

Area residents encouraged to vote for Arikaree Breaks

By Karen Krien

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Cheyenne County residents need to fill out their ballot and vote for The Breaks which are located north of St. Francis.

The Arikaree Breaks is one of 24 finalists in the Eight Wonders of Kansas contest sponsored by a non-profit group.

The nonprofit group behind the Eight Wonders of Kansas contest got hundreds of submissions and has now selected 24 finalists. And, Cheyenne County's "Arikaree Breaks" is one of the finalists.

People are urged to study the information at www.8wonders.org. When ready to vote online, just click "register and vote" on www.8wonders.org. Those going online will be asked to register by providing their e-mail address, city and state. The e-mail address is the identity in the system and helps monitor the number of times the person votes. The e-mail address will not be sold or given out for any use.

One e-mail address is eligible to be used three times so everyone's friends and family without e-mail

can use it. The deadline is midnight, Dec. 31. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will announce the 8 Wonders of Kansas on Jan. 29, Kansas Day, at the state Capitol.

There are also a number of ballots on pamphlets being left at the St. Francis banks, city office, library, Herald office, senior center and the museum. People who are not comfortable voting on the web can cast their ballot by mail.

One of the oddities on the Wonders list is the big ball of twine in Cawker City, but buildings, historical sites and striking landscapes claimed most of the 24 spots.

That's in keeping with the philosophy of the Kansas Sampler Foundation, the organization that educates people about Kansas and is running the contest.

Nominees had to be publicly accessible and reflect one of the eight elements of rural culture the foundation uses to promote communities: architecture, art, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history and people.

Some of the finalists are:

- Arikaree Breaks, Cheyenne County, which feature rugged canyons and windblown silt areas called loess.

- Ball of Twine, Cawker City, billed as the largest ball of sisal twine in the world at a current 18,032 pounds.

- Big Brutus, West Mineral, the world's largest electric coal shovel at 160 feet tall.

- Big Well, Greensburg, among the world's largest hand-dug wells.

- Brookville Hotel, Abilene (formerly in Brookville), a restaurant serving icons of Kansas cuisine (skillet-fried chicken, relishes, baking-powder biscuits) since 1915.

- Chase County Courthouse, Cottonwood Falls, built in 1873.

- Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Barton and Stafford counties, migratory

stops for North American waterfowl and shorebirds.

- Cimarron National Grassland, Morton County, more than 100,000 acres.

- Constitution Hall State Historic Site, Lecompton, the 151-year-old building where the Lecompton Constitution was drafted in 1857.

- John Steuart Curry murals, State Capitol, Topeka, depicting John Brown and the anti-slavery movement in Kansas Territory.

- Davis Memorial, Hiawatha, one man's memorial to his wife featuring 11 life-size statues of the couple.

- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Abilene, containing the papers of the only five-star general to become president of the United States, serving from 1953 to 1961.

- Fort Larned National Historic Site, Pawnee County, considered one of the best-preserved frontier Indian posts in the American West.

- Garden of Eden, Lucas, a folk-art sculpture garden built from 113 tons of concrete.

- Gypsum Hills Scenic Drive, Barber County, stunning canyons and bluffs of rock stained red by iron oxide.

- Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center, Hutchinson, with collections of U.S. and Russian space artifacts including spacecraft from all three early manned space programs.

- Kansas Underground Salt Museum, Hutchinson, where visitors travel 650 feet below ground to view natural geologic formations and artifacts left by miners over the past century.

- Keeper of the Plains, Wichita, the 44-foot sculpture by artist Blackbear Bosin.

- Lake Scott State Park, Scott County, with craggy canyons, scenic overlooks and historic connections to the El Cuartelejo Pueblo Indian ruins.



A surveillance camera at Western Metals Recycling in Denver captured Ori and Verna Ritter's tractor (above) being towed in on a flatbed trailer along with a pickup cab that actually was scrap metal. Tire tracks where thieves loaded the Ritters' tractor on the trailer were instrumental in law enforcement identifying the trailer used for the thefts. The tracks had shards of glass from the tractor's windows, which thieves broke out to reduce the amount of drag from the wind as they drove to Denver.

Tractor rustlers betrayed by a tire track at crime scene

By Sharon Corcoran

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Tire tracks, crime scene photos, a security camera video, all were instrumental in tracking down a pair of tractor rustlers — and discovering that the tractors and a stolen truck all apparently had been run through a shredder and sent to a mill where the metal would be reused.

Law enforcement officers from three counties shared information as they discovered their stolen tractor cases were all related. Wallace County Sheriff Larry Townsend said they followed tracks from the Ori Ritter farm and knew which direction the thieves had gone after loading his tractor on a flatbed trailer.

A video from a surveillance camera in Goodland gave them a picture of the trailer and two men with Ritter's tractor, and tire tracks helped them identify the trailer.

"They took really good pictures at the site of the theft," Townsend said. "Combining that with information from Cheyenne County, we found the trailer we thought had been used in the theft. We knew the size and tire treads."

What threw officers at first, he said, was that the thieves didn't appreciate the value of the tractor.

"We thought the tractor would be resold to be used," Townsend said. "We didn't think of it being chopped."

He said they contacted sales, auction barns and used-tractor-parts dealers in a 300-mile radius and

came up empty handed. After combining his information with what Cheyenne County Undersheriff Craig VanAllen had, Townsend said, they went to Denver and looked at salvage yards.

They found Ritter's tractor, two tractors belonging to Sam Goodale of St. Francis and a tractor belonging to Brent Cook of Edson had all been taken to Western Metals Recycling, tying together cases from Sherman, Cheyenne and Wallace counties.

Agencies in the three counties did most of the investigation, Townsend said, but the Kansas Bureau of Investigation helped early on, and Doug Murphy of the Quad-County Task Force helped with interviews. Goodland Police officer Doug Whitson and Sherman County Sheriff Kevin Butts also helped with interviews, Townsend said.

Townsend said had been thinking a lot about the case and kept trying to think of ideas on how to solve it, then he woke up during the night and it came to him — maybe someone in Goodland had a surveillance video. He called and asked several businesses and found a gas station that did. It was aimed to film people stopped at the pumps, he said, but it caught the thieves in a pickup towing a trailer with the Ritters' International on the flatbed.

It's kind of far away and at 10:30 at night, Townsend said, but it was enough to make out the tractor and estimate the size of trailer and compare it to the size of the tracks at the

scene and the length of the trailer from where the truck stopped to where the ramp was let down.

Townsend and Van Allen also got video surveillance footage from Western Metals Recycling showing the thieves' pickup pulling a trailer with the tractor and a piece of a pickup on the flatbed. It's a different world now than even five years ago, Townsend said; more and more places are using video surveillance.

But finding proof in the case was a close call.

"If we had even been one day later in going to Denver," he said, "all we would have gotten would have been a picture of the pickup pulling the trailer and the cab of the pickup on it. The tractor wouldn't have been in what they would have kept on file."

The Denver recycling center didn't do anything illegal in accepting the tractors, Townsend said. They're in the scrap business, and they don't know what kind of condition a tractor is in when someone brings it in.

They wouldn't have started the tractors, VanAllen said; they took a big magnet and lifted them off the trailer. Mark Joyner from Western Metals Recycling is listed in court documents as a witness.

"They were very helpful and open to us," Townsend said.

The best advice for farmers, he said, is to keep their implements as close to home as possible or next to somebody else's homestead. That's not a guarantee, he said; it's hard to hedge against a thief.

Television glamorizes police and crime scene investigation, but Townsend said it's just part of his job.

"Track them down — that's what people hire us to do," the sheriff said. "It's good when we can put it together."

"I'm happy to put it behind us. I'm disappointed we couldn't return the tractors to the owners, but I'm glad to put it behind us."

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Public Notice Petition filed in Lillich estate

Published in the Saint Francis Herald, St. Francis, Kansas, Thursdays, July 19, July 26 and August 2, 2007

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF CHEYENNE COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE

OF CASE NO. 07-PR-02

OTTO A. LILLICH, Deceased

Pursuant to K.S.A. Chapter 59

NOTICE OF HEARING

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that a petition was filed in this Court by James M. Milliken, duly appointed, qualified and acting Executor of the Estate of Otto A. Lillich, deceased, praying Petitioner's acts be approved; account be settled and allowed; the heirs be determined; the Will be construed and the Estate be assigned to the persons entitled thereto; the Court find the allow-

ances requested for attorneys, fees and expenses are reasonable and should be allowed; the costs be determined and ordered paid; the administration of the Estate be closed; upon the filing of receipts the Petitioner be finally discharged as the Executor of the Estate of Otto A. Lillich, deceased, and the Petitioner be released from further liability.

You are required to file your written defenses thereto on or before the 13th day of August, 2007, at 2:30 P.M. in the District Court, St. Francis, Cheyenne County, Kansas, at which time and place the cause will be heard. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon the petition.

James M. Milliken, Executor
JAMES M. MILLIKEN,
CHARTERED

Kari M. Gilliland, #17386
101 W. Washington Street, P.O. Box 627
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