

# Mechanic gets flight award

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
*sdecamp@nwkans.com*  
 Bob Fraker got his flight mechanic's license in 1952. Charles E. Taylor was the mechanic who built the engine for the Wright brothers' famous first flight. So what do these men have in common?

They're both master mechanics, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, and according to everyone that's ever met Mr. Fraker himself.

Mr. Fraker has been a pilot, mechanic, and airport manager for over 60 years now, he said. He came home from the service in 1946 to work and live near the Oberlin Municipal Airport.

When he nominated Mr. Fraker for the Charles E. Taylor Master Mechanic award, said Frank Bouts, a fellow pilot, he knew he had the man. He sponsored Mr. Fraker, filling out the paperwork and calling the right people to see it through. "I was going to try and do this anonymously," Mr. Bouts said later, "but there was too much information I needed to get from him. Half the country knew Bob back in the '40s, or he taught them to fly on the GI Bill after World War II."

Mr. Fraker received the award at Thursday's City Council meet-

ing in front of a packed house. Mr. Fraker and his wife Marian accepted awards from Mr. Bouts.

"Now, when was it that you got your mechanic's license, Bob?" Mr. Bouts asked him after the initial presentation.

"Well, about 1952," Mr. Fraker replied.

"And who signed that, Orville or Wilbur?"

The room filled with laughter. Mr. Fraker beamed as he received the certificate and a special pin. But just as everyone thought the ceremony was over, Mr. Bouts called again for the attention of the room.

"Now I think we all know," he said, "that it takes a special kind of spouse to stand with someone over 60 years of work. So on behalf of the (Federal Aviation Administration), I present this second pin to Marian Fraker, for all of her hard work, too."

Surprised, Mrs. Fraker stood to receive the pin to a roaring applause. She said a brief thanks.

"I think it's great," said Sid Metcalf, president of the city Airport Advisory Board and a fellow pilot. "He's been up there most of his life, working in that shop. It was a very well-deserved award."

"And with Marian ... it takes a



**RESERVED YET BEAMING**, Oberlin Airport Manager Bob Fraker received the Charles E. Taylor Master Mechanic Award before Thursday's City Council meeting. Unbeknownst to his

good partner to accomplish all of that over such a span of time. She's a good woman."

"It was a very nice presentation, and I appreciated it," Mr. Fraker said the next day, adding that he knew

wife, Marian, she too received recognition from the Federal Aviation Administration, in the form of a special pin.

— Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCAMP

beforehand that his wife would also be receiving a pin.

"I accepted the award for all the mechanics, everywhere," he said. "I think longevity is the secret to getting it."

# Colby post office to stop sorting

By **SAM DIETER**  
*sdieter@nwkans.com*  
 The Colby Post Office will stop processing mail for the northwest Kansas area in February as the U.S. Postal Service implements plans to consolidate operations, with the work — and most mail — moving out of state.

All mail from most of the nine-county area will be shipped overnight to North Platte, Neb., for sorting.

"The post office does not have the mail volumes to justify the size and capacity of our operation," said Brian Sperry, a regional spokesman for the service based in Denver. "We must match our network to the size of our workload."

The mail processing is scheduled to move on Feb. 26, Mr. Sperry said. North Platte is about 145 miles north of Colby on U.S. 83.

Most letters will take the same time to deliver, he said, because the post office maintains a standard of being able to deliver a letter anywhere in the country in one to three days.

There will, however, be two fewer employees working at the Colby office after the consolidation process, Mr. Sperry said. Other offices should be unaffected.

Mr. Sperry said his understanding is that first-class mail will con-

tinue to move overnight, at least if it makes the right truck out of town. Publications might take longer to deliver, he said, two to nine days instead of one to nine, but overnight first-class mail between area codes starting with 677 should be unaffected.

"First-class mail is our bread and butter, it's what pays the bills," Mr. Sperry said, adding that first-class volume declined by 5 percent last year and is projected to decline 47 percent by 2020.

To offset losses suffered from the rise of digital mail, the post office wants to consolidate 140 processing operations nationwide next year. The list was released quietly after 6 p.m. Friday, but the press has paid little attention.

Mr. Sperry said that last fiscal year, the service lost \$ 15.9 billion and it hopes to save \$ 1.2 billion through the consolidations.

In Colby, Postmaster Jean Johnson said the office might already be down to the number of employees who should be working after the consolidations. The service tries to reduce the number of employees through attrition — retirements and resignations — and not layoffs, Ms. Johnson said.

A \$15,000 buyout deal is being offered to any employees in the post office unions, Mr. Sperry said.

## Picking up a bargain



**HOLDING A TOY DEER** she picked out of the treasures, Elizabeth Weyeneth, 5, Cedar Bluffs, was shopping at the PEO Christmas decorations fund raiser on Saturday.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

# Council OKs loader purchase

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
*sdecamp@nwkans.com*  
 The Oberlin City Council approved the purchase of a Caterpillar loader with a grapple fork (a mechanism used to move large objects) for \$135,280 at its meeting Thursday, after a representative of the Caterpillar dealer agreed to include \$10,000 worth of tires.

The purchase will be made over five years, starting with next year's budget, City Administrator Karen Larson said, and payments won't begin until March 15. The purchase is under a program that will allow the city to buy the loader with a 3.2 percent interest rate, she said, while making payments for five years or longer.

The city decided last year, while considering the purchase, to make the payments over five years, she said, which means that they will have to take \$9,700 from the electric and water and sewer funds each year to pay for it.

In other business, the council:

- Passed a motion to make the fourth payment on the streets project, \$184,805, to contractor Bryant and Bryant. Mayor McFee said the city has paid off \$270,000 of \$455,000.

- Heard that the city will be entering a bucket truck and a few water trucks in the annual Parade of Lights on Friday. Mrs. Larson noted that this year, instead of throwing candy from the trucks, they are asking people to hand it out so as to avoid hitting anyone.

- Heard that the Airport Advisory Board will be reporting at the next meeting on Thursday, Dec. 6. The contractor is now seeding the area around the new runway, Mrs. Larson said, and the final walk-through by engineers for Phase 1 of the

project was to have been Monday. Mrs. Larson encouraged council members to attend.

- Learned that the city now has a federal bridge inspector, as well as a state bridge inspector.

"It's just something that the federal government is doing now," said Mrs. Larson, noting that the city will still be working with the state inspector.

Mrs. Larson said that the new inspector showed up unexpectedly at the city offices to see some files and said he was impressed by what he found. Oberlin has four bridges, she noted, and all will be inspected this week.

- Heard that the new computer directory at the cemetery will be here Nov. 27.

- Approved the purchase of \$7,250 worth of "Santa Bucks" for Christmas bonuses for city employees. This bonus will go to all city workers, Mrs. Larson said, including firemen, the city council, full- and part-timers. Full-time employees will get \$250, she said, and everyone else will get \$100.

- Agreed to give city employees Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, off, making Christmas a four-day weekend for them.

- Heard that there will be an employee appreciation party for the council and city workers that evening at The Gateway. Mrs. Larson asked that all attending confirm they are coming and who they're bringing with the city office beforehand. It will likely be at 6 or 6:30 p.m., she said, though the time hasn't been set.

- Received a report written by Darrell Landau regarding the pool project. Mr. Landau was not asked for the report, said Mrs. Larson, but asked that the members read it.

# County will need new, expensive radios

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
*sdecamp@nwkans.com*  
 The radios that Decatur County departments use to communicate with each other are having to be changed due to federal regulations that may cost the county anywhere from \$25,000 to \$30,000, county commissioners heard at their meeting last Tuesday.

The problem is known as narrow-banding, said Road Supervisor Tim Stallman, who discussed the money needed with the commissioners.

"Basically," he explained later, "there's a federal law with a deadline of January, that says all the radios we use have to be narrow-banded. The

current (signal we use) needs to be cut in half due to cell phones and other products using more of the frequencies. We have to have all of ours reprogrammed so we can function on this new frequency.

"It's really complicated, but it's a federal law. We're going to get our repeaters replaced, (those devices) that kick the signal out for our radios to communicate, and all the radios have to be reprogrammed so they can accept that new frequency.

"Then we have to see what we may have lost in coverage, and may have to add more repeaters to help with that coverage loss. That's not for sure; we just have to examine it

and see what we see. It's complicated...."

The commissioners approved the expenditure, after Mr. Stallman said that in order to be in compliance by January, they had to start ordering the parts and equipment right now.

He said one option they are considering is that after they install the updates and figure out if and where there are any "dead spots" without communication, then it may be more affordable in the long run for the county to buy its own land there and set up repeater towers as opposed to renting them.

The commissioners agreed only to proceed with the process and start

ordering the necessary equipment.

In other business, commissioners:

- Learned that Commission Stan McEvoy has been nominated for the Kansas Association of Counties board. He will be competing with Commissioner Herbert Schwartzkopf of Trego County for a position.

- Approved the purchase of two \$2,000 Dell computers for Clerk of the District Court Janet Meitl, who said that since the Coryell murder trial has been postponed until next year, she has the money in her budget for them. The current computers, she said, are from 2004.

## Public Auction

**Saturday, December 1, 2012 @ 10:00 A.M. CT**

Auction Location: from Atwood Kansas, go 8 miles east on U.S. Hwy 36 to Rd. 29, then south 11 miles on Rd. 29 to Road G then 3/4 of a mile East on G, then 1 mile South East to Road F then 1.5 miles East on Road F, then 1.5 North on Road 32 to the Sale site.

*Sellers: Jay Gilbert*

Selling: Machinery/Vehicles/ Shop Equipment/ Antiques/Collectibles/ Furniture/ Appliances/

**Glad Real Estate/Rocky Hayes-Auctioneer**  
 415 State, P.O. Box 173, Atwood, KS 67730.  
 Office: (785) 626-2039 Cell (785) 626-4022

Visit our web site for a complete sale bill and photos at [www.gladrealestate.com](http://www.gladrealestate.com)

## The Power of One.

—Juan, Kansas Credit Union Member

A credit union has one purpose...to make my financial life easier. As an owner, I feel the power because any profit a credit union makes comes back to me through higher earnings and lower fees.

**KANSAS CREDIT UNIONS** [kcuu.coop/PowerOfOne](http://kcuu.coop/PowerOfOne)  
*The power of one can make a difference.* (800) 362-2076

## From Home for the Holidays to Home for Good

Enjoy hugs from the grandkids year-round and more visits with longtime friends thanks to the Kansas Rural Opportunity Zones Program.

Your loved ones currently living out of state may live income tax free and receive up to \$15,000 in tuition reimbursement by returning home to Kansas.

Visit [TaxFree.ks.gov](http://TaxFree.ks.gov) for details and share this opportunity with friends and family.

## Sell your stuff in the classifieds

**475-2206**