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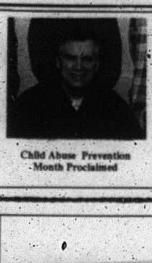
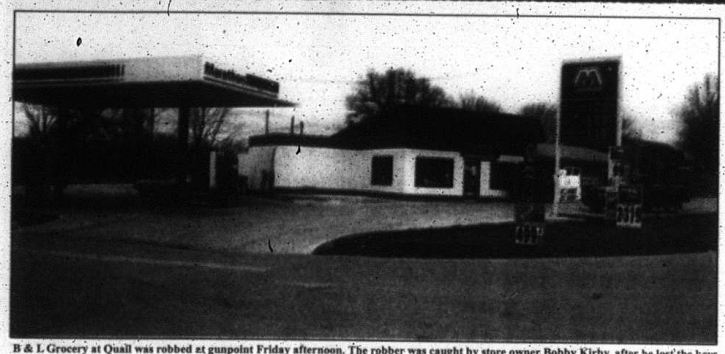


Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclaimed

Mount Vernon Signal

Serving Rockcastle County Since 1887

Mount Vernon, Kentucky 40456 - Volume 114 - Number 25 Ph. (606) 256-2244 - .50 a copy - Thursday, March 22, 2001



B & L Grocery at Quail was robbed at gunpoint Friday afternoon. The robber was caught by store owner Bobby Kirby, after he lost the keys to his car.

Would be robber loses keys to car

Grocery robbed at gunpoint

A Somerset man will be back in court on Monday to face charges of armed robbery and theft by unlawful taking, after an armed robbery at B & L Grocery on Hwy. 70.

The robbery occurred around 2 p.m. last Friday afternoon.

According to Rockcastle Deputy Sheriff Ronnie Roark, who was the first police officer on the scene, Heath D. Toney, 31 entered the store carrying a .380 automatic pistol and told store clerk Luke McKibben he wanted the store's money.

Roark said that Toney left the store with about $500 in cash and attempted to get into his car, which was parked about a quarter of a mile from the store on Hwy. 70.

Roark said that Toney had apparently lost the keys to his car and that store owner Bobby Kirby, had gotten a gun from the store and was able to detain Toney, until police arrived.

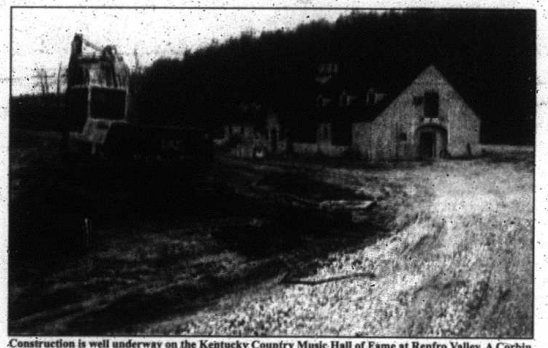
Roark said that Toney had apparently put some duct tape on his face to try and conceal his identity.

There were no injuries in the incident and the money was returned to Kirby.

Kentucky State Police Detective Gary Lane is in charge of the investigation.

Toney is also a suspect in an armed robbery at a McDonald's Restaurant in Somerset earlier in the day.

He is currently being held on $25,000 cash or property bond.



Construction is well underway on the Kentucky Country Music Hall of Fame at Renfro Valley. A Corbin company has a year long bid on the building at a cost of $1.7 million. The total cost of the project will be about $3.6 million and the opening is scheduled for Spring of 2002. The former Lair stables, shown above, will serve as a Portal to the Hall of Fame, which will actually be built in two phases. The Kentucky Country Music Hall of Fame board is also raising private funds for the project. State Representative Danny Ford of Mt. Vernon secured the orginal $3.6 million from the General Assembly. The money being raised by the Hall of Fame board will be used to operate the Hall of Fame, after it opens.

Important Summit scheduled

Promoting small businesses and tourism. Helping entrepreneurs get the financial and technical assistance they need. Working together as a county and region to bring more jobs to the area.

The Rockcastle County Development Board and Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation will hold an Economic Development Summit on Wednesday, March 28, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., to address these crucial issues.

The event, which is open to the public, will be held at the Rockcastle County CenterNet site on the third floor of the county courthouse. A complimentary continental breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m.

John Clontz, chairman of the Rockcastle County Economic Development Board, strongly urges community members to participate in this half-day session.

"Economic development is a joint effort," Clontz said. "We need our community leaders to stay informed

Cont. to A-11

Census says county grew 12 percent

By: Richard Anderkin

Rockcastle County is not growing as fast as all of the counties around it, but according to census figures released Monday, Rockcastle has twelve percent more residents than were here ten years ago.

According to the Census Bureau, Rockcastle now has 16,582 residents compared to 14,803 ten years ago.

Rockcastle saw an increase of 1,779 people over the ten year period.

However, few of the new residents in the county are school age children.

According to Rockcastle County School Superintendent Larry Hammond, student enrollment has not increased in the ten year period, and some years during that ten years enrollment has actually slightly decreased.

"We have not had a 30 student fluxuation during that ten year period either way," he said.

Madison County continues to be the most populated county bordering Rockcastle with 70,872. The county grew by 13,364 residents in the last ten years.

Pulaski County is the second largest county bordering Rockcastle with 56,217. They grew by 13.6 percent.

Laurel County showed the second largest growth of the surrounding counties with 21.4 percent more people. The county has 52,715 people living in it.

Lincoln County has 23,361 residents, with 3,316 more residents than they had ten years ago.

Jackson County has 13,495 residents and had an increase of 1,540 people from ten years ago. The county actually grew at a higher percentage rate of 12.9 than Rockcastle.

Garrard County, which barely touches Rockcastle's border, had an increase in population over the last ten years of 27.7 percent.

The county has 14,792 residents

Cont. to A-11

Stewart released from Madison County jail after posting bond

An Orlando man who is facing murder charges in Rockcastle County and other criminal charges in Madison County has been released on bond.

Davy Stewart, 32, was indicted in October by a Rockcastle Grand Jury. He is accused of killing Patty Clark, 25, of Conway on August 9 of last year.

Stewart is accused of fatally shooting Clark and also wounding Sally Hoskins, 24, of Crooked Creek, who told police that Ms. Clark had been shot to death by Stewart.

Stewart, who was shot by police in Madison County two days before Clark's body was found had been held in the Madison County Detention Center since he was released from the hospital.

Last Friday, Madison County Circuit Judge William Jennings released Stewart after he filled a $10,000 cash bond. Stewart had earlier filled a $50,000 property bond in Rockcastle County in connection with the murder charge. Circuit Judge William Cain is the Judge in the Rockcastle case.

Stewart is due back in court in Rockcastle County on April 13 for a hearing.

Stewart's trial in Madison County began earlier this year, but was delayed after a juror asked to be dismissed from the trial.

Stewart's trial date in Madison County has been set for April 2.

Sandra Laswell, 33, of Boyle County has also been indicted in connection with the case.

Laswell is accused of criminal complicity to commit murder, tampering with physical evidence, concealing, removing and altering evidence and complicity to assault.

The day after Patty Clark disappeared, Sally Hoskins walked to the home of Sammy Stewart, Davy's brother, where Laswell was staying. Hoskins had been shot, but told police she did not know what had happened to her because she had been hit in the head.

According to police, Laswell told them that she thought Hoskins had been in a car wreck.

However, police say that Laswell cleaned Hoskins up before Hoskins was taken to the hospital.

Police also determined later that the vehicle Davy Stewart drove the night of the murder, a 1988 Jeep Wrangler, was registered to Laswell.

Lane Ponder gets his wish from Dream Factory

By Willie Hiatt
Special to the Mount Vernon Signal

Lane Ponder was understandably overwhelmed by the crowds he saw in Las Vegas last fall.

The 6-year-old from Scaffold Cane attended a Professional Bull Riders event in that neon oasis compliments of The Dream Factory of Lexington, which fulfills dreams of children with serious or chronic illness.

Lane said, "Mom, I think they should call it 'Found Vegas', because everybody found it," said Lane's mother, Jill Ponder, the Youth Service Center coordinator for Rockcastle County High School.

Lane has undergone chemotherapy treatments for sacral teratoma, a germ-cell cancer discovered on his lower spinal column in April 1999 and which recurred in March 2000. The family learned his dream would be fulfilled by the Dream Factory during his last chemotherapy treatment at the University of Kentucky Children's Hospital in July.

Choosing a dream wasn't as easy as it might seem for a boy nicknamed "Cowboy." When asked what he wanted to do more than anything else, he answered "horse ridin," which the family does nearly every day anyway, his mother said.

Lane's favorite movie, 8 Seconds, which stars Luke Perry and chronicles the life of Lane Frost, a former bull-riding world champion, provided inspiration for Lane's dream.

What he chose was the mother of all bull-riding competitions, the PBR Bud Light Cup World Championships at Thomas & Mack Arena in Las Vegas on Oct. 26-29, an event televised live on The Nashville Network. Lane shared his excitement about the trip with nearly everyone he saw, including clerks at Wal-Mart in Berea.

Besides his mother, Lane was accompanied on the trip by his father, Steve; his 3-year-old brother, Cass; and his 9-year-old sister, Hannah. Others joining him were his grandparents, Jan and June Stevens, and cousins Shaunna Stevens, Katie Stevens and Mikey Todd.

The family stayed at palatial Caesar's Palace, attended several sessions of the bull-riding event, was interviewed on TV and met a number of bull riders during an autograph session with PBR stars such as Ty Murray, Cody and J.W. Hart, Chris Shivers and Tuff Hedeman.

Lane, who lost his hair during chemo treatments, received lots of attention everywhere he went, his mother said. He and his brother dressed the part with boots, hats and vests. No matter what bull rider asked Lane to name his favorite rider, he always told them Lane Frost, the man in the movie he'd watched as many as 30 times.

Many people wrongly assumed Lane was named after the famous rider.

In Las Vegas, the family also met Terry Holland, a bull rider who designed a bucking bull simulator riders use to hone their skills. The Ponder boys found it hard to pass up the "Mighty Bucky" exhibit in Caesar's Palace.

The simulator, which is operated manually and is a far cry from the mechanical bull made famous in the movie Urban Cowboy, was such a hit with the boys that the family ordered one as a Christmas present. It was a fixture in the living room until being moved to the barn just a couple weeks ago.

It isn't just the presence of Mighty Bucky that indicates life in the Ponder home is different these days. They are in the second part of their lives, Jill said, the one that comes after diagnosis of cancer. She probably wouldn't stand in the way even if Lane pursued a dangerous sport like bull riding.

"After the last two years, it doesn't seem like a big thing," Jill said. "He can do anything he wants to do. It's not half as scary a thought as what we have been through."

Lane continues to get excellent medical reports, Jill said. There is no sign of cancer. Doctors do not use the term remission for his type of cancer because it implies there is no cure, she said. What the family hopes is that it has been eradicated by chemotherapy. "He is healthy today," Jill said. "That's about all I can say, he's healthy today, and we are having a big time."

The family has taken to heart these words: Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery and today is a present. Jill said she doesn't fear for Lane's safety when he drives his golf cart on their farm. She's quick to interrupt house work to read him a book or take him to a basketball game. She can't keep her hands off him and kisses him at night as he falls asleep.

"We are not sad," she said. "We don't have any regrets. We live probably happier than most people I know, more joyful. You can really get bound up in worrying about what's coming. It paralyzes you to live like that. You turn away from it and you just enjoy yourself."

It is impossible to tell Lane's story without explaining the role faith has played. His grandmother, June Stevens of Wildie, says it is "mysterious" how an extensive prayer network has adopted Lane and his fight against the "bad cells" in his body, which is how his mother explained trips to the hospital.

Prayers for Lane have been uttered all over Central Kentucky, as well as in Tennessee, Oregon, Indi-

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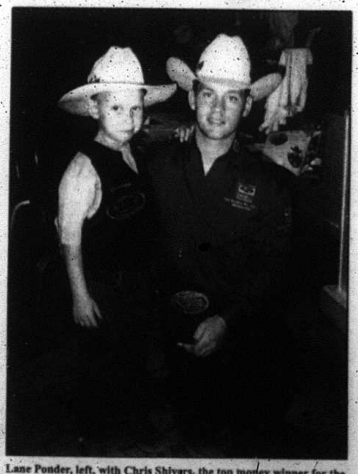

Lane Ponder, left, with Chris Shivers, the top money winner for the year 2000.