talk about diabetes
Dr. Richard Guthrie of Wichita will give a free diabetes update at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 20, at Citizens Medical Center. An international expert in the field, Dr. Guthrie has written articles and books on diabetes, a major health issue in the U.S. For information, call Jeanene Brown, director of education, at 460-4850.

Class will prepare for college
The Colby Community College adult education department is offering a free college preparation class, "Math Review and Other Stuff Too," Tuesdays and Thursdays in June. In addition to math, the class will include basic technology skills, writing, test-taking strategies, study techniques and problem solving.

Director Nance Munderloh said the class will help both graduating high school students and adults going back to school. For information, call Munderloh at 460-4663.

Head Start taking applications
Thomas County Head Start preschool is accepting applications for 3- and 4-year-old children. The program takes applications all year, but children must be 3 by Sept. 1 to start class in the fall. Tuition is free. To apply, call 460-6067.

