

State trooper ends chase by shooting California man

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press
A California man led law enforcement agencies on a wild chase through Thomas and Logan counties on Monday and it came to an end when the driver was shot by a state trooper.

The chase began in Thomas County and ended near Oakley on Interstate-70 just east of Exit 70 in Thomas County.

Captain Kelly McGuire, Kansas Highway Patrol troop commander from Hays, identified the man as Gerald Neil Bryant II, 32, of Inyokern, Calif.

"He's evidently going to be fine," McGuire said. "He's in a hospital in Wichita under guard."

Bryant was shot by a patrolman around 1:24 p.m. and then crashed his car and ended up in the center of the westbound I-70 lanes east of the U.S. Highway 83 overpass. Bryant was transported to the Logan County Hospital by Thomas County Emergency Medical Services and later airlifted to Via Christi/St. Francis Hospital in Wichita.

As of Tuesday afternoon, there was nothing new to report, but McGuire said the Kansas Bureau of Investigation is now on the case.

Patrol officials said the ordeal began with an routine traffic stop on I-70 near Colby at 12:44 p.m.

A trooper stopped an eastbound silver 2003 Dodge Intrepid carrying Bryant and his passenger, Brian E. Berry, 32, also of Inyokern. The trooper "became suspicious of illegal activity" and asked for and got permission to search the vehicle. Another trooper showed up to help with the search and Bryant drove off, touching off the chase.

Minutes later, the highway patrolmen were fired on and one of the patrol cars was hit. They continued the chase east to exit 79 when Bryant turned off the interstate. He drove east on U.S. Highway 40 and north on county roads. He stopped long enough for Berry to leave the car and Berry was caught by a state trooper and turned over to the Oakley Police Department. Berry is being held in the Thomas County jail.

The chase continued around country roads and Bryant stopped once and again shot at the authorities. He drove into a nearby wheat field and a trooper fired a shotgun at the car, hitting it in the rear but missed Bryant. Bryant drove through a fence and back onto the interstate, heading west in the east bound lanes. Back on the interstate, he exchanged gunfire with the lawmen.

The shootout and chase ended when Bryant was shot by a trooper and crashed the car.

Members of the Colby Police

Department and Thomas County Sheriff's Department, along with the Logan and Gove County police and sheriff's departments were involved. Colby Police Chief Randy Jones said the department assisted at the scene and helped with the investigation.

Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones said his agency's involvement was "probably substantial." Jones and three of his deputies assisted the highway patrol during the chase. He said he was shot at during the pursuit.

"I don't like chases because they never turn out good," he said.

He said there was no doubt in his mind the chase did have to be ended

Jones added that the man they were after was "hell-bent on killing somebody," whether it was law enforcement or anyone else.

"We had to try anything reasonable to try to get him stopped, which we did," Jones said.

There was a small mishap with one of the Thomas County deputies. Jones said during the chase one of them got his vehicle stuck in a field and later requested assistance after the field's irrigation system came on.

"A quick pull and he was out of there," Jones said.



The wrecked 2003 Dodge Intrepid driven by Gerald Neil Bryant II of Inyokern, Calif. sat in the middle of the westbound I-70 lanes Monday east of the U.S. Highway 83 overpass. Bryant was shot by a Kansas State Trooper, which ended a chase and shootout that wound around Thomas County roads. Photo by Tisha Cox / The Colby Free Press

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Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

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Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am
Thursday: Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
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Church 890-2115 or Rectory 890-6969
Priest: Father Jerry Jones
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104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423
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