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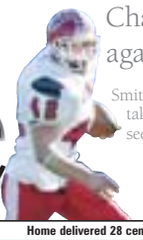
Hastings Tribune

Bowlin' them over

High schoolers face off.

Page A5





Champions, again

Smith Center takes state for second time in a row.

Page C1

20 pages | http://www.hastingstribune.com | Monday, Nov. 28, 2005 | Home delivered 28 cents | Newsstands 50 cents



Hastings native witness to fatal airplane crash

NANCY FOSTER
Hastings Tribune

He and his brother were on their way to Hastings to make a quick stop before heading to Omaha.

They'd spent Thanksgiving in McCook and left Sunday morning. Road conditions were poor, as winds were gusting hard toward the south coupled with patches of torrential rain.

Hastings natives Brandon and Dustin Petersen neared Holdrege around 11 a.m., when a single-engine airplane caught Brandon's eye. It was flying fairly low, Brandon said, just below the clouds.

"Then all of a sudden, I noticed the tower start falling, and it appeared the plane had hit one of the tethers," Brandon, 27, said this morning from Omaha, where he moved from Hastings in June. "Then the tower started tumbling down, and then I saw the plane fall in the field nearby."

After the plane struck the 1,065-foot broadcast tower, it and the tower plummeted to the ground, killing the plane's three passengers — two adults and one child. The plane, a 1968 Piper 140, was registered to Daniel Walker of Morris, Ill., according to The Associated Press.

The plane was traveling from Denver to Morris.

Please see CRASH*/pageA6*



Courtesy Brandon Petersen

Right: The KLNE-TV Channel 3 tower collapsed after a plane struck one of its tethers Sunday near Atlanta. The building was empty at the time of the crash. Above: A law enforcement officer guards the wreckage of the plane.

Get the drift?



BRENT McCOWN/*Tribune*

Cars drive along Seventh Street, which is designated a snow emergency route. Hastings is in a snow emergency until Monday evening.

Ice, wind gusts, blowing snow— winter gives hints that it's here



BRENT McCOWN/*Tribune*

Hastings Public Schools employee Randy Ochsner shovels the sidewalk in front of Morton Elementary this morning. Many schools were closed today.

Hastings Tribune

Blizzard conditions blew into Hastings and through a wide swath of Nebraska this morning.

The city of Hastings declared a snow emergency scheduled to last until 6 p.m. Wednesday, unless extended due to additional adverse weather, a news release said.

In Adams County, strong winds created near blizzard-like conditions, with gusts of 56 mph reported in Hastings at 9:25 a.m.

Sunday night's storm dropped about an inch of snow on the ground in Hastings, which, coupled with the strong northwest winds and earlier rainfall, made roads icy and travel difficult, said meteorologist Steve Carmel of the National Weather Service in Hastings.

"We're on the back side of the big upper low now," Carmel said this morning.

Precipitation was falling in a broad area that stretched from Wisconsin and Minnesota to cover most of central and southeast Nebraska.

Please see SNOW*/page A6*

Inside

The weather across the nation.

— Page D1

Travel dangerous across state

The Associated Press

Gusting winds of up to 69 miles an hour whipped snow in central and eastern Nebraska on Monday, making travel perilous for heading work or school Monday following the Thanksgiving weekend.

The National Weather Service issued blizzard warnings and several winter storm advisories for much of the state.

A low-pressure center had moved to Iowa by Monday morning, said David Eastlack, a National Weather Service forecaster in Valley, so Nebraska was being lashed by the long tail end of the storm.

Please see STATE*/page A6*

Saddam trial resumes

HAMZA HENDAWI
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The trial of Saddam Hussein resumed Monday with the former Iraqi president trying to take command of the courtroom and angrily complaining about being shackled and mistreated by foreign guards. A former U.S. attorney general sat with the defense team.

Other defendants spoke out, too, complaining of their treatment in detention or dissatisfaction with their court-appointed counsel.

After a short session in which the first testimony was read into the record, Chief Judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin adjourned the trial until Dec. 5 to allow time to find replacements for two defense lawyers who were slain and another who fled Iraq after he was wounded.

Dressed in black trousers and a gray jacket with a white handkerchief in the breast pocket, Saddam was the last of eight defendants to enter the heavily guarded courtroom, walking with a swagger, appearing confident and acknowledging people with the traditional Arabic greeting, "Peace be upon the people of peace." He also carried a copy of the Muslim holy book, the Quran.

Saddam and his co-defendants are charged in the killings of more than 140 Shiite Muslims after an assassination attempt against the former president in the Shiite town of Dujail in 1982. Convictions could bring a sentence of death by hanging.

Weather

Lo: 15
Hi: 30s

Areas of blowing snow throughout the night. Brisk Tuesday.



Art by Caitlyn Lau, 9, District 15

Nation

VERA LAID TO REST

SANTA ROSA, Texas — Nearly three months after her makeshift grave on a New Orleans sidewalk became a symbol of the death and destruction of Hurricane Katrina, Vera Smith's cremated remains were laid to rest Saturday in the family plot in South Texas.

Smith, 66, was struck by a car as she made her way to a grocery in New Orleans after the hurricane hit. Her common-law husband, C.N. Keene, placed a bedspread over her body. Someone later spray painted the words, "Here lies Vera. God help us" on the sheet, and a man built a short wall of bricks around her body.

Her body remained there for at least five days before eventually being taken to a morgue south of Baton Rouge, La.

The Associated Press

Inside

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Snow: Ice, drifts blow into Hastings area

Continued from page A1

"We're getting northwest winds of 30 to 50 miles per hour, with gusts up to 60 and even 70 miles per hour. It's creating horrible traveling conditions," Carmel said.

The outlook wasn't expected to get any better throughout today, Carmel said.

"Strong winds are going to blow around a lot more snow," he said. "Right now, visibility is less than a quarter mile. Travel is definitely not recommended anywhere.

"It's extremely windy. You've still got the snow blowing around pretty much hazardous travel conditions. It's not going to improve much."

Hastings residents can expect between another one to two inches of snow accumulation today, with most areas collecting two inches or less. In surrounding areas, snowfall counts were four to five inches in Minden, Heartwell, and Kenesaw.

Wind chill dropped to single digits above zero this morning throughout the county.

"Your skin will freeze in a matter of minutes at that temperature," Carmel said. " If you don't need to go anywhere, you're best off staying where you're at."

Roads were treacherous this morning, said Loren Uden, Adams County Emergency Management director.

"There are ice-covered and snow-packed areas, snowfall coming down, lots of white-out areas," he said.

City residents need to be aware of the snow emergency in effect for the next few days.

"It's mainly a parking issue, to get emergency vehicles down the street," Uden said. "It also means conditions are treacherous, and we recommend doing as little traveling as possible."

While a snow emergency is in effect, no vehicles may park on city snow emergency routes, which are identified by red, white and blue signs.

The Hastings Police Department will check for illegally parked vehicles while the emergency is in effect.

Dawn Miller, Adams County roads superintendent, said this morning that county roads were ice-packed, and blowing snow created white-out conditions.

"Travel is not recommended," she said. "Our salt-sand mixture doesn't activate as long as the temperature is below 18 degrees, and that's with wind chill. We did go out and apply the mixture around 5 this morning at stop signs, curbs and railroad crossings."

But since the wind picked up, Miller said the mixture wasn't activating.

And the conditions led to most of the snow removal trucks staying put this morning.

"As long as the wind continues to blow and visibility continues to be as low as it is and our drivers are not able to see clearly, the trucks will not be on (asphalt) roads," Miller said. "So far, there is not enough snow on gravel roads to cause problems. They are icy because of the rain. If we get more snow, they'll definitely be drifted. Our worst thing right now is the wind."

Hastings Street Superintendent Richard Douglas said city streets were drifting on the edges of town.

Sand trucks were out this morning to take care of most intersections, he said, and equipment was addressing the drifting.

Douglas also reminded people to be careful driving in these conditions.

"People just have to adjust their driving," he said. "Sand can only do so much. After the first snow, it's always 'driving in snow 101' all over again — people just have to adjust."

As of this morning, drivers seemed to be taking the serious conditions into consideration.

An official from the Adams County Sheriff's Office said there had been a few minor accidents but no injuries. All hardtop roads in Adams County were iced over and snow-packed, and travel was discouraged.

The Hastings Police Department also reported a few minor accidents.

"I would recommend against any travel unless it's an emergency," Sgt. Bill Mann said.

If people decide to go out, Mann said they should give themselves extra travel time and leave plenty of room to stop at intersections.

Despite the storm, area sheriff's offices reported no accidents as of midmorning. Most Tribland schools were closed for the day.

Conditions were deteriorating in Franklin County, where a sheriff's dispatcher reported blizzard conditions. Kearney County reported icy and snow-packed roads, blowing snow and poor visibility.

In Smith County, Kan., roads were passable but icy and treacherous, with heavy snowfall, a dispatcher said. Jewell County, Kan., reported little snowfall and some patchy ice on roadways.

In Thayer County, Sunday's rain had frozen, layering roadways with ice, a dispatcher said. Only a light dusting of snow had been received up until this morning, when snow and blowing conditions were prevalent.

No accidents or power outages had been reported as of this morning.

In neighboring Nuckolls County, Nebraska Highway 14 was snow-packed in spots between Superior and Nelson this morning, but road conditions were mostly OK, a dispatcher said.

Visibility had been reduced to a quarter-mile or less during earlier snowfall, but improved greatly after that, the dispatcher said. No accidents had been reported.

Clay and Webster counties reported stiff winds but no real problems with the storm so far this morning. Some cattle were out in Clay County, but no wrecks had been reported.

Roads in Fillmore County were reported slick, but visibility was better than in many other locations at midmorning, a dispatcher said.

Precipitation totals

The storm on Sunday dumped respectable precipitation at numerous locations, according to the Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network.

Volunteer weather observers reported 1.01 inches of rainfall southwest of Bladen, .96 of an inch southeast of Lawrence and .92 southeast of Hildreth, respectively.

Other totals for Sunday and overnight, reported as of 7 a.m., were:

Northwest of Republican City: .70
Northwest of Minden: .85
Southwest of Juniata: .71
Northwest of Hastings: .69
Southeast of Edgar: .64
Northwest of Superior: .79
Northeast of Superior: .41
West of Ruskin: .64
South of Hebron: .75

Snowfall totals, again from NeRAIN, included 2.3 inches northwest of Minden, 2.2 southwest of Juniata, 2 southeast of Hildreth, 1 south of Hebron, 1 southwest of Bladen, 1 northeast of Doniphan and a half-inch northeast of Ayr.

In Smith Center, Kan., precipitation Sunday and overnight totaled .87 of an inch, with a trace of snow, weather observer Bob Levin reported on his Internet site.

State: Winter hits

Continued from page A1

Basically all across central Nebraska there are storm or blizzard warnings in effect until midnight tonight," Eastlack said, with exceptions for Butler and other counties near Kansas. Those warnings probably will expire at 6 p.m., he said.

Another exception is for Douglas and Sarpy counties, which will have advisories starting at noon for blowing snow, with gusts up to 50 miles an hour out of the northwest.

Winds were freakishly strong over much of the state, said weather service forecaster Michael Power in North Platte.

He and other weather service forecasters reported gusts of 69 in Ogallala in west-central Nebraska down to 61 in Grand Island, 176 miles to the east.

Snow totals varied across the state Monday morning.

Power said 13 inches of snow had been reported in Arnold, which is in the middle of the state in Custer County. But a couple of dozen miles to the east, in Merna, only 7 inches were reported.

Crash: Three dead

Continued from page A1

Authorities were expected to release the victims' names late this morning.

The plane crashed to the ground about 200 yards from the tower, which was about seven miles southwest of Holdrege near Atlanta.

The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the cause of the crash. It was unclear whether weather played a role, the AP reported.

Nebraska Educational Radio and Television owns the tower, which carries public radio and TV programming to a large portion of central Nebraska. Both services were knocked off the air, the AP reported. NET crews were working Monday to assess the level of damage and develop a plan to provide at least limited services soon.

Petersen said he worried someone might have been injured in the KLNE-TV building, on which the tower crumpled and fell. So he drove over to the site of the crash to see whether anyone had been hurt in the station.

He had a digital camera with him that he'd used to take pictures at Thanksgiving, so he was able to document the damage to the station's building.

Another motorist who witnessed the crash went to check on the plane's passengers, he said.

The building's roof sustained damage, but no one was injured or even in the building, which houses broadcast equipment.

The news wasn't as good from the plane.

"He said it was really bad," Petersen said, of the motorist who checked the plane. "So we decided not to go close to that."

The couple and their daughter did not survive.

"It was just a terrible thing to have happen," Petersen said.

It all happened within one minute, he said.

"It was just an awful thing to see happen," he said. "The worst part is knowing that a family had just probably gotten done celebrating Thanksgiving, and now they have to deal with family members passing away."

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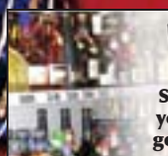
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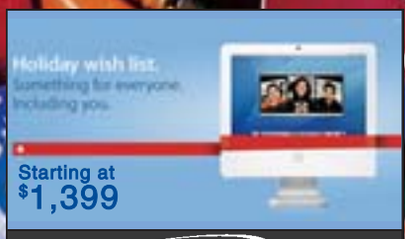
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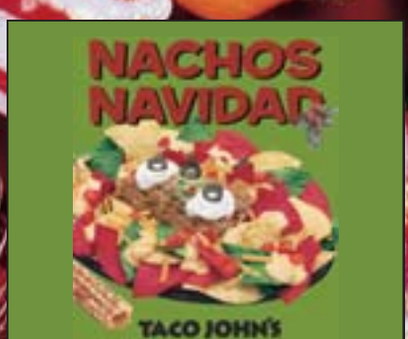
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