

Man Convicted Of Dismembering Wife

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Lincoln man has entered a plea to killing his wife, dismembering her body and hiding her remains in a storage shed.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports 34-year-old Kevin Miller pleaded Wednesday to first-degree murder and use of a firearm to commit a felony. As part of the plea deal, prosecutors have agreed not to seek the death penalty in the case.

Police arrested Miller Dec. 7, just more than a week after his 28-year-old wife Kelsey Miller was reported missing. Her body was found the day before in a storage shed in northeast Lincoln, where police say they also discovered four hand saws, a knife, air fresheners, a machete, buckets and several plastic containers.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for June 2. Miller faces life in prison.

Mitchell Animal Rescue Needs Volunteers

MITCHELL — An organization in Mitchell that finds homes for animals left at the city pound needs volunteers in order to continue to operate.

The *Daily Republic* reports that the future of Mitchell Animal Rescue is uncertain because of dwindling volunteer participation. The organization doesn't have a facility to house the animals, so it uses a foster system to provide homes to the animals until they are adopted.

The group was founded in 2008. It charges a \$25 fee to adopt a cat and between \$75 and \$175 for dogs.

The organization says the group is not ceasing operations, but its leaders will be meeting in the upcoming weeks to discuss the animal rescue's future.

South Dakota Made Mustard Recognized

TEA (AP) — A South Dakota-made mustard has been recognized at a competition that honors the most tasty mustards in the world.

KSFY-TV reports that Matt's Mom's Mustard earned the second place in the exotic category of the National Mustard Museum's World-Wide Mustard Competition. The South Dakota mustard is manufactured in Tea based on the recipe of a Pierre woman.

Berry Levenson is the curator of the Wisconsin-based museum. He says that Matt's Mom's Mustard "was a very, very strong second place."

Mustards from various countries including Japan, Sweden and France entered the competition.

Plan To Outsource Ambulance Billing OK'd

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — The Grand Island City Council has decided to outsource its ambulance billing service to a Fortune 500 company, though the cost of the contract hasn't been disclosed.

The *Independent* reports the council voted 7-2 Tuesday to approve McKesson Corp.'s proposal to handle annual billing services for what has typically contributed about \$1.2 million in ambulance revenue to the Grand Island Fire Department.

Councilman Mike Paulick voted against the plan, saying he'd prefer to keep the billing service local. And Councilman Roger Steele says he rejected the move after he found out McKesson refused to reveal its contract cost.

City Attorney Bob Sivick says the cost was confidential because the company's billing formula is considered a trade secret, as protected under Nebraska's open records law.

SD Sheriff's Office To Buy Body Cameras

MITCHELL (AP) — The Davison County Sheriff's Office plans to spend \$6,000 to buy body cameras for its deputies.

Chief Deputy Steve Harr tells *The Daily Republic* in Mitchell that the cameras that will be purchased can be attached to a deputy's hat or head. Harr says the county chose those cameras because authorities believe they are more comfortable than the ones that can be attached to the front of a deputy's uniform.

The county will spend about \$750 per camera. Officials are hoping to obtain money from the state's Drug Control Fund to reimburse the entire cost of the purchase. The fund uses money seized from drug arrests to pay for local law enforcement programs aimed at curbing drug abuse.

SD's Environment Focus Of Conference

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota State Historical Society's annual history conference May 29-30 in Pierre will focus on the state's environment.

The moderator will be David Wolff, dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Black Hills State University in Spearfish. His research focuses on natural resources and Black Hills history.

Speakers on May 29 will discuss natural resources conservation, the homesteading era, the environmental impact of Black Hills mining and the history and preservation of Good Earth State Park at Blood Run National Historic Landmark near Sioux Falls.

Topics for May 30 will include environmental and American Indian history, shoreline protection and habitat restoration, land management and cultural resource conservation.

The conference will conclude with field sessions to the Buffalo Interpretive Center, Farm Island and the Oahe Dam.

Trial Set For Counterfeiting Schemer

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — A second person accused of a counterfeiting scheme in Platte County also has pleaded not guilty.

The *Columbus Telegram* reports that a trial is scheduled to begin July 27 for 36-year-old Brian Dieter. He faces 15 counts of forgery and one of being a habitual criminal.

Dieter's trial will follow the June trial set for 37-year-old Stacy Ballou, who also is known as Stacy Segura. She's pleaded not guilty to 15 counts of aiding and abetting a felony.

Court documents say surveillance video showed Dieter exchanging the counterfeit bills for legitimate bills on Feb. 8 at a convenience store where Ballou was working as a clerk.

Obama Visit Means Long Hours For College Planner

BY STEPHEN LEE
Capital Journal

PIERRE — President Barack Obama's scheduled visit to South Dakota May 8 is historic for one rather trivial reason.

Obama will do what only three other presidents have done: visit all 50 states as president. Presidents Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton hit all 50 while in office.

So news that Obama will speak at the commencement at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown has garnered more attention than most such routine presidential visits, because South Dakota is the final and 50th state he will enter as president. And on the far end of the state from the four stony visages on Mount Rushmore.

Among other things, the announcement has had a big effect on one person: LuAnn Strait, the director of student services who is organizing the college's preparations for the May 8 visit.

Strait told the *Capital Journal* that planning the event "was pretty crazy at first," with lots of excitement and long hours answering questions from all over the nation.

"Things have slowed down now but I am guessing it is a 'hurry up and wait' situation," she said. "Once the advance teams arrive, the work will pick back up; but we are ready."

Strait started at the college in 1987 as an admissions representative. Over the years she's taken on many other tasks. She says her job as director of institutional relations includes marketing, public relations, admissions, recruitment and all student services.

Now she can add planning for a U.S. president's visit.

Strait plans graduations every year, has helped organize a few air shows in town and a NASA Space Day that LATI was part of in 2008 that brought 2,000 to campus.



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/TNS
President Obama speaks at an Organizing for Action dinner at the Ritz Carlton hotel in Washington, D.C., on Thursday.

This is another level, she says.

"We have an army of people helping," she said.

The big difference is working with the White House to draw up a list of South Dakota news reporters and photographers to be invited and setting up enough space for the national reporters who travel with the president.

Here's how the event began on the South Dakota side, Strait said:

"The White House called Lake Area Tech President (Michael) Cartney on Wednesday, April 8, and asked when our graduation was and if we had our graduation plans in motion. After telling them we did, they asked if it would be OK if President Obama would be able to give the commencement address."

That was taken by the college as a rhetorical question.

"President Cartney told a few of us at Lake Area Tech and we kept it a secret until the White House informed us they were going to announce his visit on Monday April 13 at 4 p.m. Central Time. We gathered the Lake Area Tech

staff and announced the news to them at 3 p.m. It was so exciting and the staff was just speechless."

She has been dealing with the White House's office of scheduling, not any known personage, or even if it was a known personage, "we are not allowed to say too much," Strait said. "And quite truthfully, we really haven't been told much either."

The presidential visit is not supposed to be a big disruption, believe it or not, which might be her most difficult job.

"We were told by his staff to keep things as normal as possible. They do not want this to take away from the graduates and their families and their special day. They have repeated this message over and over."

The Watertown Civic Arena seats about 4,800, she said. "The national media are taking up all the back of the arena," she said about her struggle to find room for South Dakota reporters and photographers. "We can't get too close to the stage with the bleachers, so we are down a few (seats)."

There is no admission

cost, but it will take a ticket to get in and Strait is in charge of that, too. Parking, seating, entrance details join with the normal graduation planning of decorating, printing of programs and organizing "who says what" on stage.

Everyone attending the ceremony will "go through airport-like security," according to Strait. The premises will be swept by security hours before the doors are open to the public.

No bags, sharp objects, umbrellas, liquids, signs or banners will be permitted. Cameras will be allowed.

Anyone bringing children should realize "we anticipate longer-than-normal wait times" to get in and seated, Strait said.

An alternative viewing area in the student center and student commons via video will be provided.

There are 719 graduates, a record number, she said. Last year, 672 graduated.

In her 28 years at the school, this is a new high point, Strait said.

"No one could ever have taught us how you plan a president's visit," she said.

Oil Drilling May Slow Down Drought Recovery In Great Plains

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As the main driver of climate change, the connection between burning fossil fuels and global warming is clear. But evidence shows they may be connected in another way - the physical footprint of oil and gas development on the landscape may not only contribute to global warming, it may also affect an ecosystem's ability to withstand it.

New research shows that an area larger than the land area of Maryland - more than 11,500 square miles - was completely stripped of trees, grasses and shrubs to make way for more than 50,000 new oil and gas wells that were developed each year between 2000 and 2012. Such broad industrialization may harm the ability of some regions to recover from drought and damage the ability of the land to store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Most of the development studied was in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains of the central U.S. and Canada, where drilling and fracking are creating "industrialized landscapes," often in

areas that are already drought stricken. That fast-spreading development is creating additional water stress while simultaneously damaging the ecosystem's ability to absorb carbon dioxide and store or "fix" it in plants, according to the research - a study led by scientists at the University of Montana and published in the *Journal Science*.

"When you think from a climate point of view, you're not having carbon uptake across all this landscape for many decades when there's very little plant cover," study co-author Steve Running, a University of Montana professor who models ecosystem functions, said.

The plants and their carbon uptake help the landscape provide certain "ecosystem services," including food production, biodiversity and wildlife habitat, all of which are severely degraded when the landscape is denuded by oil and gas development.

Grasslands and semi-arid regions are not nearly as carbon dense as forests, so on a global scale, loss of carbon storage in those areas because of expanding energy develop-

ment doesn't have much of an effect on global climate change, said Steve Polasky, a professor of ecological and environmental economics at the University of Minnesota who was unaffiliated with the study.

But fossil fuels development and loss of vegetation does have a big effect on how a region responds and adapts to a changing climate because of the water stress it creates where drilling is occurring.

Of course, oil and gas production isn't the only land use that strips the land of vegetation. Urban sprawl, industrial agriculture and even the growth of renewable energy, especially solar, does that, too.

One of the ways oil and gas development worsens water scarcity in times of drought is the use of large quantities of water for hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and subsequent rounds of fracking the same well, a process called "refracturing." The study estimates that up to nearly 34 billion cubic meters of water were used for fracking and refracturing in the central U.S. and Canada between 2000 and

2012, enough water to fill more than 1.3 million Olympic-sized swimming pools.

As fracking and refracturing become more common to make wells produce more oil and gas, it adds to an already fraught competition among agriculture, aquatic ecosystems, and municipalities for water supplies, the study says.

"One way of thinking is, it's sort of potentially accelerating a trajectory toward a drier environment," David Schimel, a research scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said. Schimel is a convening lead author of three Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports and is unaffiliated with the Montana study.

Energy development also pushes out drought-resistant native vegetation possibly on both the land being drilled and the land around it, and it may not grow back as temperatures rise and droughts become more severe in a changing climate, he said.

Often, lands developed for oil and gas and other uses do not fully recover their previous ecosystem functions for decades or more, Schimel said.

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