

FIRST DRAFT

Outlaws host Thanksgiving feast

Butch botched the coffee serving. He reached in front of guests and sloshed the liquid into their cups like a campfire cook.

The gathering in Brown's Park in northwestern Colorado, probably in 1896, would later become known as the Outlaw Thanksgiving.

Ann Bassett Willis, a native of Brown's Park, friend of Cassidy and a notorious figure in her own right, described what occurred in a letter to a friend more than 50 years later.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

job nearly floored him, he became panicky and showed that his nerve was completely shot to bits."

Fortunately, Willis said, other outlaws present dragged Cassidy into the kitchen at the Tom Davenport ranch where the dinner was held and quickly instructed him in the proper procedure for pouring coffee, and he was able to complete his task.

In addition to Cassidy, the hosts of the dinner included his good friend Elza Lay, as well as Billie Bender and Les Megs — called the Bender Gang. Harry Longabaugh, better known as the Sundance Kid, was apparently among the participants.

Willis described in great detail the food served — "the best delicacies Rock Springs could supply" — the clothing worn and the people present.

Those feasted included Ann Bassett and her sister Josie, brothers Sam and Elbert Bassett and their Uncle Sam Bassett. Others at the event included Brown's Park store owner John Jarvie, Charley and Mary Crouse, Tom and Joe Davenport and more Brown's Park settlers.

Jarvie offered the invocation and Ann Bassett gave a short speech on the meaning of Thanksgiving. After dinner, there was singing and dancing that lasted until dawn.

In a separate writing, Willis offered some clues about why the outlaws displayed their gratitude to Brown's Park.

"Cassidy had not harmed nor otherwise bothered the people of our neighborhood," Bassett wrote in "Queen Ann of Brown's Park," an autobiographical series published in Colorado Magazine in 1952 and 1953. "If



A group photo of the Wild Bunch, taken in Fort Worth about 1900, shows, standing, from left, Will Carver and Harvey Logan (Kid Curry); and, seated, from left, Harry Longabaugh (the Sundance Kid) Ben Kilpatrick and Butch Cassidy.

the law officers wanted him, it was their place to take him, not ours. But if the law wished to come (in) and make such an arrest, not one hand would have been raised to protect an outlaw.

"Everyone knew there was a large reward offered for the capture of BUTCH, dead or alive," she added. "I AM PROUD TO SAY NOT ONE OF US WANTED THAT KIND OF MONEY!"

Excessive curiosity about visitors was not part of the Brown's Park character, Willis said.

Cassidy apparently made his first appearance in Brown's Park in 1896, serving as a jockey for rancher Charley Crouse in a race with a Vernal horseman. The 20-year-old jockey, then known as George Cassidy, guided Crouse's horse to victory.

By 1896, Cassidy had earned the nickname "Butch" while working at a butcher shop in Wyoming. He had also earned a reputation as a rustler and bank robber. He is believed to have taken part in his first bank robbery — the San Miguel Bank in Telluride — in 1889 with Tom and Bill McCarty. He and Elza Lay are credited with robbing a bank in Montpelier, Idaho, in August 1896.

Air-tanker company waits for word on Forest Service firefighting contract

MISSOULA, Mont. — The chief executive of an air tanker company based in Montana said he's eagerly waiting to find out which of his planes the U.S. Forest Service will hire to fight wildfires next year.

Neptune Aviation's firefighting jets are back in Missoula for the winter, and the company is waiting for the Forest Service to announce its next air tanker contracts. Neptune still has three years left on a contract to fly six P2V propeller-driven tankers and one BAE-146 jet-powered slurry bomber.

A one-season contract for

three of the jet tankers has expired, however. Meanwhile, the company recently brought on two more BAE-146 tankers, for a total of six.

Company officials have been anxious to see how many of the six jets will have work next year, Chief Executive Officer Ron Hooper said.

"We expected to see the notice on the first of November," Hooper said.

Competitors for contracts include 10 Tanker Air Carrier, which flies DC-10 air tankers and for a time in 2013 was moving its headquarters to Casper, Wyoming. The company now is

based out of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Four other companies successfully have landed "next-generation" Forest Service contracts for planes able to carry at least 300 gallons of fire retardant and fly at least 350 mph.

Several of those companies have challenged Neptune's bids for a slice of the business and got the company's contract awards overturned.

"We hope within the next month or so to have that contract out," Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management Tom Harbour said.

BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Shoplifting suspect jailed

A 27-year-old woman was stopped Friday afternoon by loss prevention officers at Sportman's Warehouse, 2464 U.S. Highway 6&S0, the Grand Junction Police Department reported.

The woman, Jennifer Altamirano-Duran, was accused of fighting with the officer until police arrived, the department said.

She was taken to the Mesa County Jail on suspicion of shoplifting and third-degree assault after an investigation indicated she allegedly was trying to steal items from the store, the department said.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Carlos Camacho, 21, was issued a summons Thursday on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol in the 2800 block of North Avenue.

Someone removed a camper trailer Wednesday from a home in the 1400 block of East Sherwood Drive, causing a loss of more than \$2,000.

Someone entered a business Wednesday in the 700 block of Horizon Drive and took multiple items valued at less than \$750.

Melodie Johnson, 42, was issued a summons Thursday on suspicion of shoplifting from Walmart, 2881 North Ave.

Liam Driscoll, 28, was issued a summons Friday on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to provide proof of insurance and driving a vehicle the wrong way at North Fourth and Main streets.

A 17-year-old male was issued a summons Friday on suspicion of shoplifting at Walmart, 2545 Rimrock Ave.

Ashley Carr, 24, was issued a summons Saturday on suspicion of urinating in public in the 400 block of Main Street.

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REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Vail fire destroys residential building

VAIL — A fire in west Vail forced residents from 11 homes. The fire on Saturday engulfed three single-story homes and caused extensive damage to adjacent homes.

Interim Vail fire chief Steve Pischke said four of 11 units had extensive damage and the building will be condemned and torn down. Investigators believe the fire started in a wood stove.

Convicted killer Reali denied parole

COLORADO SPRINGS — The Colorado Board of Parole denied a convicted murderer's request to be released because she has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Jennifer Reali was convicted of killing her lover's wife in Colorado Springs in 1990. She is now in a Lakewood halfway house.

Reali was denied release during a regular parole hearing in October. She then asked the Colorado Board of Parole for a special needs hearing. The board could have granted her early release on the basis of her cancer diagnosis.

The decision means that Reali will continue to be held at the halfway house where she has lived since Gov. Bill Ritter commuted her sentence of life in prison.

Denver-area woman is Rhodes scholar

DENVER — A woman from Greenwood Village was selected to be a 2015 Rhodes scholar.

Emily Witt is now a senior at Stanford University where she majors in human biology and is working on a minor in psychology.

The scholarships announced Sunday provide all expenses for two or three years of study at Oxford University in England.

Witt did research in Guatemala on chronic nutrition and is president of the Stanford Chapter of Amnesty International.

Witt is one of 32 men and women from the United States picked by the Rhodes Trust who will enter the university next October.

Subscription questions? Call 242-1919, (800) 332-5833.

The Daily Sentinel (ISSN 1445-9662) Published every morning at 734 S. Seventh Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501. Periodical Postage paid at Grand Junction, CO.

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