

# Fires, murder hit county

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City, Mo., because the elevators did not meet certain technical requirements of the Uniform Grain and Rice Storage Agreement, which controls storage of government-owned grains.  
As of November, the grain was being loaded out. It was estimated that it would take two and a half months to get the job done.  
The elevators have yet to be re-sold.

**Elevator Fire**  
Lightning struck the former Garvey elevator on the corner of Second Street and North Avenue in August, sending a flash of fire through the headhouse and down into the bins.  
The lightning set fires throughout the distribution system atop the elevator and in 12 of 14 massive concrete bins. Members of the Norton Fire Department were at the scene for 16 hours, and it was more than 12 hours before they found the last of the fire.

The elevator, now owned by the Norton County Co-op, was nearly full of wheat, much of which was damaged by either fire or water. Most of the distribution system in the headhouse, which sends grain into the various bins, was burned.  
Firemen lowered each other into the bins with ropes to fight the blaze. But they said they could only work inside for about 15 minutes before fatigue set in.

Eventually, volunteers from seven or eight departments came to help fight the fire and spell the Norton firemen. The Department of Correction sent its snorkel truck and several firemen to assist.

The lightning and possible secondary explosions blew out windows in the headhouse and seared or melted metal parts. Manhole covers at the top of the grain bins were blown off the tower, landing on the ground below.

Linda Donovan, co-manager of Co-op, estimated that about 190,000 bushels of grain may have been damaged in the fire. She was unsure how much, if any, could be salvaged. She said that because the dust in grain elevators can be highly combustible, she felt lucky that it didn't blow up.

Norton Fire Chief Mitch Jones agreed, saying they were extremely lucky that the elevator was still standing and that no one lost



Firemen worked on top of the Garvey elevator and on the ground to put out the fire and remove smoldering grain. — Telegram file photo

their life.  
“The men really went above and beyond the call of duty,” he said. “They definitely put their lives on the line, and that takes sheer guts, bravery and trust.  
“This was not a normal fire. A ground fire is one thing, but trying to fight it 120 feet in the air is a whole different deal.”

**Gas Station Fire**  
The Norton Fire Department had its hands full on March 23 when a gas pump at the Love's Country Store, on U.S. 36 caught fire, injuring a Clayton teenager.

The blaze was started when Michael Loftus, Norton, flicked his cigarette lighter while putting fuel in a pick-up truck, causing the gas fumes to ignite.

Sara Kier, Clayton, was standing near the gas island when it caught fire. Her clothing caught on fire and she suffered second degree burns over 20 percent of her upperbody and arm and was taken to the Norton County Hospital where she was kept overnight.

The truck and gas pump were a total loss, while the awning sustained severe damage. It took 18

firemen about 15 minutes to get the flames under control.

**Murder**  
A 20-year old Norton man was being charged with first-degree murder for killing his step-father. Jimmy D. Williams was charged with beating Billy Masden to death with a claw hammer on May 31.

Williams plead guilty to second degree murder in August.

County Attorney Doug Sebelius said Williams left J. Gregory's, a bar on State Street, at 2 a.m. on May 31. At about 2:30 a.m., he went to the Masden residence at 111 S. Archer. Wearing latex gloves, Williams hit Mr. Masden 12 or 13 times with a clawhammer.

Williams was sentenced to just under 13 years in prison.

# New Year's party keeps going

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friends. This year's party was hosted by longtime Cox family friends Merlynn and Joan Colip.  
Dr. Colip's relationship with many of the party-goers goes back to the day they were born. A count at the party one year revealed the doctor had delivered 26 members of the Cox family.

Board games, food and entertainment are the primary attractions of the non-alcoholic party. Like the location, the games have changed over the years. However, some things are bound by tradition.

You have to be in high school to attend and the older children are designated baby sitters for the younger ones. While some of the parents see some advantage in keeping all of their children out of trouble, according to Jennifer Hauser, the kids usually see it more as having fun than staying out of trouble.

“I couldn't wait until I was in high school so I could come” Mrs. Hauser said. “Not so that I didn't have to babysit, but because you get to play games all night.”

Mrs. Hauser has missed just two parties since becoming party-eligible and loves the annual tradition.

“It's just always nice to have a place to go to be with family and friends to have good clean fun.”

One game that hasn't changed over the years is Corks, a family

invention.  
The game is played with a pot lid, dice and corks attached to a string. The corks are placed inside of a circle and one person holds the pot lid and rolls the dice. The object of the game is for that person to slam the pot lid down onto the circle trying to trap the corks whenever a seven, 11 or doubles are rolled. The other players try to pull the corks out of the circle with the strings before the lid comes down.

Spools have been substituted for corks for extra durability, but the game has retained its name. The origins of the game are somewhat a mystery, but it's estimated it's been part of the party for about 20 years.

“We don't know where it came from,” Mrs. Hauser said. “It's just always been here.”

Mrs. Hauser says she has a reputation as the Cork champion and most of the family won't play against her anymore. While her status as Cork champ is mostly undisputed, a member of the younger generation, Jeff Cox, considers himself an upcoming challenger. Mr. Cox has never played Mrs. Hauser but looks forward to the possibility of unseating the champ one day.

The party holds a special significance for Kirk and Kim Kasson.

It's the anniversary of their first date, which occurred at the annual celebration. Kim was 17 and in-

vited to the party, and after some persuasion from her brother asked Kirk, then 15, to attend the party with her.

They had known each other about two months and the party began a change in their relationship and, eventually, their lives. They were married six years later. For the couple, the party is an annual reminder of their first date.

“I just told my wife, ‘well it's 20 years tonight,’” Mr. Kasson said. While the party has been mostly successful in fulfilling its goal of entertaining and keeping people safe, it doesn't always go smoothly. Whether it had anything to do with Y2K or not, the millennium edition of the party was the wildest.

The party was outside of town and the younger generation decided to shoot off fireworks, with some discouragement from their elders.

When the noise unsettled the cattle, they fled and party-goers spent the rest of the night doing a roundup.

Like most of the party history, the Y2K cattle stampede is looked back upon fondly.

As the 2003 crowd gathered in the living room and began singing, talking, telling stories and counting down to the New Year, Dr. Colip had an announcement.

“There will be no fireworks this year,” he said. “That only happens every hundred years.”

# Deer, ice cause numerous accidents

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Ranger. Mr. Unterseher was wearing his seat belt and was not injured.

Icy roads caused a two-vehicle accident on Dec. 9 on West Washington Street. Nathan L. Overlease, 21, Norton, was driving a 2000 Dodge Ram east on Washington Street when he lost control of the vehicle, and slid sideways into the path of a 1994 Ford F-150, traveling west. David L. Carter, 54, Jennings, was the driver of the Ford. The Ford's airbag deployed. Mr. Overlease was not wearing his seat belt, according to the report.

No injuries were reported. Damages to vehicles was over \$500.

Icy roads are also being blamed for an accident in Alma on Dec. 11. Kimberly L. Kasson, 37, Alma, was driving east on Pratt in her 1996 Dodge Caravan when she tried to stop at the intersection of VanHorn and slid into a pole. Mrs. Kasson was wearing her seat belt and was not injured. The Caravan received over \$500 in damages.

A backing accident occurred on Dec. 11 in the Norton Livestock Auction parking lot. Doyle B. Schoen, 83, Lenora, was backing

his 2002 Dodge pickup from a parking stall and did not see a parked 1991 Saturn registered to Jay Holste of Norton. Mr. Schoen was wearing his seat belt. Damages were listed over \$500.

On Dec. 21 Miguel Morales, 28, Liberal, Kan., was southbound on U.S. 283 when the 1999 Dodge Durango he was driving struck a deer jumping from the west ditch. Mr. Morales was wearing his seat belt, and walked away from the mishap without injuries. The Durango received over \$500 in property damages.

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