



TEEGAN CALLICRATE (above right) talked to his attorney, Michael Day, before his preliminary hearing at the Sherman County Courthouse. Callicrate waived his right to the hearing, and an arraignment was scheduled for Monday, Sept. 10. Herald photo by Sharon Corcoran

Two arrested for theft

By Sharon Corcoran

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Two St. Francis men have been arrested for stealing tractors in Sherman, Wallace and Cheyenne counties and selling them as junk in Denver, getting just pennies on the dollar.

One of the tractor rustlers has pleaded guilty, and charges are pending against the other.

Authorities say the men loaded the tractors on a flatbed truck at different times between November and March and hauled them to Western Metals Recycling, where they got \$1,000 for each. A gas station security camera caught them on tape hauling a tractor from Wallace County through Goodland.

Another tractor apparently was driven right out of the diesel department at the Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland.

John Stephens, 20, a former student in the diesel technology department, took a plea bargain and entered guilty pleas to theft charges in all three counties. He was sentenced Monday, June 4, in Sherman County; Tuesday, June 5, in Cheyenne County; and Thursday, June 7, in Wallace. Stephens is the son of Dan and Rita Stephens, farmers south of St. Francis.

In Sherman County, he will have to pay \$19,099 restitution to the victim, \$163 court costs and \$50 probation fees. In Wallace, he will have to pay restitution to the victims of \$6,500 for the tractor taken there plus court costs and attorney fees. In Cheyenne County, he will have to pay \$25,000 restitution.

That is with joint liability, said Cheyenne County Attorney Justin Barrett; he could be responsible for the total, but if they get some from other defendants, it will be split between them.

In all three counties, Stephens was sentenced to 12 months of supervised probation with an underlying prison term of 10 months, meaning if he messes up just once during the year, he could be sent to jail for the entire 10-month sentence, but the three sentences run at the same time.

Stephens was expelled from the college, though not specifically for stealing the tractor. Once he was arrested, said College President Ken Clouse, he was not able to attend class. Students have a certain number of hours they can miss, he said, and once they exceed that, they are expelled.

The policy is patterned after a job, Clouse said, where you have a certain amount of sick leave and vacation, and if you miss more than that, you probably won't have a job. Each program is different, he said, but it's about 40 hours per semester.

Teegan Callicrate, 21, son of Vicki Callicrate and Mike

Callicrate, owner of Callicrate Feed Yard in St. Francis, and Stephens were arrested on burglary and felony theft charges on April 9 in Sherman County. The complaint in Stephens' court file says they stole a 1976 4630 John Deere tractor owned by Brent Cook of Edson sometime between Nov. 1 and March 19.

In Cheyenne County, they were charged with taking a 1984 Allis Chalmers 8070 tractor valued at \$20,000; a 1963 930 Case propane tractor, \$5,000; and a GMC truck, \$3,000; a total of \$28,000, all belonging to Sam Goodale of St. Francis.

Goodale's truck and tractors were stored in a building south of Wheeler and hadn't been missed until his son went to get something out of the shed March 16. Goodale said the tractors were evidently taken before the snows in December because there were no tracks on the ground, but he hadn't been out to check them over the winter.

In Wallace County, the men were charged with theft of a 1973 International 1066 tractor owned by Oriette Ritter of Sharon Springs. Stephens said in his plea he stole the tractor March 10.

Callicrate appeared before Judge John Cahoj Tuesday in the Sherman County District Court and waived his right to a preliminary hearing. His arraignment is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 10. In the meantime, his attorney, Michael Day, and Sherman County Attorney Bonnie Selby are trying to work out a plea agreement.

"I'm not terribly concerned," Selby said. "Our cases are solid."

Selby said the cases caught law enforcement off guard, though.

"Usually, we are looking for a needle in a haystack," she said, "but this time it was a John Deere."

The tractors were sold as scrap for \$1,000 each, said Wallace County Sheriff Larry Townsend.

Stephens appeared in Wallace County District Court on Monday, April 30, to face one count of felony theft, a level 9 nonperson felony. The sentence in such a case could be up to 17 months in jail and a fine not to exceed \$100,000 under state law.

"I'm happy we were able to conclude this," Townsend said in the May 3 edition of *The Western Times* of Sharon Springs. "Further investigation will bring one more arrest in this case. I hope that this sends a message out: Don't steal in Wallace County... because I'll turn the hounds loose!"

Stephens and Callicrate were charged in the Sherman County District Court with conspiracy to commit felony theft of the 1976 Deere owned by Brent Cook. Court documents say that sometime between Nov. 1 and March 29, they agreed to use a truck and trailer belonging to Callicrate Feed Yard to take the tractor to Denver, where it also was sold as scrap to

Western Metals.

Cook's tractor had been taken to the college for repairs in the diesel technology department. A fax from Dan and Rita Stephens to Scott Showalter of Goodland, John Stephens' court-appointed attorney, in the Sherman County Court file contains a copy of a bill from the department to Cook for repairs on the tractor.

The bill for \$1,020 is dated April 23, 14 days after Stephens and Callicrate were arrested, and lists repairs done.

A document in the fax lists the total value of the tractor as \$18,510, including \$12,500 for the tractor, \$4,000 for loader brackets, \$850 for an extra valve he had mounted on the tractor, \$150 for a two-way radio and \$1,020 for the repairs performed at the college.

Stephens' first appearance in Sherman County was Thursday, May 3, Selby said. He pleaded guilty Friday, May 18, and was sentenced Monday, June 4.

Stephens was free on \$50,000 bond in Wallace County, court documents said. If the Cheyenne and Wallace cases were resolved first, his release on recognizance in Sherman County would change to release supervised by Court Services Officer Deborah Farland.

In a plea bargain between Wallace County Attorney Charles Mosier and Stephens' court-appointed attorney, Stephens agreed to plead guilty to the theft charge.

In return, Mosier agreed not to oppose probation or release prior to sentencing. The county attorney also agreed to turn \$863 taken from Stephens' bank account over to the court services officer to help pay restitution in Cheyenne and Sherman counties.

Stephens agreed to cooperate and testify against others involved in similar thefts in all three counties.

Judge Glenn E. Schiffner reminded Stephens that the court is not bound by plea agreements and he could still impose the maximum fines and penalties. Schiffner asked Stephens if he did what he was accused of.

"On March 10th, I stole a tractor in Wallace County," he said, describing the 1973 International.

Judge Schiffner accepted Stephens' guilty plea and ordered a presentence investigation, which takes about 60 days to complete. Schiffner set sentencing for 1:30 p.m. Thursday, June 7.

As part of the plea agreement, Stephens must live with his parents and find a job so he can pay his victims. Sherman County requires that Stephens wear an ankle bracelet as part of his agreement here, and everyone agreed that he would be taken to Sherman County until his case is resolved. Parties also agreed on restitution in the amount of \$6,500, which will be paid to Ritter.

machine.

He was charged with using a debit card belonging to Troy Zweygardt of St. Francis at about 30 different Bird City and St. Francis businesses in January, mostly for non-taxable diesel fuel. The charges were dismissed without prejudice (meaning they can be refiled) on Friday, March 30, and Stephens was ordered to pay \$822 restitution.

The guilty pleas are pending in the Cheyenne County District Court. Paperwork has been filed with Judge Jack Burr and is waiting for his signature to be final.



Stephens

Business has new sales rep

By Karen Krien

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ECS, a feed, seed and trailer company, has a new sales representative.

Darren Dale, Bird City, joined the company two months ago and will be covering northwest Kansas and western Nebraska.

"I am excited to be able to stay home and help raise my family," Mr. Dale said. Prior to coming to ECS, he had been a sales representative for High Plains Journal.

Mr. Dale has a strong agriculture background and understanding of growers needs in the area. He will be handling Barenbrug forages, ADM animal health items and Mycogen

seed, as well as selling Featherlite Trailers. He will also be servicing ECS dealers as well as recruiting new customers.

"I'm looking forward to visiting with old customers as well as new ones," he said.

Mr. Dale and his wife Tana have one son, Taos, who is 2-years-old. They live on a farm north of Bird City.

He used to ride saddle broncs in rodeos but now is happy with hunting and fishing hobbies today.

For more information, contact Mr. Dale at 785-426-2092 (home), 785-332-6506 (cell) or dales@bwtelcom.net.



Dale

Winner enjoys shopping trip

By Karen Krien

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The \$1,000 Christmas In July Shopping Spree came to an end Saturday morning when the winning ticket was drawn.

It just took three times and Cathy Ritchey, St. Francis, was named as the winner. Other names drawn were Keely Loyd, St. Francis, and Tony Pham, Bird City, but they were not present to claim the prize.

"I couldn't believe he (Casey McCormick) was saying my name," Mrs. Ritchey said. "I was so surprised."

Her daughters, Mercedes and Tasha, were also there to help her claim the prize.

"We had many, many entries and I was happy at the interest in the contest," said Mr.

McCormick, *Herald* advertising manager.

The contest started in June and was sponsored by seven businesses. There was no rule that an item had to be purchased in the businesses. The only rules were the winner had to be 18 years of age and agree to let a member of *The Herald* staff follow them around while they spent the scrip money.

Mrs. Ritchey said she had a great time spending the "green money." She spent the bulk of the money at Owen's True Value and St. Francis' Supers. The daughters, including Kalin, had fun helping her spend the money.

It was just like Christmas, she said.

They had looked at the items in the stores on Saturday and

Mercedes carried the shopping list so they didn't forget anything. She said she had chosen a CD player, the other two girls, sleeping bags. They had some other items and also had special treats at the grocery store.

As Mrs. Ritchey shopped, she thanked the businesses for participating in the Shopping Spree.

"It was hot and we were happy that the people turned out for the Christmas In July Shopping Spree," Mr. McCormick said. "It will only be a few months before the Christmas On Us drawing will be held."

Other businesses participating in the Shopping Spree were Ross Manufacturing, Saintry Stitches, Schultz's, United Methodist Thrift Store and *The Saint Francis Herald*.



PARK GETS NEW SIGN — (l to r) Jacob White, Jacob Diers, Roy Shrader and Rex Weishapl place the new sign at Van Doren Park.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

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Man has pending charges

A St. Francis man, who confessed to stealing tractors in three western Kansas counties has pending guilty pleas to theft at the Cheyenne Bowl and burglary at the Frontier Equity Co-op in Bird City.

A case against him alleging he used someone else's debit card was dismissed, but he was ordered to pay restitution.

John L. Stephens, 20, St. Francis, pleaded guilty to breaking into Frontier Equity about Saturday, Feb. 3. Nothing was taken, but Stephens was sentenced Tuesday, May 8, to serve 24 months on probation and pay \$88 restitution for the door he broke.

He pleaded guilty to theft at the bowling alley of money, signs, quarters and tokens on Sunday, April 9, 2006. The neon beer signs and tokens

were recovered by police and returned to the bowling alley.

He was sentenced Tuesday, May 8, to 24 months probation with an underlying 21-month prison term. If he messes up once during the two years, he could serve up to 21 months in prison and have 12 months of post-release supervision. That sentence would run at the same time as sentences from the Frontier Equity break in and the tractor thefts.

The cases were taken into account with the tractor theft case, said Cheyenne County Attorney Justin Barrett, with the sentences being served at the same time.

Stephens was ordered to pay \$1,648 restitution to the bowling alley, \$1,334 for the cash and \$300 for the quarters taken from the token