



After the games, coach still an influence

By John Van Nostrand
Free Press Publisher

Longtime Colby High coach Tom Bowen said he liked his hook shot when he played basketball for the first ever team at Colby Community College in the 1960s.

Bowen was hooked on basketball. Over the years, he hooked others on it too.

After coaching high school basketball, and other sports, for 43 years, Bowen walked off the court for the last time Monday. Since 1997 he has been an assistant coach for Colby High boy's team. Bowen wanted to wait for the right time to retire from the games.

"This is my wife's last year at Colby schools too," Bowen said.

Mary Bowen teaches fifth grade. Tom, 61, retired from teaching physical education in 2001. They are planning to move to Wichita to be closer to their children and grandchildren.

Tom said the relationships built and sustained while coaching meant more to him than the Xs, Os and trophies.

"Wins and losses come and go," he said. "But it is the types of relationships you have. That is what has been good. Years later you still have those relationships and they are still good."

Opening tip

Bowen started played basketball in middle school and after graduating from Norton High School in 1963, he played on the first Colby

Trojans men's basketball team.

"Most of us were not very big," he said about that team. "We were munchkins compared to the teams we played."

After two years in Colby, he transferred to Fort Hays State University. In 1969, Trojans coach Ray Haltom told Bowen Weskan was looking for a teacher and coach. Bowen interviewed for the job and took their offer.

That would be the first step in a series of schools, scores, students and swishes.

"I always wanted to be in basketball, even after playing at Colby," Bowen said. "I just got more into it."

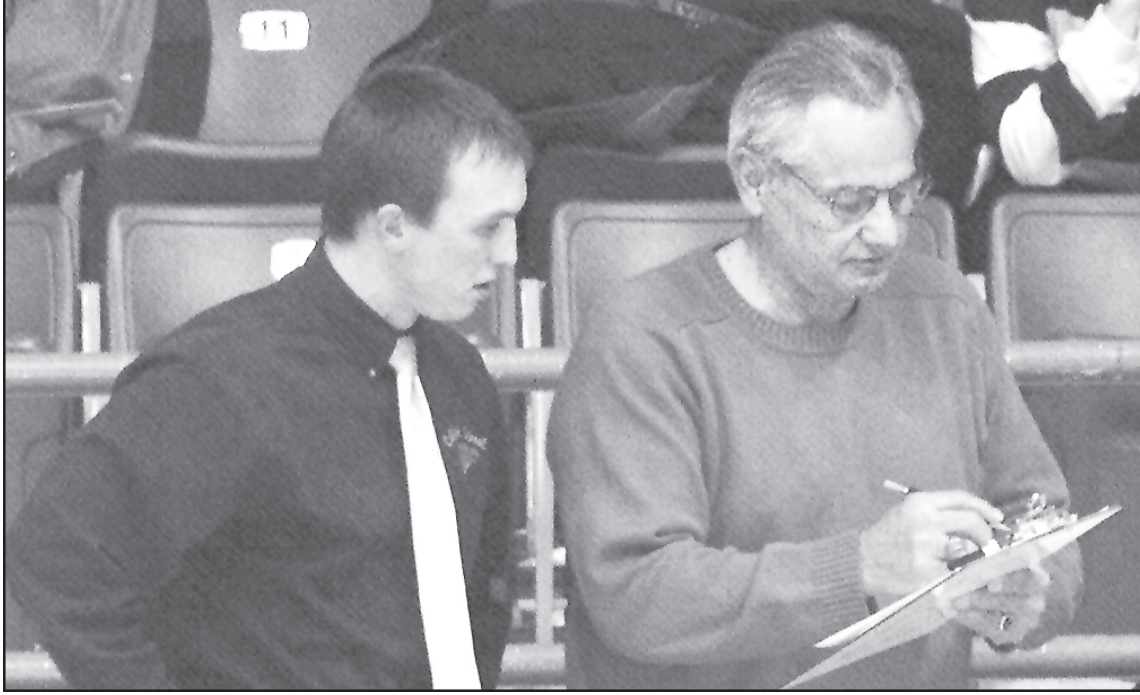
Bowen was at Weskan for one year. He was at Ellis from 1970 to 1981. Eight of those years he was head coach.

He led Colby High's boys teams from 1981 through 1990 and then went to Colby Community College as an assistant for the men's team for seven seasons. After Colby college, he returned to Colby High School as an assistant coach for the boy's team. No matter where he was at, he said he was the same coach.

"I know I have a pretty demanding demeanor," he said.

Bowen said he wanted his players to learn and understand dedication, hard work and commitment through basketball. Those traits came through enough as he helped Ellis and Colby teams reach the state tournament, including Colby's state title in 1999.

He still analyzes some of those



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press
Colby High boy's basketball assistant coach Tom Bowen, right, wrote notes with head coach Beau Sheets during Monday's substate game against Ulysses. Colby lost the game and was the last game for Bowen on the sidelines. He retired from coaching.

games.

"I still look at those tapes every once in a while," he said. "You always think about what would have happened if this or that would have happened."

Because what Bowen did for some of his players, they have not forgot him or what he did.

"I sometimes get letters from past players and I appreciate that," he said. "It's emotional. You always remember."

Bowen said discipline with his

players then has turned into friendships.

"I always enjoy meeting with the former players. It's always a hug. It's like family, chemistry."

One of Bowen's former players used Bowen's influence to eventually become a basketball coach. Mike Rohn, a 1985 graduate of Colby High, is in his seventh year as an assistant coach of Wichita State University's men's basketball team.

"He was great," Rohn said. "He

was passionate about coaching. He made us work hard."

Rohn, 40, remembers a game in the state tournament his junior year. He was called for traveling twice and Bowen pulled him out of the game.

"I didn't travel. I had my pivot foot down," Rohn said he told Bowen on the bench.

"Then he said, 'Did the ref call traveling? Then it's traveling,'" Rohn said of Bowen's response. "He let me know he was right and I

was wrong."

Rohn said those moments were lessons in respecting the coach. Rohn said what Bowen did for him helped him get into coaching after playing basketball at Dodge City Community College and McPherson College.

"Sports has always been a part of my life. He was influential and helped me open doors," he said.

Chad Wintz, who played for Bowen at Colby High in the early 1980s, remembers those tense moments too.

"Bowen was intense, passionate. He has always been that way whether coaching or with anything else he did," he said. "I was not intimidated by him. His whole motive was to get the best out of players."

After high school and Kansas University, Wintz, 41, went on to coach basketball at different levels for 20 years.

"When you coach, you call upon your own past experiences. Bowen was one of them for me. I used one of his drills from high school."

Wintz resigned from coaching at Hutchinson Community College a year ago to have more time with his young children.

Then and now

Current Colby High boys basketball coach Beau Sheets, 27, said he had to watch his words during practice. Bowen was his assistant this past season, but they go back longer than that.

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Weather Service offers classes

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

This winter's snowstorms, blizzards and other severe weather conditions might be enough to entice people to learn what to look for in the sky.

A storm spotter course will be held 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Colby Community Building. Those interested in taking the class will learn severe storm safety, thunderstorm development and evolution, clouds and their meaning, severe weather events and reporting procedures.

"Spotter classes are free and open to anyone with an interest in High Plains severe weather," said David Floyd, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service Office in Goodland.

"Storm spotters play a vital role during severe weather events," he said, "and spotters prove the ground truth that complements information displayed on Doppler radar."

The combination of storm spotters and radar are the two components needed in the storm warning decision-making process.

During April, Floyd said two advanced spotter classes are scheduled. One is in Oberlin and the other in Cheyenne Wells, Colo.

"These classes will be open to anyone who has attended a basic spotter class within the past three years and will go in more depth about storm types, evolution and movement," he said.

Floyd said the classes are part of the Spring Severe Weather Awareness Weeks during March and April. Those weeks raise awareness as to the seriousness of being prepared and knowing what to do in times of inclement weather.

In Kansas, weather awareness week is March 12-16. A tornado drill will be held 1:30 p.m. March 13.

"There is no age limit or special qualifications to become a spotter," Floyd said.

For more information, call (785) 899-6412 or e-mail: david.l.floyd@noaa.gov

Three's not a crowd



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Puddle Duck Preschool students Emma Maier, Kylie Kogler and Piper Koerperich got ready to take a spin on a tire swing during recess today. Teacher Amy Jennings said Thursday was the first day students were outside for recess since mid-December.

Western Kansas to lose longtime publishing group

SPEARVILLE (AP) — Thirty years after its founding in this southwest Kansas town, Feist Publications will close its production plant here as part of a consolidation by its New York-based parent company.

A representative of Yellow Book USA, which bought Feist in 2004, broke the news Thursday to the 60 employees.

The plant — Spearville's largest employer — will close at the end of July and production will move to Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Tom and Robert Feist established the company in 1977 in the living room of their home in Spearville, a town of about 800 people located northeast of Dodge City in Ford County.

The mom-and-pop business grew into the nation's fifth-largest independent publisher of telephone directories. At the time of its acquisition by Uniondale, N.Y.-based Yellow Book USA, Feist was publishing directories with a circulation of 4 million in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Texas.

Employees were stunned by Thursday's announcement, many breaking down in tears. Some noted that the Spearville plant had just recently expanded as all of Feist's production was transferred to the town from Wichita.

Tom Feist could not be located for comment Thursday.

But his brother, Spearville banker James Feist, said the closing "will

“I remember Tom working out of his bedroom in the early days.”

James Feist,
Spearville banker

have a drastic effect on the town."

John Hartz, a spokesman for Yellow Book USA, said all affected workers would receive severance packages. Those who worked for Feist before the Yellow Book acquisition will be paid into 2008, he said.

Yellow Book is encouraging Feist employees to relocate or apply for positions elsewhere in the company, Hartz said.

A personalized letter of recommendation will be provided to each Feist employee, and Yellow Book will work with local employment agencies and governmental agencies to prepare the employees for future employment, Hartz said.

James Feist said the Spearville company truly had been a home-grown operation.

"I remember Tom working out of his bedroom in the early days of the company," he said. "His son, Jay, was a high school kid when the company began, and he became an officer of Feist and worked there for several years. All of Tom's six children helped out, but they all are gone from Spearville now."

Leavenworth residents voice concerns on lab

LEAVENWORTH (AP) — While Sen. Pat Roberts is encouraging state support to attract a \$451 million National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility to Kansas, residents near one of the proposed sites say nobody is giving them any cause to support the project.

Dozens of Leavenworth County residents voiced concerns over the biodefense lab Wednesday at a public meeting. A 178-acre plot of rural, private land is among two sites

in Kansas under consideration. The other is in Manhattan.

"Nobody came around and mentioned that this was under consideration," said Matt Broadus, who lives near the Leavenworth site. "I don't know what you're asking for. I assume you're going to build a building? You've given me no reason, not one specific reason, to support it."

A handful of leaders responded to the concerns by discussing the economic

benefits of attracting the facility. They estimate it would generate 1,500 construction jobs, 250 to 500 scientific jobs, and \$3.5 billion dollars over 20 years.

Eighteen sites in 12 states are competing for the lab, which the Department of Homeland Security is building to replace an existing Plum Island, N.Y., facility.

Kansas officials believe a large number of agriculture research and development programs, including

work at Kansas State University, gives the state an advantage in luring the lab.

"I think this is clearly a seminal opportunity for the state of Kansas and specifically Leavenworth County," said Rep. Kenny Wilk, R-Lansing. Kansas has already formed the Bioscience Authority to help attract and develop agricultural and biological research and industries in the state. Three separate bills related to the project are

making their way through the House, including one that would transfer land at Kansas State to the federal government.

But in Leavenworth County, some residents said the use of private land rather than acreage on the Army's Fort Leavenworth doesn't make sense. "The fort has plenty of land," resident Don Magee said. "Hundreds and hundreds of acres all around the fort are vacant. Put it on their land."