



GETTING WATER from a stock tank, St. Francis volunteer firemen get ready to return to the blaze. The fire started north of the Sherman County line and strong winds soon took the fire to the northeast last Thursday. Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Coaches excited about new season

Junior High Basketball Begins
 "Wow! You really think you know a person until you start asking questions for a newspaper article," said Colleen Shrader, student writer. "This week I had the pleasure of talking with the junior high basketball coaches, and I found out many things that I did not know before. Coach Max Keltz and Coach Dan Carson are both looking forward to the upcoming season."

great job with the boys and with the school. I think we can be very appreciative of the teacher, coach, and director that we have," says Colleen.

As for the girls in junior high basketball this year, they are scarce on players, having only seven girls.

"It is has been tough to scrimmage for the girls with such a small number out," Coach Carson said. "Right now we are working on fundamentals. People from the community have been helping with practice to scrimmage. I am hoping to have a successful and fun season."

Coach Keltz said, "I am optimistic about the middle school basketball as there are some good kids who are working hard to compete. With hard work, winning attitudes, and luck we should be competing for the league championship in both A and B teams." The boys have 22 players out for basketball making up three teams.

Mr. Carson has been a coach for 10 years. Five of those years were in Indonesia where he taught school and coached basketball and volleyball, which he said he found very rewarding. Coach Carson has also taught and coached in Sharon Springs and Hays.

Mr. Carson has been back in the community for two years and has been a Cheylin substitute for those two years. This will be his fifth year coaching basketball and third as head coach. He has also coached volleyball for eight years, five years as head coach.

"He does a great job with the kids not only when substituting, but also at Teens for Christ. Coach Carson is just what our junior high girls need and will do a wonderful job," says Colleen

This is Mr. Keltz's eighth year as a basketball coach, and fifth as a head basketball coach. In the past, Mr. Keltz was the assistant coach for high school boys' basketball for 5 years.

Mr. Keltz has also coached football and track for numerous years. He has been and was the high school's head football coach for 11 years and assistant for 13 years. Junior high football was head coached by Mr. Keltz for 11 years. Junior high and high school track have also been coached by Mr. Keltz for seven years.

"Our junior high teams need all the fans they can get this season. They will make everyone proud. Good luck to all the teams throughout the basketball season!"

This is his fifth year as the activities director. "It may not seem like nineteen years, but Mr. Keltz has been very active in the school system with FFA and agriculture classes since 1988. He is doing a

Fire destroys hunting lodge and dreams

By Karen Krien

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His dream had come true, but in minutes it was gone.

Rex Murray, who lives south of Wheeler, had gotten up early Thursday morning to put the finishing touches on his shop and hunting lodge. It was about 1 p.m., he said, when he turned around and saw smoke. As hard as he tried, he could not extinguish the flames, which eventually took two businesses: 30 years of farm tools and 15 years of a hunting business.

Murray had just moved his office, his hunting equipment and supplies, and other memorabilia into the same building where he kept his farming tools.

"I lost everything," he said. "My guns — some had belonged to my grandfather, or my uncle, the dog training equipment, dog trailer, even my hunting clothes and shoes. I lost it all."

Among the items which can probably never be replaced is a photo of the dog they use on all of their fliers and a jacket he had received when he took first and second both at the National Championship of the Upland Classic Series, a hunting competition.

He wore it everywhere, his wife Sandi Murray said, he was so proud of that jacket. He kind of lost his identity, she said, by losing all his hunting stuff. He doesn't even have a dog leash.

But then Murray could have lost

his life as well. He was in the other side of the shop when the fire began, Mrs. Murray said, and it was tricky getting out with the smoke and everything. She said they don't know what caused the fire. Her husband didn't hear anything explode or anything, she said.

The fire spread north to the acres of grasslands where Murray takes hunters to shoot pheasants, quail and chukkers. And, in those acres, he trained dogs for himself as well as for other hunters. He lost 200 to 300 pheasants he used for training, his wife said.

The Murrays were going to use the remodeled area in the building for a clubhouse where family, friends and hunters could come, relax and watch a big screen television. They had even installed a kitchen to entertain those visiting.

Sunday evening, Mr. Murray said he hadn't slept since Thursday morning and he was tired. He didn't know what they were going to do.

"Maybe I should just call it quits," he said.

Family and friends had helped clean up the remains, the couple said. However, it wasn't just the people around the area helping. Hunting friends from Denver had stopped by Holyoke, Colo., to pick up and bring a dog trailer for him to use. Someone brought a shotgun.

The Murrays know a lot of people, having been involved with the dogs and hunters in state and na-

tional events. They began receiving phone calls from coast to coast. A hunter who was supposed to come this week called. When he found out about the fire, he said he was coming anyway just to help.

A New Mexico man arrived Sunday. He said he was hunting in South Dakota when he heard about the fire, and told Rex that he just packed up his stuff and came down to help.

It really meant a lot that people did that, Mrs. Murray said, what Rex does has touched so many lives.

The Murrays, along with children Crystal and Ryan, bring in hunters from all over the United States. Mr. Murray also raised and sold Vizsla dogs and trained his dogs and other breeds to hunt. He had dogs lined up to train for months in advance, his wife said.

The business had started as a hobby. Murray said he had always loved to hunt and dogs respected him as much as he did the dogs. Dogs knew him years after he had trained them.

He developed Ringneck Country, a state-licensed controlled shooting area featuring over 7,900 acres of upland game hunting. Murray said hunters could go after native birds or controlled hunts with pen-raised birds.

Hunters arrive regularly to hunt the game. Pheasants wait in hatches, waiting to be released for a hunt. Often, they would bring a dog or

two to be trained. The reserve features pheasant, quail and chukker. Murray said they mow the fields and plant feed to make sure the birds have a good habitat. He also holds hunting competitions on his property three times each year.

It took over three hours for firemen from Goodland, Bird City and St. Francis to put out the fire. A strong south wind hampered volunteers as they fought at least 3 miles of fire which burned grass, corn stalks and wheat stubble. People came with tanks of water and farmers arrived with disks and tractors to help control the flames.

"It is dry," said George Harper, fire chief. "There was high wind and the humidity was below 15 percent, making high fire index — fires start more easily and burn more rapidly."

Other fires

More fires have been reported since the Murray fire.

Chief Harper said firemen were called to extinguish a fire in a combine about 15 miles southwest of St. Francis late afternoon on Saturday. He said the fire appeared to have started in the engine compartment. Besides burning the combine, a small amount of milo was destroyed. The combine belonged to Kendall Helton.

On Monday, firemen were called to assist Sherman County firemen in a fire just over the county line. There was no information available.

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Christmas seen through the eyes of a child is priceless

This year, as in the year's past, the Special Christmas and New Year's sections will be published before the holidays. The sections will feature letters from Santa, answers of questions asked of school children, memories and recipes.

The Saint Francis Herald and Bird City Times staffs welcome participation from children to adults. All items must be received by Dec. 7 in order to get them into the special section.

Send letters, special memories, articles and recipes to The Herald at P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, KS 67756 or fax 785-332-3001, or drop them off or e-mail to sferald@nwkansas.com titling the subject as "Christmas for the Paper."



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