

Quick-change artist hits Colby, Limon banks

By Patty Decker
Colby Free Press

Bank tellers in at least two towns were caught off guard by a quick-change artist and his getaway driver, who managed to make off from banks in both Colby and Limon, Colo.

Colby police said they are not sure if the pair has pulled the scam elsewhere, but they are asking everyone to be on the look out for the two.

The incident in Colby was reported at about 11 a.m. Thursday by Farmers and Merchant's Bank, said Gary Shull, police department investigator.

"Technically, the man in the bank



A camera at Farmers and Merchant's Bank in Colby caught the "quick change artist."

would be considered a quick change artist," Shull said, "and when he is arrested, he will probably be charged with theft by deception."

The way the quick change worked in both Colby and Limon was that the man came into the banks with \$50 bills and asked the teller to exchange them for \$100 bills. Then the man decided the \$100 bills were too big and asked for \$20 bills instead, said Shull.

The deception occurred when after the teller had counted out the \$100 bills and had them laying on the counter, he said. She then reached down to a lower shelf underneath to get more \$20 bills. At that point, Shull said, that the con

artist was able to lift some of the \$100 bills off the stack without the teller knowing he had done it.

After counting out the \$20 bills, the teller put the \$100 bills in the drawer unaware that the suspect had "lifted" some prior to the final exchange.

It wasn't until later that the teller realized the theft, he said.

Shull said the suspects were seen driving a black Jeep Cherokee with possibly gold-colored striping and no luggage rack on top.

"The license plate was a white background," he said, "with numerical ones in the plate number."

The con artist in the bank is described as having a dark complex-

ion, wearing a short-sleeved dark green over white T-shirt. He was wearing either glasses or sunglasses on top of his head and his shorts were khaki green, according to witnesses.

"He appeared to be 27 to 33 years old," Shull said, "and his English was hard to understand."

The man had dark hair, was about 5 foot, 5 inches tall, medium build, wearing a loose-fitting watch on his left wrist and a ring on his right hand. He had no facial hair.

Witnesses could not describe the driver waiting in the Jeep.

"We initially sent broadcasts to area agencies to watch for these suspects and later it was expanded to

all Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado authorities," Shull said.

The second incident happened at a bank in Limon, Colo., at about 1:45 p.m. Central Time.

"It was the same type of theft," Shull said.

It wasn't that the tellers here or in Limon were confused by the man's request, Shull said; it was more like the man just took the money off the counter while the teller was preoccupied. In both situations, there were no threats or injuries to the bank employees or customers.

For questions or to report any information, call the Colby police at 462-4460.

Man, 48, arrested in sex case

A Goodland man was arrested July 2 on a charge of aggravated indecent liberties with a child.

Kenneth James Petrachich, 48, 504 W. 10th, was arrested and charged with feloniously engaging in fondling and touching of his person by a child under the age of 14.

The complaint signed by Sheriff Doug Whitson, said the incident occurred April 24, and involved a 5-year-old. The sheriff wouldn't say where the alleged crime took place, but said it was not at a public place.

Petrachich was being held on \$50,000 bond.

Sheriff Whitson said that Petrachich had the child touch him in an inappropriate manner and inappropriate location on his body. He said the incident was reported by the parents and investigated by the sheriff's department.

This is not Petrachich's first charge of child molestation. In May 1990, he was charged in Scott County District Court with two counts of indecent liberties with a child under the age of 16, said Sandy Eitel, deputy court clerk.

He plead guilty Aug. 1990, to two counts of aggravated sexual battery, and sentenced to 3 to 5 years in prison. State records show he was released in Sept. 1996 before registration.

Out of gas



A helicopter took off about 4 p.m. Wednesday after making an emergency stop along K-27 about three miles north of Goodland. The pilot said he realized he was low on fuel and landed by the

highway until some was brought from the airport. Sheriff's deputies stood by to warn drivers, but the copter was off the pavement.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Panel to hear charges against Cheyenne County judge

A state hearing panel will consider charges against Tamara Zimbelman, district magistrate judge for Cheyenne County, and could recommend that she be removed from office.

On March 21, Judge Zimbelman was found guilty of intimidation of a witness in Cheyenne County District Court. She could face up to six months in jail and a fine up to \$1,000. in the criminal case

On March 25, Kay McFarland, chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court told *The Saint Francis Herald* that Judge Zimbelman was prohibited from performing any judicial duties. Instead, she would perform administrative assignments as directed by the chief judge of the 15th Judicial District.

Earlier this month, Edward G. Collister Jr., an examiner for the Commission of Judicial Qualifications, said that the commission, through an investigating panel, had issued a written notice of formal proceedings against the magistrate.

The notice said that Judge Zimbelman could file an answer within 20 days. Regardless whether an answer is filed, the papers said, the case may proceed to a hearing and disposition.

There are nine counts listed against Judge Zimbelman, all pertaining to conduct which allegedly violated the provisions of the Canon 1 and 2 of the Supreme Court on judicial conduct.

It charges that Judge Zimbelman, on Dec. 22, 2001, phoned Chris Merklin, St. Francis, when she learned that her husband and a third party, Scott Baumfalk, had been accused of illegally visiting the Merklin home the evening before, and threatened Mr. Merklin by stating, "if you don't drop the charges against Rell (the judge's husband), I'm going to send you to jail for burglary."

On Dec. 20, 2001, Judge Zimbelman allegedly requested that city police officer Travis Stein meet her at the residence of Jim and Christy Miller where she wished to

confront the Millers because her purse had been stolen and she thought they might have taken it. When Officer Stein arrived at the Miller residence, Judge Zimbelman was already there. They went to the front door where the judge knocked on the door and questioned the Millers.

Judge Zimbelman, on Dec. 21, 2001, in a telephone call, told Officer Stein that she was sending someone over to the Millers' home to, "scare the living dickens out of them."

Judge Zimbelman, during the investigation of the Merklin episode by agents of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, at first allegedly denied Officer Stein's report of her statement and attributed the statement about scaring the Millers to Officer Stein. She later, when questioned by Special Agents Butler and Atteberry of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, she told them that Officer Stein did not lie.

Judge Zimbelman, on April 22, 2002, in a letter addressed to Agent Butler, wrote, concerning a question posed about the same conversation with Officer Stein, "On reflection of the polygraph test I took Friday, April 19, 2002, I want to reiterate to you that I do not remember saying what has been alleged. I feel like I was backed up in a corner by both you and Mr. Atteberry and badgered until I broke down. I still maintain I do not remember saying that, although you advised me the results say different."

On Dec. 9, 2001, Judge Zimbelman authored and delivered to Police Chief Jason Ryan and Of-

ficer Mark Davidson a letter informing them that if investigating officers failed to call her involving any alleged criminal action by a member of her family she would, "find you (officers) in contempt of court and pursue the matter from there." She also threatened to take the issue up with the city council if necessary.

On March 14, 2003, the Cheyenne County Sheriff's Office investigated activities of four juveniles at or near the St. Francis Cemetery, including questioning of the juveniles. The sheriff asked his wife, who was the only female with the officers, to pat down a minor female because it was better than having a male officer perform the task.

Later in the evening, the sheriff was asked by St. Francis police to come to the home of the minor female. It is alleged that, in violation of the judicial regulations, several minutes later Judge Zimbelman appeared at the same location. She proceeded to question the sheriff's authority to have his wife pat down the girl.

The judged wanted the sheriff's wife to come into the house, apparently to be questioned. Officers decided not to agree to that request. Judge Zimbelman then proceeded to question Officer Davidson about his reasons for stopping the vehicle and then questioned the undersheriff about questions he had asked the girl a month earlier. The sheriff reported that the officers then decided the encounter was going nowhere and was uncalled for, so they left.

Judge Zimbelman, on the early

morning of April 27, 2003, after being informed that her husband Rell had been stopped while driving a vehicle in a suspicious fashion, appeared at the scene and accused the officers of harassing her family.

It was common knowledge among the law enforcement officers that Mr. Zimbelman had a suspended license. In the ensuing investigation, a law enforcement officer discovered a probable controlled substance present in the cab of the pickup Mr. Zimbelman was driving and arrested him for possession of a controlled substance.

Judge Zimbelman allegedly attempted to get into the pickup and was told to stay out because it was going to be impounded in connection with the criminal investigation. At that point, Judge Zimbelman commenced cursing at the sheriff. The incident ended without further interference by the judge after the sheriff walked back to his vehicle to get his second set of handcuffs.

Canon 1 and 2 of the Supreme Court relating to judicial conduct include:

- A judge shall uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.
- A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining and en-

forcing high standards of conduct, and shall personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary will be preserved.

- A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities.
- A) A judge shall respect and comply with the law and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.
- B) A judge shall not allow family, social, political or other relationships to influence the judge's judicial conduct or judgment. A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of the judge or others; nor shall a judge convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence the judge.

On May 8, Alvis plead guilty to possession of a narcotic drug with intent of sell within 1,000 feet of a school, a level 2 drug felony. In return for the plea, Sherman County Attorney Bonnie Selby agreed to dismiss the other six charges.

District Judge Jack L. Burr found Alvis guilty, and ordered a presentence investigation.

On June 2, Alvis was sentenced to 49 months in prison and then 36 months postrelease supervision. He was given 15 percent credit for 104 days served in the Sherman County Bastille.

Paxson's case has been set for a preliminary hearing at 1:15 p.m. on Sept. 2, before District Magistrate Judge Richard L. Kvasnicka of Oakley.

Internet tonight!
899-2338

Sports Physicals

Rural Health Ventures
106 Willow Rd.
will do sports physicals on
Tuesday, Aug. 5th
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
There will be a \$10 charge
which must be paid at
time of service.

We will not bill insurance.
(785) 899-6075

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Northwest Kansas District Free Fair Ranch Rodeo

Wednesday, August 6, 2003, 7 p.m.
Sherman County Fair Grounds
\$250 per team
Limited to the first 12 (paid) teams
Contact:
Jon Anderson at 785-899-6478

DO COLONY
DIGITAL
www.goodlandnet.com/movies

Sherman
1203 Main - Phone 899-6103

Tonight 7:00 p.m.

Legally Blonde 2

PG-13

Starts Friday 7:00 and 9:00 p.m.

Terminator 3 (R)