



COLBY FREE PRESS

From Hoxie to Iraq

Grandfather helps grandson with equipment needs

By JAN KATZ ACKERMAN
Colby Free Press

HOXIE — When a Hoxie man's grandson needed communication equipment for a job in Iraq, he spearheaded a project to send him what he needed.

Harm Briery received an e-mail from his grandson, Sergeant First Class Jim Briery, who requested used parts to complete installation of a communication and television system to over 40 tents and offices.

SFC Briery works full-time as a section chief with the 891st Engineer Combat Battalion, Kansas Army National Guard, Topeka.

He was deployed to Iraq in January, and was second in command setting up a variety of telecommunication equipment, including tactical satellite phones, global positioning systems and computer and television network systems.

About half way through installing hardware to provide troops with American Forces Network television, SFC Briery learned he didn't have enough parts to complete the job.

Fortunately, his Grandpa Harm had co-owned Hoxie Cable TV during the 1980s, and SFC Briery e-mailed his grandpa asking if he had any used parts he could send him.

"Jim thought if I could send him stuff he could get the system up and running faster than if he'd requisitioned it from the Army. His Grandma Cleo (Briery) emailed him back and asked what to send," Harm said.

Harm Briery and his then partner, Rick Leiker, sold Hoxie Cable TV, to Hays Cable TV in 1990.

The company became Eagle Communications, and Briery assists Leroy Flax, a service technician, keeping the system in Hoxie maintained.

"Jim had seen used equipment in Hoxie Cable's back room and he asked if we could send him some used equipment to get the satellite TV, telephone and Internet up faster than through Army channels.

"Leroy Flax comes to Hoxie every Wednesday and when he saw Jim's request he said Eagle (Communications) would be glad to send new stuff.

"We were limited by the post office by size and weight, and to what we could send, but we sent a field strength meter, a modulator, splitters, a 16-post active combiner, phone cords, and connections," Harm said.

Flax said public support of Eagle Communications' gift to the battalion has been positive.

"I even had a guy stop me on the street and thank me for helping Harm send the supplies to Iraq," he said.

Harm Briery, a veteran of World War II, said his grandson is fighting a very different war than he had to fight.

"One thing that's different is in my day, the enemy wore a uniform. Over in Iraq, Jim said the military wears civilian clothes and mingles with the public.

It's hard to define the enemy now days," he said.

Briery said his grandson received the package about two weeks after

it was shipped and he's been very appreciative of his grandparents' and the company's help.

"Jim said Eagle Communications couldn't have done a better job putting the package together if (the battalion) itself had placed the order," Briery said.

Harm Briery (photo below) checks over equipment parts his grandson, Sgt. First Class Jim Briery requested to complete a project in Iraq. Briery, along with the assistance of Eagle Communications, Hays, shipped the parts to the battalion. Sgt. Briery (right photo) along with a fellow soldier, install the equipment. They are members of the Kansas Army National Guard's 891st Engineer Combat Battalion which ran out of parts to complete a communication network.

JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press



Broken water main closes health department for two days

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners found out one of the county departments would probably be closed for a couple of days at its Monday meeting.

Juanita Dewey, administrator at the Thomas County Health Department, came to ask the commissioners for permission to close the office because of a broken city water main at the Thomas County Office Complex.

She said without water, they can't provide their normal services.

"There's no water in the whole building," Dewey said. "I don't know how I can function there without water. It's a real inconvenience for the whole building."

She hoped the main would be fixed

sometime Tuesday so the office could reopen on Wednesday morning but told people to call ahead at 460-4596 to make sure they are open.

Other offices, such as the American Red Cross, Thomas County Extension and Thomas County Economic Development Alliance, planned to stay open despite the lack of water.

The commissioners also heard a budget request.

Jon Starns and Lynette Koon with the Thomas County Conservation District were at the meeting to make a budget re-

quest.

Last year, they received \$38,000 from the county and asked for \$55,000 for 2006, an increase of \$17,000.

"We don't feel like we're asking for anything that isn't necessary," Starns said.

He said they have upcoming programs that will bring in money, adding they're busy now but will get busier as the year goes on, and all the programs are for the benefit of the county.

Old equipment needs replacing, like computers, and Starns would also like to buy a new grass drill used in conservation programs.

The one they have now is nearly 20-years-old and could use replacing.

"We're getting a lot of use out of them," Starns said.

Chairman Ron Evans told them he and his fellow commissioners would do what they could to fulfill the request.

"We'll do the best we can," Evans said. "We're going to have to see where we are."

He also said they're doing a good job.

"You're doing good things for the county and the citizens of Thomas County," Evans said. "The work you're doing is admirable."

The commissioners also approved switching insurance companies.

"We are going to go with, on the recommendation of our employee committee, Blue Cross/Blue Shield," Evans said. As of Aug. 1, the county will no longer receive its insurance benefits from Central Benefits.

The Blue Cross/Blue Shield proposal

was \$223,502.40 and Central Benefits was \$223,863.20.

Sandy Swob, household and hazardous waste manager, told the commissioners the garage door at the building where waste is stored is sticking.

Evans told her to look into getting it fixed.

She also asked about taking part in the Kids for Safety event in Sept. 28. Swob said she would at least like to have brochures to hand out and possibly some coloring pages also.

The commissioners also went into executive session for 15 minutes with county road department supervisor Clair Schrock to discuss personnel issues in his department. No action was taken when they came back into open session.



J. Starns

Menlo address issue worked out

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Residents in Menlo finally have the right addresses. The Thomas County commissioners found out that Menlo City Clerk Sharon Munk has taken the necessary steps to straighten out the problem.

Munk said in June, 2004, the city voted to fix the problem because the town was numbered backwards. That, she said, originally happened in 1996. In November of last year, she worked with S&T Communications and then-County Clerk Tracey Perkins to rectify the problem. Now, she said, the county's Emer-

gency Medical Services have the correct addresses and map.

Chairman Ron Evans wanted to know if she was comfortable with the situation now. She also handed out an information packet containing the right addresses to show that the situation had been righted. Munk added S&T was also checking to make sure numbers match houses and out of all the residents in Menlo, only three were still wrong, but that was also being taken care of. She said she was "thorough" when tackling the issue.

"The issue came to a head at the Tuesday, July 5 commissioners

meeting when County Emergency Management Director Jim Engel told the group Menlo was addressed wrong. Engel said it could be a liability for the county if first responders went to the wrong address on a call.

Munk called the Kansas League of Municipalities and found out an ordinance isn't needed to change the addresses. Engel said he was only trying to find out how far his authority extends. Evans told them to work together to finish sorting everything out.

"We're all in this together," he said. "We don't want to interfere."

Colby man pleads not guilty to drugs

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A Colby man is faced an arraignment today stemming from charges in an April incident.

Dale A. Quast, of Colby, was scheduled for an arraignment today in Thomas County District Court. County Attorney Andrea Wyrick said Quast entered a plea this morning of not guilty to the seven charges against him.

On April 1 of this year, Quast and

Jeremy Palmer were arrested after a high speed chase down Franklin.

Quast was charged with possession of methamphetamine with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a school; sale of methamphetamine; conspiracy to commit sale of stimulant; possession of a hallucinogenic drug; possession of drug paraphernalia with intent to sell or distribute; no drug tax stamp; possession of drug paraphernalia and fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer.

Palmer was charged with possession of stimulant with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a school; sale of a stimulant drug (methamphetamine); conspiracy to commit sale of stimulant; possession of drug paraphernalia with intent to sell or distribute; no drug tax stamp; possession of drug paraphernalia; fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer. Wyrick said the next step in the case will be a jury trial for Quast.

Moving day



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Barbara Highland, human service assistant with the Colby Social and Rehabilitation Services office, packed up for the office's move last week. The office was relocated to the new state building on South Country Club Drive during their move yesterday and today. They will reopen in their new location Thursday.

