



COLBY FREE PRESS

Reunion draws hundreds back to school event

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Eagle spirit was flying high this weekend with the ninth annual Colby All-School Reunion.

Sharon Bieker, one of the organizers, said more than 1,100 people were registered for the reunion, but there were many more people than that in town, considering many brought their spouses and families. She said attendance was good and the reunion committee received many compliments about the reunion and barbecue.

"We thought it was a success," Bieker said. "The weather was perfect."

Though the next reunion isn't for five years, she said the committee will meet in a few weeks to go over what went well and start thinking about ideas for the next event planned for 2010.

One of the biggest events over the weekend was a general assembly at the Colby Community Building on Saturday.

Charley Wasson of the Colby High School class of 1989 was the master of ceremonies.

He also did Colby trivia with Elvis the Eagle.

He also read a top five list of "You

Know You're From Colby When..."

Veterans were recognized, along with Colby grads who stayed in the community.

Ron Evans talked about the Den-nen Field project to improve the stadium at the field.

Tracy Rogers of the alumni association thanked all of the committee members who helped make the reunion possible and worked to make it happen.

They included Bieker, Meredith Molstad, Sue Taylor, Bernice Skiles, Joey and Jill Nickols, Jackie Helus, Lon Frahm, Sue Evans, Amanda Wahlmeier, Wynn Duffey, Amy Jennings, Denise Schief-erecke and Alana Tubbs.

"These people are the ones who did all the work," Rogers said.

New officers were also elected, including Wahlmeier, president; Jada Tubbs, vice president; Joey Nickols, secretary and Duffey, secretary.

Rogers also presented the "Spirit of the Eagle" award to Ruth and Ray Kersenbrock, for their dedication and support of Colby High School athletics.

The assembly was followed by a barbecue at Fike Park and a basketball game.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

More than 2,000 people attended the ninth annual Colby High School All-School Reunion. During the general assembly (above) alumni and visitors were on their feet singing the school song, "Blue

Skies," along with the Eagle Feather Choir Saturday at the Colby Community Building. The assembly was followed by a barbecue at Fike Park and a basketball game.

Rape trial remains 'up in the air' as to when it will happen

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

The trial of a local rape case dating back to 1993 is up in the air as to when it will take place.

"I don't know anything about the case," Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick said Friday

The case in question involves Douglas S. Belt, 44, also referred to as the Interstate 70 rapist.

Belt was convicted last year for the murder, decapitation and mutilation of internal female organs of Lucille Gallegos, 43, of Wichita. Evidence collected at the murder scene connected Belt to seven rapes across the state.

The Colby rape dates back to March 1993, when a 20-year-old woman was raped at the Sunflower apartment complex on South Franklin Avenue.

Authorities in Thomas, Saline, McPherson and Reno Counties collected DNA samples at the time several sexual assaults occurred between 1989 and 1994, and it was those samples which linked Belt to the rapes.

When Belt was charged with

murder last year, the rape cases were on file in those four counties as the State of Kansas versus John Doe.

After Belt was connected to the one rape in Thomas County, another in Reno County, two rapes in Saline County and three rapes in McPherson County, the cases were refiled substituting his name for John Doe. The first rape cases headed to court in Reno County on Thursday with a preliminary hearing. Friday afternoon. Wyrick said she had learned her predecessor, Allen Taylor, failed to consult with her about the case before leaving office.

She said she would be contacting the Attorney General's office to determine the status of the case.

Wyrick said after learning about the Thomas County rape case from members of the media, her initial review of the case which is filed in the local clerk of the district court office has documentation indicating that John Bork of the Attorney General's Office would be prosecuting the case.

Jan Lundsford, public informa-

tion officer for the Attorney General's office, said although Bork is listed as prosecutor, it's not certain which attorney will prosecute the case.

Since the death penalty was reinstated in Kansas in 1994, seven men have received death sentences for capital murder cases.

Besides Belt's case, there are three other death penalty cases pending in Bourbon, Montgomery and Wyandotte Counties.

The death penalty convictions in these three cases are in question since the Kansas Supreme Court is looking at the constitutionality of the sentencing procedure.

Kansas Death Penalty History: 1859: Kansas Territorial Legislature passed a death penalty law. Hanging was the method of execution.

1907: Gov. Hoch signed abolition legislation.

1931: Gov. Woodring vetoed reinstatement legislation.

1935: Gov. Landon signed reinstatement legislation.

1972: Furman decision ended Kansas death penalty.

KBI makes mistake in case

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A Thomas County rape case was long in the making because of a mistake by Kansas Bureau of Investigation officials.

A 2002 change in state law required Douglas S. Belt, 44, on probation at the time for a 1999 Reno County burglary, to submit a sample of his DNA to the state. That sample sat unanalyzed in a Kansas Bureau of Investigation lab since Jan. 17, 2002.

But 16-months after it was filed. Belt was connected to a Thomas County rape, another in another in Reno County, two rapes in Saline County and three rapes in McPherson County.

Belt, charged with raping a 20-

year-old Colby woman at an apartment complex in March 1993, was on trial in Sedgwick County and had pleaded no contest to a robbery that took place in November 2002. Evidence from the murder case linked Belt to the rapes, but a 16-month delay was created by mistaken identity.

Welch said a blood sample collected during a rape investigation more than 12 years ago had been mistakenly identified as having belonged to Belt, drawing rape investigations away from his true identity.

"The tragic result of this simple mistake is that the investigation in a number of rape cases moved away from Mr. Belt. The review has shown that this was simply a case

of human error.

Even the best people aren't perfect," Welch said at the time. He said it was also tragic Belt had not been identified earlier, leaving him on the streets to commit Gallegos' murder.

Belt's DNA sample collected at Wichita crime scenes linked him to the rapes in the four counties, including the one in Thomas County. Reno County's case against Belt started on Thursday, and motions in the case in McPherson County are due to be filed by Oct. 4.

A spokesman from the Saline County Attorney office on Friday said no information about the Saline County case was available.

without her signature.

July 1, 1994 to Jan. 1, 2004:

Over 80 potential capital cases

Over 50 capital cases in 18 coun-

ties 15 Capital trials, 7 men received death sentence, 8 men received prison terms. - Source: 2004 Kansas Death Penalty Guide

Donors raise money for BTK relatives

WICHITA, Kan. (AP)—Donors will help pay for relatives of the BTK serial killer's victims to attend this sentencing, but organizers of the fund worry they might not have enough to cover all the expenses.

"We've had pretty good success, but it's going to go real fast," said Kelli Cochran, an architectural firm worker who started the fund in early July.

"We're running out of time."

So far, Cochran said, donors have raised about \$4,000 for travel and lodging expenses and several restaurants have offered discounted meals—for which other businesses have offered to pay.

The sentencing hearing for Dennis Rader, a former code enforcement officer from the Wichita suburb of Park City, is scheduled to start Wednesday in Sedgwick County District Court.

The process is expected to last three days.

Rader pleaded guilty in June to killing 10 people in and around Wichita from 1974 to 1991.

His nickname, which he gave himself, stands for "Bind, Torture, Kill."

At least 10 relatives of the victims are expected to travel to Wichita for the sentencing.

If there is any money left over from the fund, it will be evenly distributed among those family members to help offset lost income.

Cochran, a former police employee who has lived in Wichita since she was 13, said she established the fund because she recalled the fear BTK struck into the city's residents—especially women.

She said several donors have included notes of support for relatives of Rader's victims.

However, District Attorney Nola Foulston's office has asked her to hold those letters until after he is sentenced.

Reminiscing



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Mary Jo Boye and Sharon Steele, both of the Colby High School class of 1953 talked to other alumni Friday at Colby Country Club. Steele also had a party at her home for alumni.

Colby City Council to consider building

By Patty Decker

Colby Free Press

The Colby City Council will consider approving a cold storage building when it meets at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers for the regular meeting.

Two bids were received on the proposed public works building and will be discussed at the meeting, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

In addition to the bid, the council will be reviewing and talking about a proposed heavy commercial district zoning regulation.

Armstrong said the planning

commission has been working on this for many months to create a new commercial district that would allow minimal amounts of manufacturing and finishing in a commercial zone rather than just in the light industrial zone.

The council could add its input to what the commission has developed for that heavy commercial district.

For a copy of the agenda or questions, stop by city hall, 585 N. Franklin Ave. or call 460-4410.

All meetings are open to the public and everyone is encouraged to attend.

Alumni photo album
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