

# Fire sweeps through almost 300 acres

By Karen Krien

karenk@nwkansas.com

The wind had blown all day Thursday, sometimes reaching 60-mile-an-hour gusts. At about 2 p.m., the firemen were called to put out a grass fire north of St. Francis. The fire jumped several country roads, two asphalt roads and the railroad tracks before it was stopped.

"It has been dry and, with the wind and high humidity levels, the fire traveled fast," said George Harper, St. Francis fire chief.

He said the fire was "electrical" and, at the time, was unsure if a line had broken in the wind or if wires had touched, causing a spark.

When the firemen reached the fire, it had already traveled about a half mile and was just north of Benny Weber's house at Road 15. It swiftly traveled down a wide ravine, east of the sewer ponds, and on east of the St. Francis Cemetery. The wind was from the north/northwest but it seemed to shift from time to time.

The Charlie Draper place seemed to be in the line of the fire for awhile but it moved east where Steve and Deb Christy had horses and cattle in a pasture. It burned much of the pasture but the animals were able to reach an area that did not burn. Todd Krien's horses were within a 1/4 mile of the fire.

The fire jumped the old Wheeler Road which is asphalt. The Bracelin brothers had cattle in that pasture and Rodney Bracelin cut the fence wires so the cattle could be moved to an adjoining pasture.

Now, the homes of Jo Hagney, Rick and Laura Reeser, Dr. Brett and Cynthia Poling and Eddy and Sherry Schultz were near the path of the fire.

Both Ms. Hagney and Mrs. Reeser had climbed up to one of the sand piles west of their home only to turn around to see the fire almost on top of them. They ran to their house

where they were met by Bird City firemen, Gary Brubaker and Craig White, who told them to evacuate "now!"

"We were terrified," Ms. Hagney said.

Firemen and other volunteers had let the animals out at Reeser's so they could seek safety.

The Sherman County Firemen had been stationed on U.S. 36. From a distance, the black and sometimes green smoke billowed into the sky between the Wheeler Road and U.S. 36, which had been blocked to keep traffic out.

Traffic was backed up on both roads. Some of the people were those out seeing what was going on while others, including a huge oversized load, several semi trucks and farm equipment, sat on K-27 waiting for the blockade to lift.

The fire moved southeast, barely missing the Ed Morris place and, at that point, jumped across the highway.

Chief Harper said that Sherman County firemen were able to put out the fire before it could spread further.

He said the support during the fire was tremendous. Fire departments came from Hale, Colo., and Bird City to fight the fire and there were other departments standing by. Anyone having big trucks to haul water arrived; the county, Goodland Greenline and farmers supplied equipment and manpower to plow up ground for a fire line. Local law enforcement, state troopers and emergency medical technicians were also there to lend a hand.

Even though many acres burned in the fire, there was no structural damage, there was only one injury when a fireman fell and no animals were lost. During the fire, power was lost in the country and some of St. Francis. Radio power was also down momentarily until the standby batteries at the tower



**FIRE QUICKLY SPREAD, burning between 200 and 300 acres of Cheyenne County grassland. The 60 mile-per-hour wind**

hampered firemen's effort

Times staff photos by Karen Krien

kicked in.

"Since the fire, we have had phone calls and people thanking us for being there," he said. "It's a good feeling."

Wal-Mart and Presto Convenience Store, Goodland, donated bottled water and Gatorade. Salvation Army provided money and St. Francis Supers donated food and bottled water.

After the fire, Judy McKee, from the Goodland Community Emergency Response Team, was there along with Dolores Jenik, Salvation Army coordinator, Mary Rath, Deb Lindsten, Susan Dinkel, Carol Rogers and Deb Harper, to serve food to the firemen.

Although the fire appeared to be out, the area was patrolled much of the night. Law officers reported a hot spot on a railroad bridge about 3 a.m. on Friday and Chief Harper went out to extinguish it.



**BIRD CITY FIRE FIGHTERS, Gary Brubaker and Craig White (in uniform) took a moment Thursday to release animals from pens which were in the line of the fire.**

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

## McDonald News By Vera Kacirek

The Halloween Soup Supper in McDonald at the Legion Hall will be Wednesday, Oct. 31 at 5:30 p.m.

It is always on the evening of Halloween. The public is invited to come and enjoy the evening and to watch the kids participate in the Halloween games.

Bernita Beesley of Quinter and Sharon Schreiner of Kansas City are helping Mike and Andy Sramek while they are putting up their silage.

Fourteen ladies enjoyed the birthday luncheon on Wednesday at the highway cafe to celebrate October birthdays.

Josh Johnson was a Sunday evening visitor of Jim and Ruby Tracy.

Kenny and Phyllis Wilkinson visited in the Hester Home on Tuesday in Benkelman. They visited Marge Hickert and Wilma Burk.

Kenny and Phyllis Wilkinson attended the surprise birthday

party for Louis Sabatka on Sunday evening at the St. John Hall. Other birthdays acknowledged were Craig Sabatka, R.J. Sabatka and John Skolout.

Rod, Lisa and Josh Johnson were Monday night supper guests of Kenny and Phyllis Wilkinson.

Amelia Banister and Karlyne Atchison visited in the St. Francis Good Samaritan Home on Friday with Irene Kehlbeck and Viola Jones. They were lunch guests of Marie Holzwaeth.

Last week, Jerry and Betty Knapp moved the personal items of their daughter, Brenda Knapp to Venango, Neb. Brenda has started a new job there.

Kay Miller and Frances Erickson visited in Benkelman on Saturday with Virginia King and Glenard Greene.

Vera Kacirek went to Benkelman on Monday afternoon to attend a get-together of members of her graduating class.

## Bid for Courthouse steps comes in too high

By Karen Krien

karenk@nwkansas.com

The front steps at the courthouse have been closed since December when they were deemed "unsafe." The county had received a grant for \$78,384 from the Kansas State Historical Society to restore the steps to their original state of limestone. The county's cost would be around \$20,000.

However, when the bid was opened at the Oct. 16 Cheyenne County Commissioners' meeting, it was too high.

Eric Johnson and Darrin Saenger, representing Campbell and Johnson, an engineering company out of Concordia, were

at the meeting. The company had been hired to oversee the steps job and they were there to discuss the process of the bid before it was opened at 1 p.m.

The only bid was from Mid-Continental Restoration Company, Fort Scott. It was for \$133,900 which was \$35,920 over the total project budget of \$97,980.

The commissioners agreed that the project would need to be bid again. Mr. Johnson said he would contact the State Historical Society on how to proceed with the project.

Winter is setting in so it will probably be next spring before any work will start on the new steps.

## Introducing

Kyla Howard

Mitchell Howard is proud to announce the birth of his new baby sister, Kyla Brielle Howard. She was born Oct. 8, 2007, at 11 p.m. at Dundy County Hospital. Kyla weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21 inches long. Parents are Chris and Dana Howard of Bird

City. Grandparents are Dennis and Lila Howard and Brian and Connie Sabatka, all of McDonald. Great-grandparents are Gayle Loker of McDonald, Raymond and Marlene Johnson, also of McDonald and Agnes Sabatka of rural Atwood



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The Bird City Housing Authority is hosting an Open House in order to thank **Donna Johnson** for her many years of service to the Housing Authority and to also thank **The Bird City Century II Foundation** for funding the New Washers/Dryers and the Community Room Improvements.

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**2006 DELINQUENT PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES**

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DAY, BETTIE JANE (SUSPENSE)	3239 E DES MOINES ST	MESA	AZ	85213	47.42
DAY, SAM (SUSPENSE)	3239 E DES MOINES ST	MESA	AZ	85213	56.28
JB WELL & TRENCHING SERVICE	PO BOX 564	BIRD CITY	KS	67731	469.39
MILLER DAY ISELI ENERGY CO.	14917 SE 142ND AVE	CLACKAMAS	OR	97015	179.99
MOSLEY, FRED	PO BOX 888	ST FRANCIS	KS	67756	118.86
SHANE EVERSOLE	HC 67 BOX 36	HAIGLER	NE	69030	329.48
TRUETT, MARY	13905 NE 9TH COURT	VANCOUVER	WA	99985	58.20
VOORHIES, ROBERT KENT	1481 ROAD 34	MCDONALD	KS	67745	19.35
WILLIAMS, LYLE	PO BOX 156	BIRD CITY	KS	67731	10.03
ZWEYGARDT, ALVIN R.	221 BIRCH	ST FRANCIS	KS	67756	662.89

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For more information: Bonnie Zweygardt • 785-332-2569;  
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or email: coc@cityofstfrancis.net

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