

3 Bodies Recovered In Fatal Slough Crash

SISSETON (AP) — Divers over the weekend recovered the bodies of three women whose vehicle crashed in a South Dakota slough as they were returning from a trip to a North Dakota casino.

Cleone Pewamo, 65, of Sioux Falls, and Alberta Harwood, 47, and Exzilda Seaboy, 54, both of Sisseton, and had been missing for a week. A farmer came across the crash site Saturday afternoon.

"(Pewamo's) body surfaced, that's why he found it," Highway Patrol Lt. Brett Schutt said Monday. "The vehicle was in 10 to 13 feet of water so nobody could see it. It was on a gravel road, obviously not traveled very often."

Divers located the vehicle Sunday and retrieved the bodies of the other two women.

Authorities said Harwood was driving Oct. 29 when the car went off a county road and into the water about four miles northwest of Claire City. The women were last seen earlier that day at Dakota Magic Casino near Hankinson, N.D., he said.

It was not clear who reported the women missing or if any organized searches had been conducted. Roberts County Sheriff Jay Tasa did not immediately return telephone calls to The Associated Press on Monday.

Rain, Snow Slow Field Operations In Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska farmers continue to make good progress on the corn harvest, while rain and snow slowed most field operations last week.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says in the weekly crop report on Monday that the corn harvest is 87 percent complete. That's behind last year's 93 percent but ahead of the average of 66 percent. The harvest is nearly complete in the eastern half of the state, but only half finished in the Panhandle.

The report says 78 percent of the corn is in good to excellent condition. The USDA says rain and snow that fell in the middle of last week slowed field work. Snow fell in portions of western Nebraska last Wednesday, with rain in the south and southeast on Thursday.

Butte Co. Courthouse Celebrates Centennial

BELLE FOURCHE (AP) — The Butte County Courthouse in the Northern Black Hills is officially a centenarian.

The *Black Hills Pioneer* reports that the Belle Fourche building has been a pillar of justice and commerce since it opened 1911. County officials laid out items of historical significance during a Friday open house celebrating the courthouse's birthday.

The memorabilia included a rusted prisoner ball and chain, a judge's vintage cloak and a logbook detailing the minutes of the City Council when it first voted to construct the courthouse.

Man Sentenced To 2 Years For Embezzlement

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A Sioux Falls man convicted of mail fraud has been sentenced to two years behind bars for embezzling nearly \$400,000 from SDN Communications over 10-year period.

Bradley Whitsell, 46, is ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine and serve three years of probation. U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson says in a Monday news release that Whitsell also has to pay about \$475,000 in restitution. U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol sentenced Whitsell on Monday.

Whitsell pleaded guilty to mail fraud in August. In exchange for the plea, an additional charge of wire fraud was dismissed.

Whitsell had worked in management at SDN Communications. The company paid more than \$70,000 on a forensic audit that uncovered his ongoing theft, which was rolled into Whitsell's ordered restitution. The FBI headed the criminal investigation.

Couple Gives Birth En Route To Hospital

BROOKINGS (AP) — A Brookings couple who tried to make it to a Sioux Falls hospital in time to have their baby ended up giving birth en route instead.

Emergency crews from Moody County helped deliver the healthy baby girl. Her weight: 7 pounds, 8 ounces, reported KDLT-TV.

Moody County Emergency Medical Services paramedic Kristene Rancour said the baby was born early Sunday, within 12 minutes from the time the ambulance left the couple's home.

"I've had some pretty close calls, but we've always made it in time," Rancour told KDLT. "This one, we ended up being four minutes away from the hospital."

Rancour, who has been working as an emergency paramedic for nearly 10 years, had never delivered a baby before. She was coached by emergency medical technician Mark Bonrood, who has delivered three babies in his 36-year career.

"When it happens, your training kicks in and you just do what has to be done," Rancour said. "You're always worried that there are complications, and in this case, there were none. It was successful, and it was an amazing experience."

Rancour says the 6:52 a.m. birthing is a moment she will cherish. "A lot of the situations that we have to deal with don't end up in a miracle happening, and so that's what I'll take from this experience, definitely," she said.

Rancour will be honored alongside Bonrood, county dispatcher Jamie Gaspar and off-duty Flandreau police officer Wyatt Koens for working together in the delivery.

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Iowa Woman Who Shot Neighbor Convicted

FORT DODGE, Iowa (AP) — An Iowa jury convicted a woman Monday of murder in the 2001 death of her 20-year-old neighbor, rejecting her claim that she shot him to protect herself and her three children during a home invasion.

Prosecutors maintained there was no home invasion and Tracey Richter, now 45, killed Dustin Wehde to keep him quiet about his role in a convoluted plot to frame her ex-husband. They said Richter lured Wehde to her home in Early in December 2001, had him write in a pink notebook that her ex-husband hired him to kill her and her son and then shot him nine times with two guns.

Richter was involved in a custody fight at the time, and prosecutors say she was trying to gain an advantage before an upcoming hearing to keep from losing her son and \$1,000-a-month child support payments.

Richter buried her face in her arms on the table when the jury's verdict was read.

Her mother, son and fiance huddled in the courtroom, hugging and crying before quickly leaving without talking. Her attorney, Scott Bandstra, declined to comment as he left the courthouse in Fort Dodge.

Wehde's mother, Mona Wehde, said the verdict was "a blessing."

"I knew that was what we should get," she said. "We thank everyone... for seeing through the lies and hearing the truth. It's what we all were waiting for."

Mona Wehde once filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Richter but dropped it when investigators said it could interfere with their case. She

said despite the verdict and the decade since her son's death, there's "a lot of deep hurt left in there."

Wehde's sister, Ashley Pingree, said the verdict marks a new beginning for the family.

"We can move on now because everything is out in the open," she said. "We know and so does everybody else."

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Wednesday, November 9
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Pipeline Process Scrutinized

BY MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State Department's inspector general will review the Obama administration's handling of a Canadian company's request to pipe oil from western Canada to Texas, following complaints from Democratic lawmakers about possible conflicts of interest in the review process.

Deputy Inspector General Harold W. Geisel said the special review will center on whether the State Department "and all other parties involved" in the project followed federal laws and regulations related to the \$7 billion Keystone XL project. The 1,700-mile pipeline proposed by Calgary-based TransCanada would carry oil derived from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, to refineries in Houston and Port Arthur, Texas.

The pipeline would travel through Montana, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma before reaching Texas. It would double the capacity of an existing pipeline that opened last year, carrying oil through North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Illinois.

Announcement of the review comes one day after thousands of protesters gathered in Lafayette Square across from the White House to oppose the Keystone XL plan. During Sunday's rally, the crowd linked hands to surround the White House, keeping up pressure on President Barack Obama as his administration decides whether to approve the pipeline project. The State Department has authority over the project because it crosses a U.S. border.

The review could delay the heavy-contested project, which has become a political trap for Obama, who risks angering environmental supporters if he approves the pipeline and could face criticism from labor and business for thwarting jobs if he rejects it.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., said Monday that Obama should delay a decision on the pipeline request until the inspector general's investigation is finished. The administration has said for months that it expects to decide by the end of

Through their backyard

The proposed Keystone XL tar sands oil pipeline would cross Nebraska's Sandhills and parts of the Ogallala aquifer, a major source of



this year, although in recent days officials have hinted that timeline could slip.

"This is a critically important issue for our environment and the energy future of our country," Sanders said. "At a time when all credible scientific evidence and opinion indicate that we are losing the battle against global warming, it is imperative that we have objective environmental assessments of major carbon-dependent energy projects."

It was not known how long the inspector general's review would take, although a spokesman for the inspector general's office said Monday that a team has been assembled and has already begun work.

A spokesman for TransCanada said the company welcomes the review.

"At TransCanada, we conduct ourselves with integrity and in an open and transparent manner. We are certain that the conclusion of this review will reflect that," spokesman James Millar said.

Sanders and Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., requested the review, saying they were disturbed by media reports that a company that performed an environmental review on behalf of the State Department had listed pipeline developer TransCanada as a "major client." Two other senators and 10 other House members — all Democrats — also asked for the IG review.

In a letter last month, the lawmakers asked the inspector general to look at all contractual or financial relationships between the consultant, Houston-based Cardno Enrinx, and TransCanada.

Lawmakers Credited With Stopping Bar Brawl

FORT PIERRE (AP) — Several South Dakota lawmakers have been credited with restraining a Minnesota man accused of pulling a knife in a Fort Pierre bar.

Mark Bardwell, 41, of Zimmerman, Minn., faces simple and aggravated assault charges in the Friday night melee at the bar inside the AmericInn Lodge and Suites.

"It was really weird. It was just bizarre," state Rep. David Lust, a Rapid City Republican, told the *Argus Leader*. "You don't expect that in small-town South Dakota in a hotel bar."

According to the lawmakers' descriptions to the newspaper,

here's what happened:

A group of conservative South Dakota legislators came to Fort Pierre for a pheasant hunt to raise scholarship money for travel to events sponsored by the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative organization.

After a banquet, some went to the hotel bar. A man who had been drinking there for several hours began acting erratically and at one point grabbed state Rep. Kristin Conzet, R-Rapid City, by the arm.

House Speaker Val Rausch, R-Big Stone City, intervened, at which point the man allegedly pulled a knife. Lust, the House

majority leader, then stepped in. The man allegedly sheathed the knife, but took a swing at Rausch. "Then the melee was on," Lust said. "Myself and several others tackled him and held him down until the police arrived."

Rausch said he dodged the man's punch, but state Rep. Brian Gosch — who is the speaker pro tempore — suffered a cut to the finger as he struggled to ensure Bardwell didn't pull the

knife out again.

"If he'd have gotten the knife out of the sheath when we had him up against the wall, it would have gotten really bad," said Gosch, a Rapid City Republican.

Stanley County Sheriff Brad Rathbun told the *Argus Leader* that deputies were dispatched to the scene at about 11 p.m. He said Bardwell drives a food service truck and is scheduled for his first court appearance Tuesday.

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