



12 pages

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## Thieves take safe, jewelry during break in

By Andy Heintz

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Sheriff's investigators say they are looking for two men believed to have broken into Bill Olsen's property at 3035 N. Range on Monday, making off with a safe containing thousands of dollars worth of jewelry and personal items.

Thomas County Sheriff Rodney Taylor said the break in apparently happened between 8 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. He said officers now believe two white men were involved, one of whom was seen driving a dark-colored Toyota Tundra pickup. One is about 6 foot, 3 inches and weighs between 250 and 300 pounds.

Friday, Olsen said the thieves broke a glass door to get into the home. They went directly to the master bedroom for the safe. He said it looked to him like they were after money, since they took a wine bottle half full of change, but left other, more valuable items.

"Personally, I feel it was someone who knows me or a family member and probably someone who has been in my home before," he said.

He said he's offering a \$500 reward for information leading to return of the property or arrest of the thieves.

"If anyone has any information or saw anything suspicious Monday morning, at my home or in

town, I hope they will call the me or the sheriff's department," he said. "The safe contains no money, just personal items and jewelry."

Olsen said his phone number is 462-6204, and the sheriff's office number is 460-4570.

The burglary is just one of a several reported in the area recently, Taylor said. Others have been near Oakley, in Selden and in downtown Colby.

Beringer Hardware reported merchandise missing from the store a couple of weeks ago. Two men were arrested in Atwood on Thursday, and many of the stolen goods have been returned.

Colby Police Chief Randy Jones said Thursday that the Atwood Police reported finding the merchandise when they served a search warrant on property in Atwood. The recovered materials included nine weed eaters, a portable welder and a lawn mower.

Colby Officer Richard Barrett went to Atwood and collected the goods. Some stolen materials from the store have not been found, Jones said.

Barrett said Colby and Atwood officers continue to investigate the burglary.

In another crime, Jones said the Loft above the Oasis Travel Center was broken into sometime between 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday. A small amount of cash and five stone necklaces were stolen from the store, he said.

## Smoky Hills to go digital on Tuesday

Smoky Hills Public Television says it will cease transmission of analog signals as planned on KOOD-TV (Bunker Hill/Hays) and KSWK-TV (Lakin) on Tuesday, the date originally ordered by Congress for the conversion to digital television.

The station said it will save money by going ahead with the switch, adding that it believes most viewers will be ready.

"Congress recently passed a bill

that allows broadcast television stations to delay turning off their analog transmitters until June 12," said General Manager Lawrence Holden, "but many news stories don't point out that this extension is not mandatory, but optional."

"Smoky Hills has chosen to end the analog broadcast service on KOOD and KSWK on Tuesday for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that

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## Many offices, banks to close for holiday

All federal offices will be closed Monday in observance of President's Day, and there will be no mail.

The Colby Community College campus will also be closed, with no classes that day. All banks and financial institutions will be closed, except the F&M Bank branch at Dillons.

Thomas County offices, including the courthouse, landfill and Health Department, will be closed and the transit van will not run.

However, Colby city offices will be open regular hours. State offices and all public and parochial schools in the county will be open as usual. The Senior Progress Center will also be open and lunch will be served.

The Colby Free Press will publish as usual Monday, with regular hours and deadlines. Because there will be no mail, anyone sending ads or news needs to make sure it's at the office by Saturday or bring it or e-mail it in by Monday.



JASMINE STEWART and ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

A car (above) made waves on College Drive this morning as it ran through water from a broken fire hydrant. Meanwhile postman Ike Donn (below) was not letting the snow slow his appointed rounds and Jerome Mazanec (bottom) was cleaning the snow from a downtown sidewalk.



## Storm provides moisture

By Cynthia Haynes

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Mother Nature delivered a wintery valentine to the Colby area today, as the first snow of February fell over northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska.

The fast-moving storm swept across the plains this morning and afternoon. It was expected to dump one to four inches.

The National Weather Service in Goodland had predicted an 80 percent chance of snow today and a high of 29 degrees.

In Colby this morning, people were scraping the 80 percent off windshields, sidewalks and driveways.

A blustery northeast wind pushed the snow into small drifts and across the highway, except where buildings and windbreaks blocked it. These caused intermittent slick spots on highways.

At the sheriff's office, a dispatcher said he had no information he could give out. Sheriff Rod Taylor was reported to be out working accidents, but there were few calls.

At Range and College Drive



in the city, someone ran over a fire hydrant on the southeast corner, near the entrance to Colby Community College. Water was running out into the road and down the ditch along Range. City crews converged on the leak to stop the flow, but drivers were splashing through.

Businesses along Range from Poplar south and the college were warned that they would be without water for awhile, Public Utilities Director Chris Bieker said. With snow on the roads, slick spots were common, and the weather service warned that roads could be snowpacked and slick with some drifting, mostly to the north along U.S. 36, which runs through Cheyenne, Rawlins and Decatur counties.

The service reported the last moisture in the area was .52 of an inch of rain at Goodland on Sunday and Monday. The last snow was a little under two inches, which fell Jan. 26 and 27, said meteorologist Kelly James.

The forecast for the next few days shows the snow diminishing tonight with a low around 13 and an east wind of 5 to 10 mph. Valentine's Day may see more snow, with the weather service predicting a 40 percent chance of white to go with the traditional red hearts in the evening. The winds will continue at 5 to 10 mph with a high around 30 and a low around 14.

## Plane crash kills 50

CLARENCE, N.Y. (AP) — A Continental commuter plane coming in for a landing nose-dived into a house in suburban Buffalo, sparking a fiery explosion that killed all 49 people aboard and a person in the home.

It was the nation's first fatal crash of a commercial airliner in 2 1/2 years.

Witnesses heard the twin turbo-prop aircraft sputtering before it went down in light snow and fog around 10:20 p.m. Thursday about five miles from Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. Continental Connection Flight 3407 from Newark, N.J., came in squarely through the roof of the house, its tail section visible through flames shooting at least 50 feet high.

"The whole sky was lit up orange," said Bob Dworak, who lives less than a mile away. "All the sudden, there was a big bang, and the house shook."

Two others in the house escaped with minor injuries. The plane was carrying a four-member crew and an off-duty pilot. Among the 44 passengers killed was a woman whose husband died in the World Trade Center attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

By morning, with the rubble still smoking, the task of retrieving remains had not yet begun.

Erie County Emergency Coordinator David Bissonette said it appeared the plane "dove directly on top of the house."

"It was a direct hit," Bissonette said. "It's remarkable that it only took one house. As devastating as that is, it could have wiped out the entire neighborhood."

President Barack Obama voiced condolences, saying "our hearts go out to the families and friends who lost loved ones."

No mayday call came from the pilot before the crash, according to a recording of air traffic con-

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## Governor discussed for cabinet

TOPEKA (AP) — Kansas House Speaker Mike O'Neal says Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has canceled a Monday meeting with legislative leaders.

The news today came amid speculation about Sebelius as a potential nominee for U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services.

O'Neal said he doesn't know what to make of the cancellation. The Democratic governor meets regularly with legislative leaders, and her latest session was set for 8 a.m. Monday.

In Washington, Sebelius has been viewed as a leading contender for the Health and Human Services job since President Barack Obama's first pick, former Sen. Tom Daschle, withdrew earlier this month.

## Briefly

### Charity dinner, dance Saturday

The second annual American Cancer Society Charity Ball, Dinner and Auction will begin at 5:30 p.m. Saturday with a social hour at the City Limits Convention Center. Dinner will start at 6:30, and an auction and games at 7:30. Dancing starts at 8:30 with the band Plan B from Hays. A table for eight is \$240 and individual tickets are \$35. Call Pat Sloan at HomeLand Realty and Auction, (785) 462-8255, tickets.

### Speaker to talk on health goals

Dr. Jeffrey Burnett, a member of the Health and Human Performance faculty at Fort Hays State University, will talk about realistic goals and formulas to improve health at 5:30 p.m. Monday at the Community Building's Little Theater. Dr. Burnett is known,

for humorous and lively talks. People not enrolled in the Wise Up and Count Down wellness program can attend for a \$5 fee. For information, call 460-4582.

### Deadline Monday for art class

Anyone who wants to enroll in the High Plains Art Club's Portrait Painting Workshop Friday and Saturday, Feb. 20 and 21, at the Colby Community Building, must register by Monday. Call Marlene Carpenter at 460-7656; Ruth Hughes at 462-2876 or Marj Brown at 462-3515.

### Court offices to close for class

Thomas County District Court offices will close from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday for training. For information, call the office at 460-4540.

### Chamber to hold After 5

S&T Communications will host the monthly Business After Five mixer for the Colby Chamber of Commerce at 5 p.m. Wednesday at their office at 755 Davis Ave., west of Colby High School. Chamber members should stop by for refreshments and conversation. For information, call 460-3401.

### Free tax help at library

Free tax help will be available for with low- and middle-income taxpayers, with special attention to those 60 and older, from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays through April at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The program is sponsored by American Association of Retired Persons. Call 460-2645 for information.

### Woman to detail range wars

Evelyn Hoyt Ward of Goodland will talk about

range wars between ranchers and homesteaders from noon to 1 p.m. Thursday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The talk is a part of the Food for Thought program, which features a soup lunch and history program. A different presentation will be offered March 19. Call the museum at (785) 460-4590 for details.

### Justice scholarships available

The Thomas County Community Foundation is looking for applications for criminal justice scholarships to attend Colby Community College. Money comes from the Colby Police Department Special Law Enforcement Fund and the Cory R. Wang Memorial Scholarship. For an application, contact the office at 350 South Range, Suite 14, in Colby. These must be postmarked by Tuesday, March 10. Call Melinda Olson at 460-9152 for information.



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