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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Local couple survives

Canyon collision claims life of Thermopolis man

by Jonathan Green

Al McClelland, 80, of Thermopolis died Sunday in a head-on collision in Wind River Canyon.

Jason Krueger, 35, was driving south in a 2003 Chevrolet pickup on U.S. Hwy. 20 about eight miles south of Thermopolis with his wife Tammy, 40, at about 8:40 a.m. He pulled out to pass a tractor-trailer combination in a legal passing zone, according to Wyoming Highway Patrol trooper Sam Donahue.

Donahue said a slight bend in that part of the highway may have obscured McClelland's car, a 1992 Geo Metro, from view. Weather was clear and the road was dry, according to a patrol report.

Krueger and McClelland saw one another and attempted identical maneuvers to avoid a wreck. Both swerved into the ditch and toward the canyon wall east of the highway and then swerved

west and back onto the highway. They collided in the northbound lane.

The semi driver told Donahue he heard the collision. The Metro was knocked back from the point of impact and landed upside down.

The Chevrolet veered from the wreck back into the southbound lane and nearly struck the rear duals of the combination trailer, rolling behind the semi and coming to rest against the guard rail on the west side of the highway.

McClelland, who was wearing a seat belt, died instantly, Donahue said.

The Kruegers, who were not wearing safety belts, were treated and released from Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

Donahue is awaiting test results and other investigative findings before deciding whether to bring any charges.

Non-voter ruled out after successful write-in effort

A successful write-in campaign for Kirby Town Council failed because the apparent winner is not registered to vote.

Mike Randolph received 13 write-in votes for one of the two town council seats open in the election. Vote totals for the candidates on the ballot were Ross R. Rhodes 24, Jessica Slagle 11 and Irene "Dolly" Hurley 8.

Hot Springs County clerk Hans Odde said if Randolph had been registered to vote, he would have won election to the second seat by a two-vote margin. Instead Rhodes and Slagle

will serve on the council.

Total vote

Total vote in Hot Springs County was 2,563, up 2% from the 2,506 who voted in the 2004 presidential general election.

The increase was in Precinct 3, which soared 11% from 777 voters to 859.

Most of that is probably in the Lucerne area, which has had many homes added. Kirby and East Thermopolis are also in that precinct.

Thermopolis was down a total of 18 voters in its two precincts, 1.1%, while Precinct 4, the west-

ern part of the county was down seven votes, 4.3%.

Precinct 3 had the most voters, 859, compared to 842 in Thermopolis Precinct 1. Next was Thermopolis Precinct 2 with 707, followed by Precinct 4 with 155.

How does the current number of Hot Springs County compare with others in the last 60 years?

An informal check of Independent Record files shows a peak of 2,784 voters in 1960. The lows were 1,325 in 1988 and 1,742 in 1948.



During a candlelight service in Bicentennial Park on Tuesday, past Wyoming Veterans of Foreign Wars commander John Huckman of Thermopolis reads a tribute to those who have served in the military. Holding one of the candles is Nancy Madrigal. Other Veterans Day events at the VFW post included the traditional 11 a.m. flag ceremony and a dinner.

Airport input committee members exchange views at initial meeting

by Jonathan Green

The Hot Springs County airport environmental assessment study input committee met Monday evening to hear progress from Ryk Dunkelberg of Barnard Dunkelberg and Co. of Denver toward relocating the airport.

The current airport is considered deficient in a number of design parameters by the Federal Aviation Administration. Airport Road is too close to the perimeter fence, part of the fence is too close to the runway, the runway is too steep and the protection area at either end of the runway is too small.

Because of these deficiencies the airport is not eligible for federal money, Dunkelberg said. A federal modification to standards, or waiver, is unlikely, he said, because the current facility is "so far out of standard."

Hot Springs County commissioner Brad Basse also warned that the limited state funds currently used at the facility could be threatened if the community were to abandon planning for a new airport. He said it is his opinion the state is continuing to subsidize such an out-of-standard facility to maintain air traffic into a community considering a new airstrip.

Members of the group could not agree on whether a new airport is viable or desirable. Issues complicating the construction of a new airport discussed Monday included funding availability, land acquisition, disruption of historical or cultural artifacts and landing approach considerations.

Most funding questions were beyond the scope of the study input committee meeting. Dunkelberg did say any federal funds would be limited to capital construction projects, not maintenance and operation.

Federal airport funds come from the Airport Improvement Trust Program, supported by air traveler user fees, not taxes. State funds are gathered the same way, through user fees, except for

the local government match, which comes from tax revenue.

If federal funds are tapped to create a new airport, any revenue raised by the facility would be required to be rolled back into the airport.

The FAA also requires the organization sponsoring any new airport to possess powers of eminent domain over the prospective building site. The commissioners do have such authority as the sponsoring organization of the airport.

Dunkelberg said his firm was in the process of completing an archeological assessment of the two potential locations for a new airport. One is west of Thermopolis near the junction of Wyo. Hwy. 120 and Wyo. Hwy 170 and the other is north of Thermopolis near Buchanan Flat.

Several committee members expressed concern about the approach vectors that would be available at a new facility.

Under visual flight rules (VFR), ambient conditions are sufficient to land without a total dependence on instrumentation. Instrument flight rules (IFR) deal with landings in sub-par weather.

A desire was expressed that the new airport support IFR landings in conditions at least equivalent to those supported at the Worland airport for medical transports.

Dunkelberg said new airports do not initially have IFR capabilities, which can take up to five years to be developed. In the interim, traffic would need to be routed elsewhere when weather is a factor.

Committee members also worried about the type of equipment necessary to support IFR approaches. Mark Mortimore said many of the aircraft used for medical transfers lack the sophisticated technology to support newer IFR methods.

No action was taken. The meeting was only intended as a sounding board for Dunkelberg's engineering firm to collect feedback for continuing research. The group will meet next year, probably in February, Dunkelberg said.

October wet; drought lessening

Precipitation in October in Thermopolis nearly matched last October.

A total of 2.01 inches was measured at the official National Weather Service site at the Thermopolis Wastewater Pumping Station. October precipitation was 2.79 inches last year and

2.25 inches in 2005.

The annual total for the first ten months of 2008 was 10.86 inches, just ahead of the total of 10.35 inches last year.

However, it is far short of the 14.90 inches received in the first ten months of 2005.

The totals in inches of precipi-

tation in recent years include:

Year	Oct.	Total
2007	2.79	10.35
2006	1.51	7.65
2005	2.25	14.90
2004	.64	11.50
2003	.45	11.66
2002	.96	7.24
2001	.29	6.45

DirectAir sold to TCT West

by Breez Longwell Daniels
Thermopolis Internet service provider DirectAirNet has been purchased by TCT with company headquarters in Basin.

"All DirectAirNet accounts have been closed in our office and transferred to TCT," DirectAirNet manager Angie Guyon said. "I handled the sale, and I am still here to answer questions." Guyon will continue as general manager of the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, the company that launched DirectAirNet in 2000.

"We were successful for a number of years, but we couldn't compete with the big boys like telephone and cable companies that can package Internet service with other services," she said.

The sale of DirectAirNet resulted in a loss of two employees and one contractor, Guyon said.

TCT general manager Chris Davidson said the company provides wireless Internet service to about 3,000 customers in southern Montana and northern Wyoming with offices located in Basin, Lovell and Powell. "We plan to offer a step up in service with reliable download speeds, increased bandwidth and technical support seven days a week," he said. "DirectAirNet customers keep the same e-mail addresses and wireless equipment. With the purchase of DirectAirNet we bought about 300 customer accounts."



Caught in the act of robbing food from a bird house, a dangling squirrel packs away all he can eat in preparation for the lean winter months in Thermopolis.

—Jonathan Green photo