



THINK ABOUT IT!
You cannot go around giving people a piece of your mind without making them think you are not all there.—Anon.

The NEWS XPRESS

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Cook reward raised to \$100,000

By C.A. Moore

Mike Christie's voice quivers, there's a pause...he swallows hard, then goes on...

"Dave and I were like brothers. I considered him my big brother...he was seven years older than me...a great guy," his words filling with emotion.

Christie, head of Midland Land & Cattle Co. of Lenexa, Kan., is referring to David Cook, his right hand man in the founding and development of the 10,000-acre Sterling Corporation ranch some two miles south of Amsterdam.

As is widely known, Cook, 55, who grew up on a farm near Ballard, Mo., literally vanished into thin air Wednesday, Nov. 19 of last year and what happened to him remains a mystery. Reportedly few clues were left behind, but enough to determine without a doubt foul play.

The News Xpress spent Friday morning at the ranch's main lodge with Christie and Cook's sister, Judy Transue of Lenexa, Kan., to learn more about Cook's involvement with Christie, the managing part-



Gateway to the 10,000-acre Sterling Ranch, two miles south of Amsterdam, where David Cook was affiliated at the time of his disappearance. Middle building is the main lodge.—Staff photo.

ner of the ranch—and—to be advised of the reward for reliable information connected to Cook's disappearance had just been raised to \$100,000.

Transue has been a key figure in the determined effort to solve the crime. All connected with the case have pretty well resigned themselves to the inevit-

able: Cook is deceased.

"Judy and I are not going to give up...even if it takes ten years or more," Christie vows. "There's definitely a murderer out there. I feel progress is being made and we're going to keep the pressure on."

Missouri Highway Patrol criminal investigator Sgt. Greg Martin, who has

been in charge of the case since its early beginnings, echoes this position. "We'll stay with this case until it is resolved," he says.

The initial reward posted was for \$10,000, shortly after, \$50,000, and more recently, \$80,000. Christie said several friends chipped in to up the reward to its present figure including

the Cook family, Mo-Kan Livestock Market owner Jerry Hertzog, Max Motors of Butler, and Carter Energy and former Butler resident Buck Hinson's Hen House grocery chain in Kansas City. Information should be turned over to the Bates County Sheriff's Office, Butler, telephone 660-679-3232.

★★★

Christie first became acquainted with residents around the Amsterdam-Butler area in 1989 when the ranch as it is today was but a dream. A year later he teamed up with Cook and via Cook's entity became partners along with other friends in the massive undertaking.

Cook became wholeheartedly dedicated to the task, from infrastructure details to project designs. It was a labor of love.

At that point Cook assumed the responsibility of running the ranch, a members-only recreational getaway for relaxing, fishing, horseback riding and related outdoor activities.

Cook, along with contractors, built the main lodge in 1992. But that was only half of the adventure.

Cook, a 34-year employee of the nearby KCPL generating plant at LaCygne, Kan., is described as a working machine.

"He'd pull his late night shift at the plant, come home, sleep two or three hours then get up and run

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Arpeggios, please...

The News Xpress

One of the area's high profile persons, known far and wide for his keyboard virtuosity, has just released a CD of old time favorite sacred selections titled "Jesus, What a Friend," and he's excited over the re-

sponse so far.

"I haven't advertised to any extent, but already several have purchased my CD by word-of-mouth," Ron Dunlap smiles.

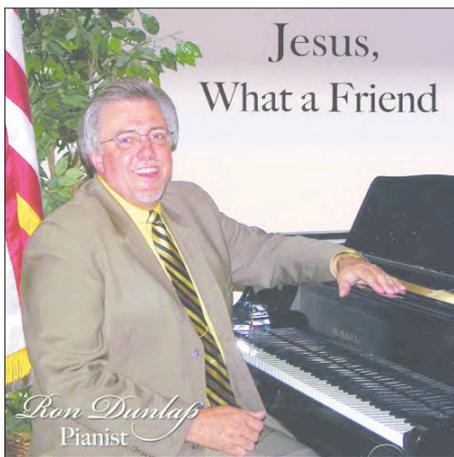
As might be expected by the CD's title, the immortal "What a Friend We

Have in Jesus" is included plus 11 more:

- "Amazing Grace."
- "Jesus You're the Center of My Joy Medley."
- "He Looked Beyond My Fault."
- "Sweet Beulah Land."
- "There is a Savior."
- "Gentle Shepherd."
- "I Surrender All Medley."
- "Something About The Name."
- "Haven of Rest Medley."
- "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus", and
- "He Hideth My Soul."

Dunlap attributes the CD to long-time friend and mentor Tommy Shelton whom he met several years ago at a church camp. As their friendship grew and Dunlap's incredible God-given talent continued to blossom, Sheldon, who owns a recording studio—

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Old Settlers reunion includes prizes

The 112th reunion of the Bates County Old Settlers Society draws closer to the Wednesday, Aug. 26 date.

Society president Phyllis Wheatley notes the meeting will be held in the gym of the former Butler High School, Pine and Fulton streets. Registration opens at noon with the meeting convening at 1.

The following awards will be presented:

- Oldest man present born in Bates County.
- Oldest woman present born in Bates County.
- Oldest person born elsewhere but living in Bates County.

•Couple present married the most years (born, married and living in Bates County).

•Couple present married the most years (born or married elsewhere but living in Bates County the longest).

•All persons 85 years and older living in Bates County.

•Couples present who have been married 50 years or more living in Bates County.

Only one cash award per person. Door prizes will be given courtesy of various businesses and individuals. Refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the program and awards.

Scenes from the Rockville Festival



PROMINENT in Saturday's Rockville Festival was this entry featuring Festival queen candidates.—Staff photo.



FIRST PLACE ENTRY in the Rockville Festival kiddie parade, Grammy's (Hough) Garden Patch.

Butler Aquatic Center closes for the season at 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16

•Reward now \$100,000

FROM FRONT PAGE

the ranch," Christie noted. "Dave also helped construct several of the cabins scattered over the ranch, built roads, made fence, mowed... whatever. He even suggested rearranging the configuration of a dam and helped complete the job."

Christie and Cook were in almost constant contact, either face to face or telephone conversations from the ranch to Christie's office in the WestStar Shopping Center in which he is involved. "It wasn't unusual for us to talk five times a day, almost always something to do with ideas and plans for improving the ranch."

According to Christie, Cook was a hard worker and never shirked from any challenge, be it construction, feeding cattle—or breaking horses.

"Dave's familiar comeback was 'no problem,'" Christie said.

But there was a lighter side to his personality also, as Christie can attest.

"He liked being around people, we joked a lot and we pulled pranks on each other," Christie said. He loved to barbecue, party and have a good time."

★★★

Wednesday, Nov. 19 was about as normal as any late autumn day, at least in the daybreak hours.

Christie said he had called a contractor's meeting at the ranch to go over plans for an upcoming project, but the otherwise reliable Cook didn't show up. Christie said he figured Cook had worked very hard at the plant and was getting some extra rest.

As time dragged on, no Dave. Christie called the KCPL plant repeatedly—10 times over a 24-hour period and was advised Cook hadn't reported for work or called in. Christie went to Cook's residence on his 400-acre farm that joins the Sterling Ranch. Cook's two pickup trucks were parked in the driveway but the house was empty. Nothing appeared in disarray.

"This was not like Dave," and we became really worried," Christie said. "We feared something was terribly wrong."

Over the next two days Christie and those related to or otherwise associated with Cook were in "total panic," as Christie put it.

As word spread of Cook's disappearance, a multi-jurisdictional major case task force was activated and tem-

porarily headquartered at the Bates County Jail in Butler.

Chad Anderson, then a sergeant with the Butler Police Department, is a standing member of the task force. A couple of weeks earlier he had been elected Bates County Sheriff, a position he would not assume until Jan. 1, 2009. As others in high authority at the jail were not available, sheriff-elect Anderson was chosen to go to the ranch and meet with Christie and the large following that had assembled.

"Anderson came out and quickly calmed things down," said Christie. "He assumed leadership and brought order to what had been chaos. We were finally getting some traction."

On Sunday Anderson helped organize a 200-person search party, that included several on horseback, hikers, boats, and a Highway Patrol helicopter, all to no avail.

As is the order of procedure in these matters, the task force was deactivated and the Highway Patrol assumed command of the investigation.

Ironically, Cook was to sell his herd of approximately 900 Black Baldy Angus steers at Mo-Kan in Passaic the day after he disappeared. Reportedly 100 or more of this herd could not be accounted for. This turn of events is being pursued as a possible link to Cook's disappearance.

A month or so later, Cook's farm equipment, trucks and other tools were also sold at Mo-Kan.

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Last Thursday, Tim Miller, founder and president of Texas EquuSearch, a high-tech group rescue/recovery out of Dickinson, Texas, arrived at the ranch to begin a search of the 50 to 60 bodies of water on the Sterling Ranch—wells, ponds, lakes, strip pits, some of which are 70 feet in depth in hopes of recovering Cook's remains.

Transue said a friend and former co-worker had heard of her brother's disappearance and contacted EquuSearch, which has posted the Cook case on its Web site: tim.miller@equusearch.org. Miller otherwise owns a construction company in Dickinson.

The volunteers from various locations across the U.S. are equipped with state-of-the-art satellite image devices, sonar units, remote control cameras and deep-drop cameras, plus a 4-pound drone aircraft-type machine

that can pick up images below the waters surface. It alone has accounted for recovering the remains of six people.

EquuSearch is funded solely by donations. "But we always stay broke," Miller quips. Miller had to sell his prized Harley Davidson motorcycle to raise funds to keep his organization in business. EquuSearch has a 70 percent success record since it started up in 2000.

Miller says EquuSearch has conducted over 1,000 searches in eight years. Its members have traveled to numerous disaster sites in the U.S., including Hurricane Katrina where 300 victims were rescued who otherwise would have died, as well as foreign countries such as Mexico, Nicaragua and Indonesia. EquuSearch recovered its 100th deceased victim three weeks ago. The Cook case is listed as No. 1041 on Miller's log book.

The organization has worked closely with the FBI, other law enforcement agencies and John Walsh's America's Most Wanted TV series.

Coincidentally, Walsh and Miller have traveled similar paths in their quest to help others. Several years ago Walsh's young son was kidnapped and murdered. In 1986 Miller's 16-year-old daughter Laura mysteriously disappeared.

Miller said the investigation faltered and led to nowhere. Eventually his daughter's remains were found 2-1/2 miles from the Miller home, along with three other young women, two of whom have never been identified. No arrests were made.

"We made a promise to Laura and God to never leave a family alone in time of distress if we could help," Miller said.

He added he and his EquuSearch specialists will remain at the scene until it is felt they have done everything they could do in the search for Cook.

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"We're trying our best to move forward since Dave left us," Christie said. "We'll continue with the David Cook Memorial Scholarships (three @ \$500) at Miami High School, have engaged a row crop farmer and hired a new rancher with a staff of three. Things will never be quite the same without Dave, however."



Tim Miller, founder and president of EquuSearch rescue/recovery unit, Dickinson, Texas, checks equipment at a command post set up on the Sterling Ranch.—Judy Transue photo.

Round about at Rockville Festival



First place float, adult division, Zion Lutheran Church, Prairie City.



The pitch tournament is always a big attraction.

Partial list of winners

Parade

Antique Tractor: Lynn Mount, Appleton City.
Classic Car: Bill Bauer, Rich Hill.

Best Float: Zion Lutheran Church and School.

Most Unusual Entry: Jim Davis and crew, Appleton City.
Best Horse and Rider under 12: Marriah Seider.

Kiddie Parade

1st Grammy's (Hough) Garden Patch.

2nd Two Bugs in a Rug.

3rd: Buzzing Rockville.

Baby Show

Girls 0-6: Mali Hope Rosburgh (Nathan and April), El Dorado Springs. Boys 0-6: Kale Hudson Dody (Darren/Janna) El Dorado Springs.

Girls 7-12: Amber Kay Walden (Frank/Julie) Montrose. Boys 7-12: Dane Otto Powell (Clint/Brooke) Appleton City.

Girls 13-18: Chelby Patience Fischer (Trevor/Beth) Butler. Boys 13-18: Oscar Louis Green (Damon/Katy) Rich Hill.

Girls 19-24: Alexis Gabrielle Tuner (Ryan/Britanni) Appleton City. Boys 19-24: Benjamin Augustus Rotert (Paul Rotert/Mary Scheer) Appleton City.

Girls 25/36—3-way tie—Taylan Kaye Schiereck (Bret/Valerie) Rockville; Zoie Jaide Umstadd (Miles/Heather) Butler; Reagan Lynn O'Farrell (Adam/Jamie) Cleveland, Mo.

Boys 25-36: Isach Alan Fleischer (James/Mary Beth) Rockville.

Girls 37-48: Sahara Kay



Second place, children's division, Two Bugs in a Rug

Watson (Bruce/Scarlett) Rockville. Boys 37-48: Gavin Gene

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