

Brookings Woman Earns Miss South Dakota Title

HOT SPRINGS — Calista Kirby of Brookings, Miss Rushmore, was crowned Miss South Dakota Saturday night in Hot Springs.

Her platform is "Stay Well, Get Well, American Cancer Society." For her talent, she performed a tumbling routine to the song "Defying Gravity" from the musical "Wicked."

Kirby, 23, was a double preliminary winner, winning the talent competition Thursday night and the preliminary swimsuit award Friday night. Kirby also won the Miss America Organization Community Service Award for \$1,000, and the Top Interview award.

First runner-up was Miss Sioux Empire Fair, Heather Johnson of Olivia, Minn. Johnson was also a preliminary winner, winning the swimsuit award Thursday night.

Second runner-up was Miss Siouxland, Autumn Simunek of Hot Springs. She also won a scholarship for Top Fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network.

Third runner-up was Miss Rolling Plains, Tessa Dee of Mitchell. She also won the "Ray Peterson Rookie of the Year" \$500 scholarship for the first-year contestant with the highest overall score.

Fourth runner-up was Miss Lake Alvin Brittanie Venard of Tea. She also won the Miss



COURTESY PHOTO
Miss South Dakota 2011, Anna Simpson, crowns Miss South Dakota 2012 Calista Kirby.

America Academic award.

Miss State Fair Abbi Sudtelgte, Miss Hot Springs Morgan Black, and Miss Rapid City Julia Kendrix rounded out the top eight semi-finalists. Sudtelgte won the South Dakota National Guard Community Service award. Miss Brookings Cecilia Knutson won the award for most talented non-finalist. Miss James Valley Calli Pritchard was named Miss Congeniality by her fellow contestants.

Emilee Davenport, Sioux City, Iowa, Miss USD, won the \$500 Harold Monroe Memorial Award for best non-finalist interview.

Kirby will represent South Dakota at the Miss America pageant next January.

Victim Files Papers To Sue County

Claims Negligence For Failing To See Him Laying In Field On Dangerously Windy Day For Controlled Burn

BY GRANT SCHULTE
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A man who was burned in a controlled grass fire in the Nebraska border town of Whiteclay has filed papers to sue local authorities for negligence, saying they failed to spot him lying in a field and ignited the blaze on a dangerously windy day.

The man burned, Bryan Blue Bird Jr., lives just across the state line on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and the incident comes amid already tense relations between members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Whiteclay business owners. That's due to the vast amount of alcohol sold in four beer stores to residents of Pine Ridge, where alcohol is banned.

Blue Bird, who said he hadn't been drinking when he was burned, has hired an Omaha lawyer and filed tort-claim papers that will allow him to proceed with a lawsuit against Sheridan County and the Rushville Fire Department.

Blue Bird said members of the volunteer department should have seen him when they set the blaze on March 6. He suffered burns on roughly 25 percent of his body, including his hands, face, left leg, lower back and abdomen.

"I'm a grown man, but I've cried a lot since this happened," Blue Bird said. "I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy, on anyone's worst enemy. It's horrible."

Phone messages left Thursday and Friday with the Sheridan County Sheriff's office, which supervised the Rushville fire crew, were not returned. An assistant Sheridan County attorney said officials had turned the case over to their insurer, which would hire a lawyer to represent them.

Sheriff Terry Robbins has said firefighters searched the field before they started the fire.

Firefighters set the blaze to protect several abandoned homes and nearby businesses in the 11-person town — including the four beer stores that last year sold the equivalent of 4.3 million, 12-ounce cans of beer.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe has filed a federal lawsuit seeking \$500 million from the stores, their distributors and the global beer makers, arguing they knowingly contributed to devastating alcohol-related problems on the reservation.

Blue Bird isn't involved in that lawsuit and said he doesn't blame the beer stores for his injuries, but activists who have tried to limit alcohol sales in Whiteclay said such a case was inevitable, given the number of people who loiter around the stores and sleep in nearby fields.

Duane Martin Sr., a leader of the Strong Heart Warrior Society on Pine Ridge, said he was outraged when he heard about the incident but not surprised. Martin said intoxicated tribe members often sleep in and around the abandoned houses, and he criticized the department for not checking the field more closely.

"Isn't that what fire departments are trained to do?" Martin asked. "This is the type of problem I've been telling people about. It makes a lot of sense something like this would happen, because of the alcohol crisis in that place."

Although firefighters set the fire in a field where intoxicated people have been known to pass out, Blue Bird said he hadn't been drinking.

Blue Bird, a 51-year-old Army veteran who worked laying cinderblocks, branding cattle

and fixing cars, said he went to Whiteclay to meet a friend and was walking through waist-high prairie grass in the unincorporated town when he dropped to one knee to tighten his bootlace, causing a muscle spasm that blasted pain through his lower back. He said he turned over and lay face-up in the grass, then sat up slowly to relieve the cramp.

The fire swept over him before he realized what was happening, he said. Blue Bird said he rolled over on his stomach, inhaled, and covered his face with his hands. Flames scorched his eyebrows and mustache and singed the ponytail that reached halfway down his back.

"I saw them, but they were moving so fast," he said. "It was really windy that day. Even if I had seen them and gotten up to run, they still would have gotten me."

Weather records indicate wind speeds around Whiteclay varied from 11 mph to 35 mph that day, with gusts that reached 44 mph.

Blue Bird now wears oven mitts to lift heavy objects, so his skin doesn't peel. Burns scars cover his left ear, left leg, and abdomen. The two smallest fingers on his left hand fused together, and he now shies from direct sunlight.

Blue Bird said a friend pulled him out of the flames and beat the fire out with his hands, as he drifted in and out of consciousness. Someone called an ambulance that drove him to Pine Ridge's hospital, where medical staff sedated him. He awoke almost three days later at a burn center in Greeley, Colo., with a breathing tube in his throat.

Blue Bird's attorney, Tom White of Omaha, filed a tort-claim notice with Sheridan County and the Rushville Fire Department in April. White said Thursday that the notice triggers a 6-month waiting period before Blue Bird can file the lawsuit, so local authorities have a chance to seek a settlement.

White, a former Democratic state lawmaker who is also representing the tribal government in its lawsuit against the Whiteclay beer stores, said firefighters did "a very poor job" of checking the area before they lit the fire.

OBITUARIES

Verna Strivens

NORFOLK, Neb. — Verna J. Strivens, age 89 of Norfolk, Nebraska died on Saturday, June 23, 2012 at the Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk.

Funeral services will be on Tuesday, June 26, 2012 at 10:30 a.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church in Norfolk with the Rev. Edgar L. Schambach officiating. Burial will be in the Lawn Ridge cemetery in Coleridge, NE following a luncheon. Visitation will be on Monday at St. John's in Norfolk from 4-8:00 p.m. and will continue on Tuesday one hour prior to services. Arrangements are under the direction of the Wintz Funeral Home in



Strivens

Honorary pallbearers will be Verna's great grandchildren.

Verna June Strivens was born on June 1, 1923 in Coleridge to Will and Lena Frichs. She graduated from Coleridge High School in 1940. After graduation, she worked in a grocery store, cream station and the post office. On June 1, 1947, Verna mar-

ried Robert Strivens. To his union four children were born. They farmed in the Wausa area until 2004. Verna worked for Pfeil & Associates during the tax season for about three years. In 2004, they moved to Norfolk, NE. Verna and Bob were fortunate to be able to celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary this spring. She loved playing cars, crocheting, painting and being around her family and friends.

Verna is survived by her husband, Bob of Norfolk; her four children and their spouses, Bill and Rhonda Strivens of Hartington, NE, Gary and Barb Strivens of Wausa, NE, Dave and Susan Strivens of Wausa, NE, and June and Dave Fox of Wisner, NE; 8

grandchildren; 4 step-grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren and 5 step great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents; four sisters, one grandchild, Carrie Ann Strivens; one step grandchild, Andrew Deyo.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
 June 25, 2012

WINTZ
 FUNERAL HOME, INC.
 Hartington * Coleridge * Crofton
 203 W. Franklin, PO Box 505
 Hartington, Nebraska 68739

Lucille Palmer

Lucille M. Palmer, age 83, of Yankton, South Dakota, died Thursday, June 21, 2012 at Avera Sister James Care Center in Yankton.

Memorial services are 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 26, 2012 at First United Methodist Church in Yankton with Reverend Ron Johnson officiating. Inurnment will be at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 27 at the Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis, South Dakota.

Visitation with the family is from 5:00 to 8:00 PM, on Monday, June 25, at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton.

Honorary pallbearers are Roger, Doug, Kevin and Jeff Fritzsche.

Lucille "Lucy" was born December 4, 1928 in Wessington, South Dakota to Earl and Hazel (Galbreath) Fritzsche. She graduated from Wessington High School and cherished the time spent playing the piano in the family band. After high school, Lucy attended a business school in Rapid City, SD where she received her training to be a secretary. She then moved to Indiana and in 1951, married Robert E. Rhodes. After her divorce in 1955, Lucy moved to Huron, SD with her daughter and began working at the Unemployment Agency. On June 3, 1961, she married Kenneth L. Palmer. After their marriage, they lived in Chamberlain, SD for over 20 years, moving briefly to Aberdeen, SD and then settling in Yankton in 1979. Lucy enjoyed a long career at the different job service agencies, retiring in 1989. She loved



Palmer

dancing, golfing, fishing, playing cards, and most of all, watching the kids participate in sporting events and school activities. Lucy is survived by her daughter, Patricia "Patti" Bawdon of Sioux Falls, SD; two grandchildren: David and Bethany Bawdon of Sioux Falls; two brothers, Harold (Maxine) Fritzsche of Rapid City and Leonard (Luanne) Fritzsche of Wessington, SD; a sister, Lois Pierce of Rapid City; special friends, Roger and Linda Hora of Yankton and Dr. Tom and Jane Gilmore of Yankton; and many nieces and nephews.

Lucy was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Kenneth Palmer on January 1, 1990; brother and sister-in-law, Edward and Elaine Fritzsche and brother-in-law, William "Bill" Pierce.

Memorials may be directed to the American Cancer Society or First United Methodist Church.

To send an online sympathy message, please visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
 June 25, 2012

WINTZ & RAY
 FUNERAL HOME
 and Cremation Service, Inc.
 Online condolences at:
 www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com

Jean Gropper

PLATTE — Jean Gropper, 86, of Platte, SD passed away Friday, June 22, 2012 at the Platte Health Center.

Memorial Services will be 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, June 26, 2012 at the Olive Presbyterian Church in Platte. A Committal Service will follow at the Platte City Cemetery.

Visitation will be held from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Monday, June 25, 2012 at Mount Funeral Home with a 7:00 p.m. Prayer Service. Expressions of sympathy may be extended to the family through www.mountfuneralhome.com.

Jean Mowforth was born on January 11, 1926 to Leonard and Florence (Turnbull) Mowforth in Hull, England. She graduated high school and was united in marriage to Leslie Gropper on May 29, 1947 in Chamberlain, SD. Jean was a member of the Community Action Agency for 8 years, serving on the CAA State Advisory Council in Pierre, SD for 3 years. She worked under Gov. Bill Janklow for 9 years on the Office of Aging State Advisory Council and spent 10 years as a Green Thumb Supervisor. Jean was a member of the Olive Presbyterian Church and the Platte American Legion Auxiliary.

Grateful for having shared in Jean's life: her 4 children: Michael (Carla) Gropper of Blue-springs, MO, Wendy (Randy) Linderman of Ferndale, WA, Gillian Anderson of Irene, SD and Kristy (Dennis) Hacecky of Utica, SD; 13 grandchildren; 33 great grand-



Gropper

children; 4 great-great grandchildren; along with several nieces and nephews.

Jean was preceded in death by: her husband (April 17, 2006); a daughter-in-law; a son-in-law; a grandson; her parents; a sister and 4 brothers.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
 June 25, 2012

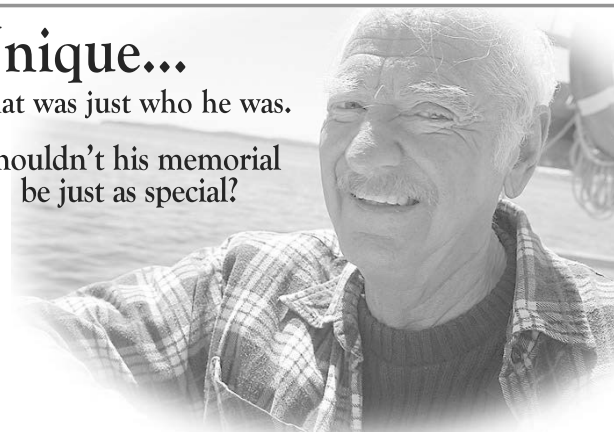
LuVern Swensen

VERMILLION — LuVern Swensen, 91, of Vermillion died Saturday, June 23, 2012, at Sanford Vermillion Care Center.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Kober Funeral Home, Vermillion.

Unique...
 that was just who he was.

Shouldn't his memorial
 be just as special?



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 THE MARK OF EXCELLENCE

Even a princess
 occasionally
 chooses to
 get dirty.



There's a good reason why you didn't always play 'dress up' with your friends on Saturdays. His name was Dad. With him, even fishing was fun. And while you've idolized Dad your entire life, you'll want to celebrate these times after his death.

A meaningful funeral allows you to grieve and say goodbye, as well as remember and laugh. It's a significant celebration that honors Dad. One that in many ways, is also for you.

WINTZ & RAY
 FUNERAL HOME
 and Cremation Service, Inc.
 Yankton, 605-665-3644
 wintzrayfuneralhome.com
 Garden of Memories Cemetery