



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Suspect's DNA still on shelf

By The Associated Press

For nearly 16 months, DNA from Douglas S. Belt has sat unanalyzed in a Kansas Bureau of Investigation lab.

Belt, 42, of Wichita, is being held in the Sedgwick County Jail on a charge of first-degree murder in the June 2002 killing and decapitation of a woman at the apartment complex where she worked as a maid.

Months after his arrest last November, Belt was charged with seven rapes that took place between 1989 and 1994 in four Kansas counties, including one in Colby in March 1993.

Belt also was charged Dec. 20 in Madison County, Ill., with three counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault stemming from a Nov. 22, 1992, attack on a 21-year-old mother of two near Granite City, Ill.

KBI spokesman Kyle Smith said the bureau received a DNA sample from Belt on Jan. 17, 2002 — five months before Lucille Gallegos, 43, was found dead in Wichita. Belt was on probation at the time for a 1999 Reno County burglary and was required to submit the sample under a state law that went into effect last year.

However, that sample has yet to be analyzed by KBI.

Wichita police said they discovered a connection between Belt and several unsolved rapes when they ran his DNA information through the national Combined DNA Index System.

The FBI runs the national database so that federal, state and local crime labs can exchange DNA profiles electronically.

Smith would not comment on why the DNA sample at the KBI lab has yet to be analyzed, other than to say there's "a backlog."

That's because Belt's was one of thousands of DNA samples taken under the new state law, which requires anyone convicted of a felony to provide fingerprints and blood and saliva samples.

The law covered any convicted felons who were in jail or on probation at the time it took effect.

"There are just under 11,000 samples that have been profiled and 19,000 waiting," Smith said.



## Showers, maybe

**Thomas, Logan Counties**  
Tonight...Mostly cloudy with a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms. Lows near 50. Light southeast wind becoming north late. Chance of rain 20 percent. Thursday...Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Highs near 70. North wind 5 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 30 percent. Thursday night...Mostly cloudy. Lows near 50.

**By the numbers**  
Tuesday's high, 74  
Low this morning, 54  
Year ago today, 68 and 55  
Records for the date, 98 in 1958, 38 in 1916  
Soil temperature, 71  
Precipitation to 8 a.m. Monday, 0.15  
Precipitation to 8 a.m. Tuesday, 0.07  
Precipitation up to 8 a.m. today, 0.06  
June's precipitation to date, 0.28  
Year's precipitation to date, 6.63  
**Water Usage/Colby**  
June 2 = 2.066 million gallons  
June 3 = 2.127 million gallons



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Brad Philipps, a sales and technical support representative for Shelbourne Reynolds, unloaded a stripper header from a container that was shipped from the factory in Stanton, England. Containers are brought to the United States by boat then by train and truck the rest of the way to Colby.

## Strippers...

### *British firm's product catching on*

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

International strippers? In Colby?

Well, sort of.

When you hear people talking about the strippers in Colby, don't be fooled. They are not talking about a seedy after-dark club, but rather combine headers made by Shelbourne Reynolds Incorporated.

Neil Smith, business development manager, said the British-based company began selling the specialty headers in 1993 in this area after a hail storm had practically destroyed the wheat crop. The stripper header can be used to harvest hailed out crops better than a traditional header since it is lower to the ground and actually strips the grain from the stalk and leaves the straw intact, he said.

When some of the farmers were yielding five to 10 bushels per acre with other headers, the stripper headers had increased yields to 30 to 40 bushels per acre in some cases, he said.

Smith said as the company became more known in the Midwest and more farmers were using the stripper header, it was apparent that a local parts distributing center was needed. Enter: Colby.

"When people are harvesting, they are in a hurry," Smith said. "They aren't prepared to wait 24 hours for a part."

Some people may question

why Colby was selected to be the main distribution facility used by the parent company. Smith said the main reason Shelbourne chose Colby was a partnership with Western Sunflower Company.

The sunflower packing and distribution plant, which was located in Colby at the time, allowed Shelbourne to have containers shipped by railway into their facility and unloaded them in exchange for the empty containers to use to send out sunflowers.

The arrangement worked well for the two companies and allowed freight to be brought by boat from England and then into Colby by train. Now, since Western Sunflower no longer has a facility in Colby, the freight is shipped by train into either Kansas City or Denver and then brought by truck the rest of the way.

Although Smith said there were certain disadvantages about being located in Colby, such as the distance to an international airport, there is a higher importance placed on being at the doorstep of their customers.

"It is better for us to have to drive to Denver than for our customers to have to drive long distances to pick up a needed part," Smith said.

There are anywhere between 2,000 and 3,000 strippers being used in the United States, he said. All parts and headers are sold through one of their 80 dealers or seven distributors. Besides Colby,

distributors are located in Kentucky, Arkansas, California, Washington and Canada, although the Colby location is the only one owned by the parent company.

The parent company and factory is located in Stanton, England, a community of about 6,000. Being the largest employer in the community, the factory employs around 120. Nearly 75 percent of their product is exported and spread throughout 35 countries, 50 percent of that to the United States specifically for wheat crops.

Much of the success of Shelbourne has been in the harvesting of wheat. Since the stripper keeps the straw in place, it fits hand-in-hand with no-till farming practices, Smith said. With the straw left in the field, moisture is retained in the soil and wind has less damaging effects. Farmers are also left with the option to cut the straw for bales.

"So now, what started as disaster recovery in a hail damaged area, has turned into more effective conservation," Smith said.

Although a significant number of strippers are used on wheat, it is not the top crop being cut with the header — rice is number one. Strippers are also being used for flora, grass seed, chili peppers, wild flowers, peas and lentils.

For questions or information all (785) 462-6299.

## House, yard causing concern on W. Plum St.

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The abhorrent conditions at 440 W. Plum in Colby prompted two nearby neighbors to appear before the city council at its meeting Tuesday night and find out what can be done to correct the problem.

Jack Vagher and Dale Koenig both told the council that it's not just the problem of overgrown weeds and grass, but it's a fire and health hazard as well.

With the Fourth of July getting closer, time is of the essence with respect to the dry conditions, Vagher said.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, agreed with Vagher and Koenig, about the condition of the property and possible condemnation proceedings if the owner, Jay Epard, of Salina, does not begin cleaning up the area.

The city's attorney, Joel Kriss, told the council that a complaint and summons were issued to Epard earlier in the week, but Randy Jones, chief of police, is concerned about the time frame.

"There is iron, wood, pipe and other hazards in that yard," Jones said, "and my concern is that if he fails to appear it would slow the process for clean up."

Jones said unless something is done quickly, the problem would be extended even further with court delays.

One suggestion was to buy the real estate, clean it up and then sell it. Armstrong said she doesn't think the house is salvageable.

Jones queried that in the event Epard failed to appear, could a hearing be held without him and then go ahead and clean up the property with an order for restitution.

He said he is concerned about the process taking three to six months and the hazard it imposes on the neighbors, who want to see something done sooner.

"Couldn't we bypass the complaint and summons and go for a warrant?" Jones asked.

Kriss said that it would be up to the judge on issuing a warrant and with regard to the complaint, the city cannot hold a hearing or take action if Epard isn't here.

Ken Bieber, one of the councilman, said it seems that the city is seeing more and more of these types of property violations.

"We need to get something going on this," he said. "Maybe we could check on the taxes (for delinquency) and also send a certified letter about the property and that it has to pass inspection or the city will clean it and charge the costs back to the owner."

Whatever decision is reached on the legal-side of this issue, Armstrong said it might be a good idea to revisit the ordinance and make changes allowing the council more latitude when problems like this arise.

"There are only a handful of people that don't care about the property," she said.

As for the Epard residence, Armstrong said the city will begin looking for someone willing to clean up the area with proper equipment to move the larger items.

"There has to be something we are able to do about this," said Mayor Warren Hixson.

Kriss reiterated to the council that the complaint process has started and he will review the ordinance regarding the city taking action on their own.

The council overwhelmingly agreed that "something needs to happen" and this cannot continue.

The house has been vacant for almost two years, Jones said, and the city has notified the property owner to take care of the house and yard.

"The problem is just getting worse," he said.

## Annual wheat plot tour is next Tuesday

Mike Brown of Colby will again host the annual wheat plot tour, sponsored by Kansas State University. Producers and those involved in agriculture are encouraged to visit Brown's wheat plot, which is five miles south of Levant.

The tour will begin at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday at his shop on the east side of the road. Mattson Farms will

provide doughnuts and coffee.

The wheat plots will offer producers a chance to view the different varieties of wheat and how they fared in Thomas County, said Roger Stockton, crop and soil specialist at the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby.

Stockton will discuss the varieties.

## Park music to start Thursday

"Picnic in the Park" returns to Fike Park in Colby for another season, starting Thursday at noon. The popular musical noontime attraction will continue on Thursdays through July, said Jada Johnson, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

Local entertainment highlights

the hour-long gathering.

"All you need is your lunch and a lawn chair and we will take care of everything else," Johnson said.

"We are truly blessed with the amount of talent we have right here in our community," she said.

The series is sponsored by the Chamber, Convention and Visitors Bureau and *your* Colby Free Press.

### Prayer rally meeting set

Those interested in a "Prayer Rally for the Local Medical Community" are urged to attend an organizational meeting on Thursday at 6 p.m. in the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Questions to 462-3222.

### Flea market scheduled noted

Rexford PRIDE is sponsoring its Farmers/Flea Markets now through September. The events will be held on the first Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Booth cost for vendors is \$10 with a lunch stand provided by various community organizations. Questions to (785) 687-3925.

### 'Harvest for Health' tourney planned

The Citizens Foundation is sponsoring its 13th annual "Harvest for Health" golf tournament on Friday, June 20 at the Colby Country Club. Registration will be from 8-9 a.m. with tee time starting promptly at 9 a.m. The cost will include prizes, a light breakfast, lunch and hors d'oeuvres. 462-1214.

## Briefly

### Spring horse show Monday

Thomas County will host a spring horse show beginning at 9:30 a.m. on Monday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. The show will be open to anyone wanting to participate. Some of the entries include western pleasure, reining, poles, barrels, showmanship, equestrian, walking and trotting, officials at the Thomas County Extension office said. The show will be divided into three age classes: 7-9 year olds; 10-13 year olds; and 14 and older. The show is free of charge. Question to the Extension office at 462-4582.

### Rod Run/Heritage Daze near

The 10th annual Rod Run will be held the weekend of Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 13, 14 and 15 in Fike Park. In conjunction with rod run activities, Heritage Daze will also take place with food, craft vendors, antique tractors, children's activities, local entertainment and vintage cars. Questions to the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, 460-3401.

### Cemetery flowers need removal

The Colby Cemetery Board is reminding everyone that any flowers not in a permanent vase should be picked up by Monday, June 9, to allow grounds personnel to do mowing and trimming. Questions to Paul Baird, head caretaker, 462-3188.

### City offers swim lessons

The Colby Recreation Department is offering swim lessons with three different sessions available. All children must be five years or older to participate. The first session started today and will conclude on Thursday, June 12. The second session is from Monday, June 16, until Thursday, June 26, and the third session is from Monday, June 30 until Thursday, July 10. All sessions have start times of 8:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., or 10:30 a.m. Lessons will run Monday through Thursday, with Friday being a makeup day if there is rain. For questions or to register, call the Colby Recreation Department at (785) 462-4440.



