



Firemen stop motel blaze

Engines go back to douse hot spots

By Vera Sloan
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It was Everett Robert's second day as manager of the Quality Inn on Range Avenue, and it wasn't starting out so well. A man came into the office just before 6:30 a.m., said there was smoke coming from the back building, then ducked out.

"It's not what I expected, but it's happened, and no one was injured, which is the most important part of it all," Robert said.

"A gentleman walked into the office early Tuesday morning to say there was smoke coming out of the roof at the back of the motel, and then he turned around and left," said Robin Hudgins, a Quality Inn manager from Wichita who has been in Colby since Friday. "We have no idea who he was."

Hudgins, who said she is in Colby to help in the transition to the new management team, said the fire was confined to C building at the back, or west, side of the property.

She said smoke was pouring from the vents at the peak of the roof. They called the fire department around 6:30 to 6:35.

"They were here in five to 10 minutes," Hudgins said. "They were good and they were fast, and they did a really wonderful job."

"You can tell anyone that Colby has an excellent fire department."

Firemen were called back to the building about 9:40 this morning to douse some hot spots. They reported two, at the northwest and southeast corners of a second-floor room where the fire may have begun.

Hudgins said the two-story C building on the far west side of



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby firefighters entered a room at Quality Inn on second story and attic of the motel's west building. Monday (above) while fighting a fire that damaged the The firefighters had to cut holes in the roof and pull down the ceiling over a breezeway (below) both to get at the fire and to let smoke and hot gasses escape.

the motel complex has 41 guest rooms. It is not connected to the rest of the motel. Only five guest rooms in that building were occupied at the time of the fire. The motel has 117 guest rooms in two buildings.

"Everyone was evacuated safely and appropriately and there were no injuries," she said. "Our biggest concern is always the safety of our guests."

The procedure when there is a fire, she said, is to call the room phones, and if there is no response, to knock on the doors. Tuesday morning, Robert said, they went right away to knock on doors. All the occupied rooms had outside doors, and the guests just went outside and left the building.

"Guests were allowed to return to their rooms to collect their belongings once the safe signal was given," the manager said.

The motel's insurance company was expected to have an adjuster here today to estimate the damage.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said the fire station logged the call at 6:35 a.m.

"There were flames in the attic when we arrived," McLemore said, "and actual fire damage was confined mostly to the attic. We won't be able to determine or even speculate on the cause ... until the state fire marshal comes to Colby on Friday."

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Blood drive draws 110 donors

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The Red Cross Blood Drive had a few more donors than usual on Thursday.

The drive normally draws about 100 donors, according to the volunteers at the reception table, and the goal was to end the day with 120 units, or pints. The final count, said Blood Drive Coordinator Bev Vaughn, from Colby, was 110 units. Eight people were barred from donating for various reasons, or they would have come very close to their goal.

A person who wants to donate blood must meet requirements for weight, blood pressure and medications that might be in their system, Vaughn said.

The Solomon Valley 4-H Club took on finding volunteers as a community service project, and the kids rounded up some first-time donors to add to

the state's emergency blood supply. Eleven first time donors came through the door on Thursday, said Vaughn.

"We think this is going pretty well," said Ross Sloan, one of the 4-H leaders. "We have several kids here who are helping to serve food, too, and it's something I think we'll want to consider again."

Vaughn said it takes about 20 volunteers to unload the truck, load it back up, help run the canteen and escort donors to their stations.

"The nation's supply of blood is OK, but there's always a need for fresh blood," Vaughn said. "We had a family who came in to donate on Thursday. They said when their son was small, he received several units of blood during a severe illness, and ... they said felt the need to give back."

Vaughn said she wanted to thank all the volunteers who helped load and unload the truck, the 4-H club, McDonalds for the orange drink and Walmart for a cash donation for the sandwiches.

Cycles to debut at the fair

By Vera Sloan
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The Thomas County Fair is getting closer, and fair board members were getting down to the end of their planning at Thursday night's meeting.

New at the fair this year will be flat-track motorcycle racing.

Mark Ostmeyer came to talk to the board about publicity for the races, which he said will be the first appearance for motorcycle racers since the 1960s.

Rich Epp of J&R Marketing asked the board if they would take down the fence in front of the grandstand again this year for the concert on Sunday, July 25.

He said if this year's crowd for

the Sunday night performance of Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers matches the 2,300 that packed the grandstand for last year's performance of the Oak Ridge Boys, they will need plenty of handicapped parking.

The board members said they believe they are prepared for a crowd of that size. They talked about having a turn-around area as a drop-off point for the handicapped, but said they don't have all the details worked out yet.

With a few horse stalls to repair and rodeo gates to fix, overall, the plans are coming along well, members said. The buildings and grounds are in good shape.

Board secretary Audrey Hines said she is working on posters and will have them ready to be proof-

read in the next two weeks.

The Sunday performance by the Gatlins precedes the actual first night of the fair. Rodeo will take up the first two nights, on Monday and Tuesday, July 26 and 27. The Demolition Derby will be Friday and Saturday nights, July 30 and 31.

The Blue Grass Festival committee had asked that they be allowed to leave up their tent until the morning after the festival, which runs July 17, 18 and 19. The board voted to have the group remove all equipment after the festival is over, however, because they need to start watering the grass for the fair the next day.

Briefly

Expert to talk about diabetes

Dr. Phillip Challans of Wichita will give a free diabetes update at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Citizens Medical Center. Challans is taking over for Dr. Richard Guthrie, who is unable to be here. For information, call Jeanene Brown, education director, at 460-4850.

High school teams selling supper

The Colby High School forensics and debate teams are selling tickets for their Celebrity Servers fund raiser Saturday at Montana Mike's. Tickets are \$15 for either a center-cut sirloin or grilled chicken dinner. Part of the ticket price and all tips will go to the teams for their trip to the National Championships on May 28. For information, call coach Nancy Rundel at 460-5300.

Dance teams will wash your car

The Colby High School Dance Team will be wash-

ing cars to raise money for their dance camp from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday in the Dillon's parking lot. For information, call coach Denita Rogers at 460-1325.

Golf club plans tournament

A one-couple golf tournament - which has golfers in pairs rather than foursomes - to raise money for Meadow Lake Golf Club will begin at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the course, 1085 E. Golf Club Drive in Colby. Registration will be at 10 a.m., with tee-off at 10:30. Cost is \$60 per couple. Cart rental is available, and lunch and snacks will be provided. Call the club at (785) 460-6443.

Register for youth program now

Registration is open for students in fourth through eighth grades for a free Chautauqua Youth Camp from June 1 to 5 at the Prairie Museum. The camp, led by Dr. Joyce Thierer and Dr. Ann Birney of "Ride

into History," will offer kids a chance to research and then portray Thomas County personalities from the 1930s under the Chautauqua tent. Call the museum at 460-4590 for information.

Moran's staff plans office hours

Staffers from Congressman Jerry Moran's will hold open office hours from 9 to 10 a.m. at the Thomas County Courthouse on Tuesday. Chelsey Gillogly, a district representative for Mr. Moran, will be in the commissioners' room to meet with area residents who have opinions about the federal government or are experiencing difficulties with Social Security, Medicare, Veterans Affairs or other issues. For information, call Gillogly or Rachel Robben at (785) 628-6401.

Remember book sale at Library

It's time again for Pioneer Memorial Library's

Memorable Book Sale, Thursday to Saturday, May 27 to 29, starting at 9 a.m. and closing at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 4:45 p.m. Friday and 3:45 p.m. Saturday. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

Vacation Bible School starts soon

Trinity Lutheran Church's Vacation Bible School will be 9:15 a.m. to noon Tuesday, June 1, to Friday, June 4, at the church. The school is open to ages three (potty trained) through fifth grade. Parents can pre-register at any time or at the church the first day of the school. For information, call Trinity Lutheran at 462-3497.

