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Thermopolis Hot Springs

# Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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## Cowboy Rendezvous taking center stage

by Joe Sovo

Back in the 1950s and early 1960s, Thermopolis was the host site of one of the most famous and well-attended rodeos in the United States. This year marks the seventh year of a great comeback for this historic annual event with the Cowboy Rendezvous this weekend.

Several new activities have been added, making it a fun-filled weekend for everyone. Activities range from a pair of PRCA Rodeo performances, parade, music gathering, free breakfast, dinner and dance. "We're trying to build that (the rendezvous) back up. It's growing every year. It is a big event," said Gayla Mead, Cowboy Rendezvous secretary. "We promote it as a whole weekend for the community."

"Our goal is to make it the best PRCA small-town rodeo in America. We're trying to win that award."

Mead said a "vendor alley" has been added at the fairgrounds for rodeo goers. In addition to food vendors, there will be booths offering a variety of western arts, crafts, jewelry and apparel, plus local knife maker Wes Whipple.

A cowboy music gathering gets the party started Friday af-

ternoon from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Hot Springs State Park amphitheater. The Wyoming chapter of the Western Music Association will present an afternoon of cowboy music and poetry. Featured will be Hub Whitt's band, the music of Patti (Vanoy) Highland, cowboy poetry with Adobe Dick Hall and other artists.

### PRCA Rodeos Friday, Saturday night

The Hot Springs County Fairgrounds festivities begin Friday night with the first of two PRCA Rendezvous Rodeo performances, beginning at 7 p.m. Gates open at 4:15 p.m. Another performance is set for the same time Saturday.

Rodeo tickets are \$10 per performance. Purchase advance tickets for both Friday and Saturday and the cost is \$15 for both rodeos, a savings of \$5. Advance tickets can be purchased in advance at White Horse Country Store, the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center, Storyteller and Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce office, plus Butch's Place in Kirby. Children 3 and under are admitted free.

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## Man charged with attempted murder

by J.D. Stetson

Hot Springs County prosecutors charged James "Jim" Weisbeck, 66, with attempted murder in the second degree and influencing, intimidating or impeding a witness last week after law enforcement responded to Weisbeck's Eagle Ridge Road home.

According to documents filed in Hot Springs County Circuit Court, the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office received a call from a 51-year-old woman at 1 a.m. June 15 who said Weisbeck allegedly shot a pistol at her at

the home while the two had an argument.

The woman said she had told Weisbeck she was going to call 911 after he had fired the weapon. She told deputies he allegedly threatened to kill her if she contacted law enforcement and then he left the home, according to court documents.

After interviewing the woman at the Law Enforcement Center, two deputies returned to the home and located a bullet in a

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Sunday's "show and shine" during the Hot Spot Car Rally at Hot Springs State Park was dampened by rain, but it did not deter the spirit of owners and spectators. Above, Edwin

Ortega of Riverton uses a chamois to dry his vintage Corvette during a break in the moisture. There were 107 total entries in the car rally. —Joe Sovo photo

## Car Rally not deterred by rain, features 107 entries

by J.D. Stetson

Albeit a bit of rainy weather Sunday, the 19th annual Hot Spot Car Rally concluded as a success.

The event had more than 100 cars from all corners of Wyoming, plus two cars from out of state, said Tawna McQueen, car rally committee spokeswoman.

The rally had a total of 107 cars, down from 136 in 2010. McQueen was happy with the turnout due to the weather. She said only two left the rally because of the rain. She estimated 65 percent of the participants were recurring participants from past rallies.

The actual rally awards went well and local participants Jim and Dollie Daniels took the Pre-1985 Classic Unmodified award with their 1959 Ford Thunderbird.

The awards for People's Choice and Best Street Rod went to Randy and Lori Nissen of Worland for their bright orange 1936 Ford three-window coupe, which also won People's Choice and Best Car in 2010. The

Nissens have owned the car for more than nine years and it took eight years to rebuild.

The committee also made \$500 from raffle sales for a quilt made by the Old West Quilting Guild. The committee planned to donate \$250 to People for People and \$250 to the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center.

Although the weather was rainy Sunday, Saturday's events went off without a hitch. McQueen reported the Boy Scouts, who provided the barbecue dinner Saturday night, said they made a profit on the meals. The entertainment, the Ron and Opal Show, started early after about 50 people showed up and were waiting for the activity to start. The show was a success with a crowd stretched across the park.

"People were all over, and there wasn't an empty chair during the show," McQueen said.

### Awards and winners

Best Unmodified Pre 1950: Ken Derringer, Hyattville, 1930 Ford Model A.

Pre 1985 Classic Unmodified: Jim and Dollie Daniels, Thermopolis, 1959 Ford Thunderbird.

Post 1985 Classic Unmodified: Ray Parnell, Casper, 1988 Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS.

2000 and Beyond: Joel Highsmith, Shoshoni, 2008 Dodge Challenger Superbird.

Best Motorcycle: Lloyd Lafave, Casper, 2007 Boss Hoss trike.

Best Muscle Car: Tom Wolff, Gillette, 1965 Pontiac GTO.

Best Truck: Paul Zahler, Cody, 1931 Chevrolet pickup.

Best Car: Lenard Miller, Mills, 1950 Ford coupe.

Best Street Rod: Randy and Lori Nissen, Worland 1936 Ford three-window coupe.

People's Choice: Nissens, 1936 Ford three-window coupe.

Committee Choice: Bob Coe, Cody, 1968 Dodge Charger R/T.

Farthest Distance: Steven Piel, Colorado Springs, Colo., 1980 Chevrolet Camaro Z-28.

Jacket winners: Kris Kofakis, Casper; Lloyd Lafave, Casper; Jack Gaudern, Riverton; Kevin Kleinheselink, Casper; Scott Steiner, Cody; Randy Nissen, Worland.

Quit raffle: Patti Jeunehomme, Thermopolis; second (bench from Hazel-n-Pearl's): Judy Kenast, Thermopolis; third (gift basket from Wind River Casino) Barb Rice, Thermopolis.

Poker Run winners: High hand: Sandy Howe, Thermopolis, four aces, \$270; Low hand: Mark Mount, Thermopolis, king-high, \$180.

## DCI responds to allegations

by Cindy Glasson

The case summary surrounding the recent probe by the Department of Criminal Investigation (DCI) into various alleged charges against the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Department was released Tuesday afternoon.

The entire contents of the DCI investigation were reviewed by Neal R. Stelting, county and prosecuting attorney for Sublette County.

In order for the investigation results to be made public, an outside attorney had to review the reports. If the results had been turned over to the State's Attorney General, the case would have been permanently sealed.

Wishing to have complete transparency in the investigation, the Hot Springs County Commissioners specifically requested an outside review of the following allegations:

### Horse shooting

In his summary, Stelting said the shooting of a horse owned by Larry and Chris Bentley by undersheriff Dave Larson appears to have been intended to humanely cease the suffering of an animal.

"The owners have raised and alleged that undersheriff Larson committed a crime of Property Destruction in violation of W.S. 6-3-201(a)," Stelting said.

"I have reviewed the investigation of Special

Agent Steve Herrmann and all exhibits related to said investigation. I find no evidence that Undersheriff Larson, or any member of the Hot Springs Sheriff's Department, committed a violation of W.S. 6-3-201(a) for the killing of the Bentley's horse."

Stelting said Larson was acting within the scope of his official duties at the time he destroyed Bentley's horse.

Stelting said based on the information Larson had to consider on the day of the horse shooting, he was ultimately justified in the majority of his actions, including the shooting of the horse.

"In reviewing the totality of the circumstances, Undersheriff Larson's act appeared to be reasonable in light of the information he had available," he said. "Accordingly, Larson cannot be criminally liable for the commission of said act while operating within the scope of his duties."

### Lack of proper medical supervision

According to the summary, an allegation of lack of proper medical supervision appears to have been first reported by Thermopolis citizen Daniel T. Evans.

"The crux of the complaint appears to allege that the Hot Springs County Detention Center was administering prescription drugs without appropriate

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## Mosquito spraying set for June 30

Hot Springs County Weed and Pest Department Assistant Supervisor Jim Andreen reports the district plans to conduct aerial spraying for mosquitoes next Thursday, June 30 in the Lucerne, Kirby and Owl Creek areas. The

spraying will occur in the evening hours, weather permitting.

"We're trying to stay on top of it," Andreen said about the first weed and pest mosquito spraying project of the year. "We're actively larvaciding."

With abundant moisture this spring, Andreen said it's too early to tell what the mosquito population will be like this summer. By eradicating some of the current mosquitoes, it will reduce the number of adults that lay eggs.

### Carrying for the cause



John Gerrells, above, and John Holm donated their time as auctioneers during the Fighting Chicas Relay for Life team's purse auction last Friday at Days Inn. In the spirit of the battle against cancer, Gerrells shows a poodle purse matching his pink plume. There were 80 purses sold during the live auction. The event raised \$3,867.50 for Relay for Life. — Joe Sovo photo

## Rendezvous

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Join the "Wild Bunch" in cheering as top rough stock riders from around the nation go head to head with veteran stock contractor, Dona Vold Larson of Triple V Rodeo's world famous bucking stock. In the bareback event, Indian Summer, Sadie Kate and other wild steeds will give contestants a run for their money. Dry Summer and Loose Change are a couple of the many hard-bucking horses that are going to challenge some of PR-CA's best saddle bronc riders.

Pretty ladies from all over will turn and burn in the ladies' barrel racing.

Other cowgirls making an appearance at the Rendezvous Rodeo include Miss Rodeo Wyoming, Brittany Richards; and Ms. Cheyenne Frontier Days, Amy Berry and her Lady in Waiting, Sami Jo Heitch. Ms. Rodeo Jackson Hole and Ms. Rodeo Cody Stampede may also grace the arena. In addition, our own junior royalty will be featured including Page Driver, Thermopolis Rendezvous Rodeo Junior Queen; Teryn Jackman, her first attendant; and Hannah Price, second attendant. Assisting them will be Liz Rhodes, Junior Princess; and True Thorne, her first attendant.

Both rodeo performances will include tie-down roping, steer dogging and team roping as well as single steer roping events featuring NFR qualifiers.

Justin Rumford, rodeo entertainer extraordinaire, will dazzle the crowd with amazing antics and endless wit. Things will get pretty serious, though, as Rumford and fellow bullfighters Jess Griffin and Mark Gill are kept busy in the bull riding event. "007-Q," "Really Red" and many other NFR qualifying bulls will offer up thrills, chills and spills.

### 'Tough Enough to Wear Pink'

Saturday's rodeo is billed as the "Tough Enough to Wear Pink" performance. Tough Enough to Wear Pink is a national campaign to raise cancer awareness and funds to assist local people in their battle against the disease. Contestants and spectators are en-

## Patti (Vannoy) Highland returns to roots in HSC

Hot Springs County's gift to the current country and western music scene, our very own Patti (Vannoy) Highland, returns to her roots for a series of performances during the upcoming Thermopolis Cowboy Rendezvous.

As probably the only Thermopolis performer ever to grace the stage at the Grand Ole Opry, Highland will begin demonstrating why the honors were earned, not given, at the Wyoming chapter of the Western Music Association's music and poetry gathering Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. Later in the day, she will sing our National Anthem to officially open the rodeo and she'll honor our country again to begin Saturday night's performance.

Highland will ride in Saturday's Cowboy Rendezvous parade, and she might sing a bit along the route. She also plans to perform at the dance Saturday after the rodeo.

When the weekend rodeo is finished, Highland will travel



Patti (Vannoy) Highland

to Cody and do much the same thing for the Cody Stampede, held yearly over the Fourth of July weekend.

Highland will return to Thermopolis the weekend of July 15-16 to attend her class' high school reunion party.

couraged to show support by wearing pink. Saturday night, rodeo ticket holders can dance free to the music of Sundowners at the fair building.

Saturday morning features a free pancake breakfast sponsored by T & J Propane at the fairgrounds, where rodeo slack will be running. The breakfast begins at 8 a.m.

"Cowboy Tuff" is the theme of this year's Cowboy Rendezvous parade, which begins at 10 a.m. Saturday. Eddie Shaffer is the parade marshal. It includes Thermopolis' own version of the "running of the steers." Hot Springs County Tobacco Prevention and Sheriff Lou's "Cowboy Tuff" stick horse posse rides at the end of the parade (see story in this issue). The posse will also perform during both rodeo performances.

Anyone who wishes to enter may pick up an entry form at

the Thermopolis Chamber or White Horse Country Store. There is no fee and prizes will be awarded in three categories - Best Equestrian, Best Youth and Best Merchant entries.

Line-up will begin at 9 a.m. at Pizza Hut. The parade begins at the corner of Sixth and Shoshoni, goes to the stoplight, turns right to the flagpole and then north to the rodeo grounds.

For more information, call Dave Denton at 864-3047 or Gayla Mead at 864-9339.

Following the parade, Thermopolis Hardware will host a Sarsaparilla Social, featuring historical cowboy figure and tall-tale teller Ray Maples.

The Wild Bunch Dinner is set for 6 p.m. Saturday at the fair building.

Cowboy Rendezvous activities wrap up Sunday with Cowboy Church in the grandstand at 9 a.m. Attendance is free.

## Commissioners

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medical supervision, which had resulted in a number of overdoses in the jail," Stelting said.

Herrmann did discover one accidental overdose had occurred in the detention center; however, records clearly indicate the overdose was directly due to the prescription rendered by the supervising and treating physician.

"Furthermore, there is no indication that the Hot Springs County Detention Center was administering prescription drugs without appropriate medical supervision," he said.

"Since there is no evidence to support such allegations of unauthorized practice of medicine, it is not necessary to discuss whether the Hot Springs County sheriff could be charged under W.S. 33-26-410(a)," said Stelting.

### Improper pictures of cheerleaders

It has been alleged that Larson was taking improper pictures of high school cheerleaders at a car wash fundraiser. Stelting said there is evidence to support Larson was taking pictures; however, it is unknown how many were taken or why.

"It is totally unsubstantiated whether he was on duty at the time, whether the camera was department-issued property, or whether the pictures were used in any way in a pornographic nature," he writes.

During the course of the investigation, Herrmann received information that someone in the community purported to have an explicit video of Larson perform-

ing sex acts with another woman.

"The agent was never able to verify the actual existence of such a video and no person was willing to come forth and provide the purported video," Stelting said. "Based on the agent's investigation, the story behind the existence of such a video is likely to be the creation of community rumor."

### Charges of intimidation

An allegation of intimidation was made by Thermopolis resident Marty Smith, alleging Larson had been intimidating a local citizen, Tracy Nye, apparently because Nye had information that would be damaging to sheriff Lou Falgoust and Larson during the election season.

Smith also alleged sheriff's officers had intimidated another citizen, Mike Bowman.

Herrmann interviewed both Nye and Bowman regarding the allegations and "neither individual expressed any articulable facts that could lead to any criminal charges or officer misconduct," Stelting said.

"In fact, Ms. Nye articulated feeling more uncomfortable and intimidated by Mr. Smith's visit to her home than by any Hot Springs County law enforcement officer."

Bowman stated two law enforcement officers had once stopped on the street in front of his home. By his own admission, Bowman said the officers never entered his property or residence or threatened him physically or verbally in any manner.

## Charges

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wall. The deputies evaluated the scene and found it to be consistent with the victim's statements.

Deputies saw Weisbeck's vehicle on the road and stopped him near his driveway. Deputies arrested Weisbeck without incident and they found a .357 Smith and Wesson revolver in the vehicle, according to the court documents.

Sheriff's Lt. Dan Pebbles said the department has not confirmed whether the weapon found in the vehicle is the same weapon allegedly fired inside the home.

Pebbles added deputies originally arrested Weisbeck on charg-

es of aggravated assault and battery and the Hot Springs County Attorney's Office chose to change the charge to attempted second-degree murder after evaluating the evidence.

Attempted second-degree murder is punishable by a minimum penalty of 20 years in prison and a maximum penalty of life in prison, a maximum fine of \$10,000 or both. Documents describe the charge as "unlawfully, purposely and maliciously, but without premeditation, attempt to kill any human being."

Influencing, intimidating or

"Based on the investigation, it is unclear whether the officers had a motive for conversing outside Bowman's house, or whether Bowman, having been in trouble with the law, is paranoid and overly sensitive of peace officer presence," the report states.

The special agent's investigation produced no evidence of any criminal act related to the allegation of citizen intimidation.

### In conclusion

"Based on the facts and evidence presented by DCI Special Agent Herrmann regarding the allegations set forth above, I find no admissible or verifiable evidence of criminal conduct or acts by any member of the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Department," Stelting said. "Accordingly, this review and investigation is concluded without the filing of any criminal charges."

"I think the commissioners went further than was necessary to go in doing this," county attorney Jerry Williams said. "It was obvious some of the claims were so outrageous there was nothing to it."

"Just because someone complains loudly does not make them right."

"At the time we felt compelled to do something because of the hue and cry," commission chairman John Lumley said. "In the same situation, we would probably do the same thing again to keep the transparency."

No one from the public was in attendance at the meeting when the summary was released.

impeding a witness is punishable by a prison sentence up to 10 years, a fine up to \$5,000 or both.

Weisbeck was arraigned on the charges in Circuit Court on Friday, June 17. Judge Tom Harrington set his bond at \$100,000.

Weisbeck posted bond Tuesday and his next court appearance will be July 8.

He served as chief of the Thermopolis Police Department from 1999 to 2004. He had worked in law enforcement for more than 40 years prior to his retirement in 2004. He is currently a member of the Wyoming Board of Parole.