

# Drivers praised, criticized by trooper after canyon crash

by Jonathan Green

One man’s driving caused a wreck in Wind River Canyon Friday, while another man’s driving may have saved the first man’s life, Wyoming Highway Patrol trooper Sam Donahue said Tuesday.

At about 3:20 p.m., Edgar King, 79, Worland, was northbound on U.S. Hwy. 20 just north of the tunnels, approaching the county line at mile marker 117.

Jerry Hinkle, 41, Riverton, was headed south in a 2006 International tractor pulling two empty acid tankers.

King lost control of his 2002 Saturn sedan, first sliding into the southbound lane, then back across his lane and into the borrow ditch before over-correcting.

Donahue said King turned the wheel too hard, causing the front tires of the Saturn to dig into the snow and dirt, which threw the car back into the oncoming lane.

Hinkle had witnessed King losing control and began slowing and moving over as far as possible.

King’s car struck the tractor left-front to left-front. Donahue said the force of the impact was

great enough to break the tractor’s front axle.

The Saturn was thrown counterclockwise, its rear passenger quarter striking the drive wheels on the tractor. The force of that impact sent the car back into the borrow ditch.

Donahue credited Hinkle’s precision driving in minimizing the damage.

“There was barely enough room to put my hand between the semi and guardrail,” he said, reducing the profile of contact between the two vehicles.

King was treated and released at the scene, while Hinkle was uninjured.

Donahue said both men reported wearing seat belts. King was cited for driving too fast for conditions.

Donahue warned against drivers thinking “the black and white advisory signs” posting speeds are “mandatory minimums.” He said conditions in the canyon can vary quickly during inclement weather, so drivers should slow down.

Donahue said another vehicle slid into the rock wall on the east side of the canyon while he was investigating the first wreck, but he did not have additional information.

# Several nominated for boards

Several Hot Springs County residents have been nominated for state boards by Gov. Dave Freudenthal, including:

• Cynthia DeVries, Judicial Conduct and Ethics Commission.

• James Weisbeck, Board of Parole, reappointment.

• Howard Willson, MD, University of Wyoming Board, reappointment.

Some of the appointments must be considered by the Wyoming Senate before being final.

# Quarberg: Stimulus funds provide a moving target for state's legislators

by Breez Longwell Daniels

With two weeks left in the legislative session, Rep. Lorraine Quarberg said committees are finishing up, while the Senate is putting in extra hours in order to hear all the House bills.

The Wyoming Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center bill, HB 239, was heard in the Senate’s Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee on Wednesday. Quarberg said a Thermopolis delegation planned to attend and testify again on behalf of the bill.

Another bill directly impacting Hot Springs County is the Omnibus Water Planning bill. Quarberg said the bill was passed in the House and would provide funding for projects including those on Red Lane and Grass Creek and Cottonwood.

“Five million is still in the supplemental budget for Pioneer Home capital construction,” she said. “That building really needs to be updated, and it could include new rooms to increase capacity, generating more income.

“These are projects that translate into dollars.”

According to Quarberg the Homestead Exemption Act will be heard in Senate Appropriations Committee this week.

“We will see what the will of the senators is on

the stand alone (property tax) bill,” she said. “The DUI bills are not progressing well.

“The House sent two DUI bills to the Senate and there is only one bill left. It deals with the use of interlocking devices as a sentencing option.

“Things are kind of winding down. The governor has begun signing a few bills.

“The House and Senate will form a joint conference committee to work the supplemental budget. The Senate has indicated they want more information on the federal stimulus package before work begins on the budget.

“My original take on the stimulus is that it is more of a federal spending bill than a stimulus,” Quarberg said. “Stimulus funds may provide relief for the state on Medicaid, which would free up some state money.

“It is really a moving target. A lot of the funding is tied to unemployment.”

Currently Wyoming has a 3.4% unemployment rate. The federal stimulus guidelines require 6% unemployment for funding.

“The scary thing is by the time we have unemployment issues there may not be any money left.

“The good thing is that there will be an opportunity for some highway money.”



Jerry Williams places a fan to remove smoke as fellow volunteer firemen lieutenant Jeff Brown, left, and Brandon Blakesley rush a water hose to an apartment fire Sunday. Damage was limited to the interior; however, Kathryn Leder and her cat were treated for smoke inhalation. See Mountain musings on page 4.

# Knights top Stars of Tomorrow

Natasha, Devin and Katarina Knight teamed to win the 47th annual Thermopolis Kiwanis Club Stars of Tomorrow on Tuesday.

Their bluegrass vocal and instrumental performance qualifies them for the Division 10 and 1 competition later this year.

Also qualifying is the high school division runnerup, Sarah Basse, who performed on the violin. Other placewinners included:

High school: Sheyle Lippincott, vocal, third.

Kindergarten-second grades: Tahja Hunt, first, vocal solo.

Third-fifth grades: Chloe Crosby, first, vocal solo.

Sixth-eighth grades: Darren and Laurel Le-onhardt, vocal and instrumental performance, first.

Other performers included KinDale Andreen, Zoe Stehlin, Callie Jordan, Harley and Elizabeth Rhodes, Torrie Coulter, Morgan McCain and Cyle Hart. Lea Schoenewald was master of ceremonies. TJ Schoenewald directed the event, with Ron Philips handling the technical equipment and Leslie Basse as accompanist.

# Where should fifth graders go?

Classroom space issues at Ralph Witters Elementary School will be discussed at a public meeting Tuesday in the middle school library at 7 p.m.

Several options are being considered including modular units, increasing the number of students in classrooms or moving all fifth grade students to the middle school building.

The fifth grade constitutes approximately 12% of the students in kindergarten through 12th grades.

# Several subdivisions pondered

by Cindy Glasson

An application for a subdivision by Blanton and Rose Mary Dennis was withdrawn at the Hot Springs County Planning Commission meeting Feb. 18.

Part of the six acres is on a platted flood plain, and county planner Lee Campbell said there is historic record to show it has been susceptible to frequent flooding. The property is located on the west side of Skelton Road.

Among the other subdivisions discussed was the Blaich subdivision, a single, 4.5-acre lot separated from the Eagle RV property owned by Tim and Nancy Blaich.

During a conference call with the Blaiches, it became clear the subdivision would be for the purpose of building a private home for the owners. A well permit from the state is already in place.

The initial public hearing for the proposed Blaich subdivision will be March 18.

Larry and Connie Dickinson are considering creating a single lot off Harris Lane, just above the Super 8 Motel. The lane which runs to the lot is owned by Carl Leyba of the Super 8. The Dickinsons reported Leyba will allow them easement

to the property.

The initial public hearing for this subdivision will be held April 15 to give the applicants time to have a detailed survey done.

A letter has been drafted to the owners of the Nakamura estate, advising them the planning commission intends to re-open the public hearing on the proposed Nakamura subdivision at a later date.

Several items need to be resolved including right-of-way issues and water easements. The planning commission members do not feel they have heard enough testimony to consider these issues finalized.

Jim Skelton, foreman for the county road and bridge department, told Campbell the 40-foot easement on the private road going through the Nakamura property should be adequate from Hwy. 20 to the railroad crossing, but the road should be upgraded to a 60-foot easement east of the crossing.

County attorney Jerry Williams informed board member Tom Anderson if the right-of-way for the road is agricultural its designation will have to be changed or a new right-of-way created.

# Who owns alley by McDonald’s

by Breez Longwell Daniels

An undedicated alley running behind McDonald’s and Ava’s Silver and Rock Shop from Sixth Street to Seventh Street has come to the attention of the Thermopolis Town Council.

The council has asked land surveyor Rick Hudson to write

a letter to all property owners involved asking them to work together to dedicate an alley easement.

The town has a 20-foot sewer easement but no official alley. Director of public works Ernie Slagle said a major sewer main runs through the strip.

“Technically if the property owners blocked it off the town would not have access,” assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill said.

“Primarily we have three property owners involved, and the town council would need to accept the alley.”



Jennifer Cramer, Kaylee Groh and Darby Abbott enjoy the Thermopolis basketball games against Rocky Mountain Saturday while dipping and licking candy. –Pat Schmidt photo