



COLBY FREE PRESS

Thompson pleads guilty; sentencing scheduled in May

By **PATTY DECKER***Free Press Editor*

Michael A. Thompson, 18, of Colby pled guilty to amended charges of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated battery as a result of a two-car collision that occurred on Saturday, Jan. 29, 2000.

The plea was heard earlier today in the District Court of Thomas County with Judge Glenn D. Schiffner presiding.

In the original complaint, which was set for a jury trial beginning today, Thomas County Attorney Laurence A. Taylor said that late Sunday afternoon his office, along with Thompson and his court-appointed attorney, Cal Williams, came to a plea agreement.

The agreement meant that the State of Kansas would drop its two counts of murder in the second degree to involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of Angela J. Duden and Justin Shaw. Thompson also agreed to plead guilty to the charge of aggravated battery with respect to Brice Reynolds and William Pederson, who were seriously injured in the accident.

As for the other counts to include involuntary manslaughter while under the influence of alcohol, driving under the influence of alcohol, and reckless driving, both sides agreed to drop those charges.

When asked by Schiffner if Thompson understood the charges he was pleading guilty to, Thompson said, "yes."

"Michael is taking full responsibility for what happened," said Williams, "even though he has no memory of the incident."

Williams said that Thompson entered the guilty plea based on the fact that his car was there, that he was involved, but when asked, "What happened?" he can't say "yes."

Williams also stipulated the facts of the case by reviewing the events which led up to the fatal crash.

Williams read a statement, which said in part, that the accident happened on Jan. 29, 2000 at the intersection of Thomas County Road 27 and Highway 24.

Additionally, he said that Thompson's vehicle, a 1976 Cadillac, and Duden's vehicle, a 1995 Probe, were involved and that it was Thompson's

vehicle which failed to stop at the intersection.

After reading the statement, Judge Schiffner asked Thompson if this was an accurate record of what happened.

"I don't know," Thompson said.

Williams added that his client does believe that based on testimony that would have come out in a trial that he does know the accident happened and it was his car involved.

Williams said that his clients is entering a plea based on a certain set of facts and since Thompson doesn't remember what happened and because he doesn't know what a jury would do — the defense believes this is a "good solution to a terrible, terrible problem."

Schiffner asked Taylor if the state is satisfied with the statements by Thompson and his attorney.

Taylor hesitated and, at first, said nothing.

In response to his silence, Williams asked if he might be able to clarify a few points.

"We assume that it is 'very likely' that had this gone to a jury trial, it would lead to a conviction," he said.

Schiffner asked Thompson if he agreed with his attorney that the outcome would have meant a "very likely conviction."

To that, Thompson said he agreed with he attorney that the outcome of a trial would have been "very likely a conviction."

Based on the stipulation of facts and questions answered, Taylor said he was satisfied and Schiffner accepted Thompson's plea to the crimes of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated battery.

The next step in the process will be a pre-sentencing investigation with the sentencing scheduled for Wednesday, May 8 in district court. The sentencing guidelines for involuntary manslaughter carries a term of confinement of not less than 31 or more than 136 months depending on prior criminal history. It can also mean a maximum \$300,000 fine. On the aggravated battery charge, the term of confinement is no less than 7 months or more than 23 months, with a \$100,000 fine.

Thompson's supervised bond through the Thomas County Court Services will continue until sentencing.

It's not what you may think

Colby firefighters Sean Hankin and J.L. Ellis burned off weeds today from the south side of the Prairie Museum of Art & History. According to Ellis, this chore will have to be completed yearly until enough buffalo grass grows to choke off the weed growth.

DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Firemen summoned to downtown apartment

By **PATTY DECKER***Free Press Editor*

Colby firefighters were called to a fire in a downtown apartment Friday night, said Colby Fire Chief Bob McLemore today.

Officials arrived at the upstairs apartment located at 425 N. Franklin, formerly known as the Shore Building,

at 9:45 p.m. to discover a mattress on fire.

Although the blaze was quickly extinguished, the circumstances surrounding the incident are suspicious in nature, McLemore said.

"The apartment was not occupied and when we arrived the door was unlocked," he said.

Although there was no damage done to the apartment or building itself, the fire department and city police are investigating.

"We have been interviewing people who lived in that apartment and others in the building," he said.

After the incident, McLemore said that one good outcome to this fire was

that smoke detectors made the difference.

"There were other people living in that building and because of their attentiveness by hearing the smoke alarm, we were alerted right away," he said.

McLemore said he can't stress enough how important a smoke detector can be in saving buildings and lives.

County commissioners okay bids on new pickup for road department

By **MAXINE NELSON***Colby Free Press*

The Thomas County Commissioners decided at their Friday morning meeting to purchase a pickup for the road department from Tubbs and Sons, and to hire Meier Construction of Burlington, Colo., to strip the dirt from over the weekend (but remember this is just Monday and

The pickup bid was \$16,127 for a Ford pickup with trade-in. Other bids were \$17,176 for a Chevy pickup and \$18,989 for a Dodge pickup by Frontier Autoplex.

The Burlington company's bid of \$30,000

won over bids by Mitch Tiede Terracing of Goodland for \$39,000, and Sporer Land Development of Oakley for \$35,000.

In other business:

• Don Morton was at the meeting and said he was concerned with the changes in directorship of the EMS during the last couple of years. He said he had been an EMT for 20 years, through five directors. Jim Cave left to manage Montana Mike's, Marian Lindberg left to return to college and Josh Buffington resigned.

Morton said he thought low pay was a factor in the resignations. Commissioner Glen

Kersenbrock told him the county can only pay what the taxpayers can afford. He said the county tries to go by the median salaries paid EMS directors throughout the state.

He said the commissioners had advertised and got four applications. Two of the applicants need extra training, and the commissioners will be interviewing two next week and they hope to have a new director by the last of May.

• Chris Bieker, roads supervisor, said he was working on the state five-year road plan, and suggested adding the two miles of oil road north of Levant, and the Frontage Road to the plan.

He also said he had reports of a lot of heavy truck traffic south of Levant and Brewster, and the road was getting wavy from the heavy traffic. Kersenbrock said he would remind the sheriff's department to patrol the road.

• Sheriff Tom Jones said the new drug dog has arrived. His name is Boz. The commissioners signed a bill of sale, selling Guszt, the former drug dog, to Ken Patton, his handler. Guszt is 8 years old and is retiring.

Jones brought proposals for a new back-up generator for the Law Enforcement Center. The power recently failed in the center, and the

back-up generation did not work. Jones said the motor had been tested regularly, but when it had to connect up to the generator, things did not work.

Proposals were considered for a generator and maintenance plan. A decision was tabled until the following meeting.

• The commissioners signed a proclamation for Fair Housing Month, expressing the hope that this year's observance will promote fair housing practices throughout the county.

The commissioners had met Friday morning to pay bills and conduct routine business.

Briefly

Weather: Big temperature drop

If you like today's warmth, you are going to hate Tuesday's 'coldth.' The National Weather Service expected the Colby area's high to reach near 80 today, with Tuesday's high expected to be no warmer than the 30s. Here is the detailed forecast. Tonight, clear skies early then becoming cloudy with scattered rain or snow showers through early morning, precipitation set at 30 percent; brisk northeast winds 15-25 mph with gusts to 35 continuing; lows around 30. Tuesday, mostly cloudy, scattered snow showers in the morning; colder with highs in the upper 30s and north winds 10-20 mph; precipitation 30 percent. Tuesday night, cloudy with lows near 20. Wednesday, partly sunny with highs moving up but just barely into the mid-40s. Wednesday night, mostly clear with lows in the mid-20s. Thursday through the weekend (but remember this is just Monday and weather can change without notice) highs in the 60s and lows in the middle 30s. Colby's high Sunday was 62 and the overnight low this morning was 32. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 42 degrees. The records for April 1: 87 in 1940 in -4 in 1936. (*The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.*)

Colby School Board meets tonight

The Colby School Board will hold it's regular meeting

tonight at 7 p.m. in the board room of the Administration Building, 210 S. Range. Items on the agenda include republication of the budget, discussion of dates for Shirley Faver's retirement reception and the year-end staff gathering, discussion of an out-of-district field trip request and bids for fuel for the school district. The school board will also hear reports from the principals of the grade school, middle school and high school, the curriculum director and the NKESC board of directors. The public, as always, is invited to attend the meeting.

Trustee to review programs today

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. today in the board room of the Thomas Hall Administration Building. The agenda will include a program review, approval of contracts, and dorm contract. The trustees will consider tuition and fees, authorize the state health insurance plan for the college, and discuss any other items any member wishes to address. The meeting is open to the public.

Puddle Duck sets enrollment

Enrollment for Puddle Duck Preschool will be Wednesday and Thursday, April 3-4, from 4-6 p.m., at 520 W. 5th, Colby. For more information call Amy Jennings at 462-2603 or 462-8388.

Colby meeting to focus on women

By **PATTY DECKER***Free Press Editor*

Heart attacks do not have to kill and the American Heart Association wants to explain that and more to women of all ages on Friday from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall of the United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin, Colby.

"Many women lack basic knowledge about heart attacks and the purpose of this event is to stimulate awareness," said Sherry Kriegshauser, with the Colby Chapter of the American Heart Association.

Marcia McCoy, RN, MSN, will talk about early detection, education and prevention during her presentation entitled, "The Heart of Women's Health," she said.

"Marcia is an excellent speaker, along with being the coordinator of the Women's Cardiac Center, Mid America Heart Institute and Saint Luke's-Shawnee Mission Health System," Kriegshauser said.

National statistics revealed that 10 million women in this country have heart disease and 6 million of those women are younger than 65.

In addition, a woman in menopause has a high risk of heart disease, primarily because as her body's estrogen level naturally decreases, the protection it provides also decreases. What this means, is that each year over 500,000 women will die from heart disease.

"This state of vulnerability and the magnitude of this silent epidemic warrants an emergent need for awareness," Kriegshauser said.

"We, as women, need to be educated. Not only for ourselves, but for our children and our children's children."

There are many risk factors to consider in prevention. One of the most important factors being family history.

If parents, grandparents or other close relatives have suffered heart attacks, chances are increased.

Association officials also said that

while men are more likely to have heart attacks at a younger age than women, once a woman reaches menopause her chances of having a heart attack equal that of a man.

"As we women get older, our risk of having heart attacks grows," Kriegshauser said.

"Then there are modifiable risks related to cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, exercise, diet and stress."

"We need to live a healthier life by watching our diet, dealing with stress in a proper way, exercising and being aware if we have high blood pressure," she said.

There is a \$5 registration fee to attend, Kriegshauser said, and reservations or questions can be made by calling (785) 462-8656 or (620) 285-6896.

"We hope women in the area will take advantage of this program by attending the meeting Friday," she said.

Editor's note: Two Colby women will talk about their personal experiences after surviving a heart attack.

