



COLBY FREE PRESS

Blast Off! NASA engineer talks at library event

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Patrons at Tuesday's "Booked for Lunch" at Pioneer Memorial Library got a view into humanity's future in space. Dr. Jack Bacon, an engineer at Johnson Space Center in Houston was the featured speaker.



Dr. J. Bacon

Bacon, who oversees space station integration, talked about the challenges and successes of NASA's exploration program.

Bacon started out with a slide of Stonehenge and said humanity hasn't changed since the standing circle was built 5,000 years ago. The outward appearance is the same, and so are peoples' brains, which he said are about the size of a grapefruit yet are capable of holding more than 100 trillion bytes of information.

He also showed a slide of his grandfather who was one of the founding members of the NACA (National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics), NASA's precursor. The changes the administration have gone through have echoed the changes in society. "Life has traditionally gotten better and better," Bacon said.

He's written two books on tracking generational change and said the changes in technology and society since have been "amazing progress" from the start of the administration during his grandfather's time, to Sputnik in his father's time and the International Space State in his own.

Space was his own dream growing up.

"It's amazing children's dreams can come true," Bacon said.

He showed a picture of the lunch box he had as a child, which had

rockets and a space scene, and it also had a Russian cosmonaut doll sitting on top. Bacon said the doll belonged to a Russian friend who wanted to go into space who now works for the Russian space agency along with his daughter.

He said the space race between the two Cold War rivals "leveled playing fields and politics."

Now the two countries, along with a host of others are collaborating on the first long-term human habitation in space.

"The space station is by far the largest thing ever conceived for orbit," Bacon said.

When completed, the International Space Station will be 21 stories long and 17 stories high vertically, covering the area of a football field with the volume of a 747 jumbo jet.

Bacon's job is station system integration, or making sure the foreign technologies that link the station together all work in harmony, including the Russian and western technology.

Japan, China, Canada, Germany, France, England and Brazil are also involved in the project.

He said the station is working because of all the efforts on the ground. The endeavor has entailed technical challenges but they've worked through those and dealing with different languages, cultures and time zones.

During the grounding of the shuttle fleet, cooperation became even more necessary. He said the station is being put up in parts and they've been launched from spaceports in Russia, Japan and Brazil.

Bacon said working on the station program has challenged everything he learned in school but he wouldn't trade it for anything.

"What we're about to offer the world is the conquer of the last force of nature," he said, adding it will change everything, just as the discovery of the new world and west-

ern expansion did.

Exploring space has lead to breakthroughs in many fields, events that never would have happened if people hadn't left the planet.

A human presence in space is also ideal for science. Bacon said everything acts differently in space — heat, chemistry, electricity. Structures change and even the human body responds differently in zero gravity than it does on earth.

He said the immune system becomes weaker, which is what happens when people age on Earth, which makes space the perfect environment to study gerontology. Zero gravity even affects microbes. Bacon said they get more virulent, which is an interesting way to study cancer and other diseases.

He also briefly addressed NASA's other endeavors, including its use of unmanned probes to explore the solar system and the shuttle program.

Bacon said the probes have yielded "dazzlingly unexpected results," such as the Cassini-Huygens probe that landed on Saturn's moon Titan several weeks ago. The information already received shows the moon has liquid lakes and clouds. He said the robots are getting smaller and the program has been very successful.

On the space shuttle, he said a launch is scheduled for May 15, the first such launch since the Columbia incident Feb. 1, 2003.

He said he knew four of that crew very well and said they knew the risk they were taking and the space program isn't without risk, although it's an issue of national pride to have a perfect record.

"We have to risk human lives in order to go," Bacon said, adding robots can't do what people do.

Such missions, he said, are getting the stage set for a manned mission to Mars, colonization and further exploration.

A new season



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sacred Heart Catholic School first grader Andrew Voss received ashes from Father Dana Clark during services at the church this morning in observance of Ash Wednesday. All of the students and others were anointed with ash to mark the beginning of the Lent season.

Colby doctor's hearing date moved

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A hearing for the Colby doctor being investigated by the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts has been rescheduled due to conflicts with his attorney's schedule.

A spokesman for the Board of Healing Arts said Tuesday afternoon the hearing scheduled for Dr. Victor Hildyard has been moved to this summer because the doctor's attorney is in session with the Kansas Legislature.

Michael R. O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, represents the 104th District in the Kansas House of

Representatives and his schedule in Topeka conflicted with an April hearing date.

Originally scheduled last October, Hildyard's hearing before the Board of Healing Arts was to begin April 11, and expected to last eight days.

The hearing is now set to begin at 9 a.m. on June 22, and will run through June 24. It will reconvene on June 27, and wind up on July 1.

A petition filed in August by Stacy L. Cook and Diane L. Beliquist, both of Topeka and representing the Board of Healing Arts, charges Hildyard with 12 violations

against the Kansas Healing Arts Act alleged to have taken place between 1996 and 2003.

All 12 counts allege the doctor committed acts which are inclusive "but not limited to professional incompetency and or unprofessional conduct."

The Board could revoke, suspend, censure, fine or otherwise limit Hildyard's medical license.

O'Neal said at the time the petition was filed, the doctor plans to "fight every one of the claims."

The hearing will take place at the Board of Healing Arts building at 235 SW Topeka Blvd. in Topeka.

Economic development group to work on sales tax, abatement policies

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

The Thomas County Economic Development Alliance is in the process of developing a policy prior to the city sales tax going into effect on Friday, April 1, said Carolyn Armstrong, Colby city manager.

In clarifying an article regarding the tax abatement policy, Armstrong said that in addition to creating a policy for the sales tax, the county's economic development alliance will also be charged with suggesting requirements on tax abatements.

The sales tax policy and the tax abate-

ment policy are two separate issues, Armstrong said, and both are going to be developed by the alliance.

Once the economic development alliance comes up with a suggested tax abatement policy, the city will review it and vote on its passage.

However, there are two city councilmen, Ken Bieber and Eugene Wieland, who will offer input and sit in on the alliance board discussions regarding the tax abatement policy, she said.

Regarding the quarter-cent sales tax policy, Armstrong said the city will wait for

the county's suggested policy.

There are many questions that will need to be answered as the sales tax policy is developed, she said. For example, who can apply for economic development funds from the sales tax; will other cities within Thomas County be eligible, and what level of assistance will be granted?

These are only a few questions that the board will need to consider when putting the sales tax policy in place, which is strictly for economic development.

As for collecting the tax, Armstrong said, only businesses within the corporate lim-

its of the city will be affected.

There are five people on the economic development board who will be reviewing not only the tax abatement policy, but the sales tax policy as well.

Those include two city representatives: Junelle Hills, chair, and Larry Barrett; along with three county representative: Paul Steele, and Larry McDonald. Mike Baughn, sheriff, resigned from the alliance earlier this week. Baughn told the commissioners he didn't believe he could give enough time to the alliance after being elected sheriff. A replacement for Baughn

has yet to be named.

"The city does not envision granting any money for economic development from the tax for several months," Armstrong said today.

"That fund will need to be built first." One goal of using the sales tax money that has been discussed could be in doing something with a major impact for the people of Thomas County.

Although the county is developing the sales tax policy, Armstrong said that the city will have the ultimate authority in approving or disapproving applications for money.

Briefly

Fair board to meet

The Thomas County fair board will meet at 8 p.m., Thursday at the 4-H Building on the fairgrounds. The meeting is open to the public.

Library plans book sale Saturday

Pioneer Memorial Library is having its "Lover's Day Book Sale," Saturday from 9:15 a.m. to 3 p.m. The sale will be held in the basement of the library, 375 W. 4th, Colby. For questions, call 460-4470.

Sorority to hold soup supper Friday

Kappa Upsilon, a local sorority, is sponsoring a soup supper on Friday from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Colby Community Building when Colby takes on Quinter in basketball action. The menu will include chili, chicken noodle, and vegetable soups, along with cinnamon rolls, cookies and drinks. The cost is free-will donation with proceeds going to benefit PuddleDuck Pre-School. For questions, call Lana Johnson, 462-3727.

Free income tax help available

For those retired and over 60 or with people with low-income, a special free service is available for filling out 1040s or uncomplicated income tax paperwork. Anyone who would like assistance on their 2004 Income Tax is asked to bring all W-2 information and other related documents to Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, Colby from 1 to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays only, said Alvin Volk, assisting with preparations. This service will be provided every Wednesday through April 15. For questions or other general information, call Volk at 460-2645.

Conservation District reservations due

The Thomas County Conservation District will have its annual meet-

ing and awards banquet on Tuesday, Feb. 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the 4-H Building. There is no charge to the event; however, reservations must be in no later than Friday, said Lynette Koon, conservation district spokesperson. The agenda includes a meal, which is sponsored by the county banks, election of two district supervisors, presentation of conservation honors, posters and environmental teaching awards. For reservations, 462-7482.

Rotary holding soup supper

The Colby Rotary Club will hold its soup supper from 5-7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 15, at the Colby Community Building during the Colby-Goodland basketball game. Chili and potato soup will be served.

Tsunami fund raiser Saturday

The Colby Council #2647 of the Knights of Columbus will held a "Tsunami Victims Pancake Feed" on Saturday, Feb. 12 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the basement of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1065 W. 5th. The feed is open to the public with a free-will offering being accepted. Proceeds will be directed to the Catholic Relief Services to provide food, shelter and medical care in those areas most affected by the tragedy. The Knights of Columbus will be assisted by the Catholic Youth Organization.

Scouts to ship cookies overseas

Colby Girl Scout Troop 162 will be shipping cookies overseas to Colby-area servicemembers fighting the war against terrorism, said Jan Barnum, troop leader. In addition to the "Troop-to-the-Troops" drive, scouts in Troop 162 will also be taking orders from Colby residents as well. The troop will be responsible for sending the boxes of cookies overseas. Although Barnum said she has a few names of local servicemen stationed in Iraq and Kuwait, if someone knows of any other military members or would like to order cookies to be shipped, she asks that they call her at (785) 462-6503.

Colby
Hoxie
Oakley



Warmer weather returning

Tonight...Clear. Lows around 13. West winds 5 to 15 mph.
Thursday...Sunny. Highs in the lower 40s. Southwest winds 5 to 10 mph.
Thursday night...Increasing clouds. Lows around 20. West winds 5 to 10 mph.
Friday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. Southwest winds 5 to 15 mph.
Saturday...Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of rain. Highs in the upper 40s.

The numbers

Tuesday's high, (not available)
Low this morning, (not available)
Year ago today, 42 and 29
Records for this date, 71 in 1954 and -22 in 1933
Precipitation past 48 hours to 8 a.m. (not available)
Soil temperature, 32

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

