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Cratty pleads guilty

Aaron Cratty changed his plea to guilty in the death of his infant son in an appearance in District Court Tuesday morning in Bismarck. (TOM STROMME/Tribune)



By JENNY MICHAEL
Bismarck Tribune

A Bismarck man accused of shaking and striking the head of his infant son has admitted to causing the boy's death.

Aarin Cratty, 20, pleaded guilty to Class AA felony murder on Tuesday at the Burleigh County Courthouse.

Hank Allen Arden Cratty died on Oct. 10. He was the son of Cratty and Lori Lyon, of Bismarck. According to his obituary, he was born on June 21.

Burleigh County Assistant State's Attorney Lloyd Suhr said police and Metro Ambulance were called to Cratty's

home around 2 p.m. Oct. 6, 2009, for a report of an infant who was not breathing. When they arrived, Hank was not breathing and was turning blue. After rescue efforts, the baby began breathing and had a pulse. He was taken to St. Alexius, where Dr. Robert Bathurst and Dr. Patricio Fernandez treated him. Fernandez said Hank had injuries consistent with head injuries caused by shaking or high velocity trauma.

The infant was considered brain dead and died after being taken off life support, Suhr said.

In interviews with police, Cratty said he picked his son up to play with him when he

began crying, Suhr said. He said as the interview went on, Cratty said he played rougher than he should have with the baby and shook him. Cratty told officers the baby's head snapped back and hit Cratty's knee, at which time Hank went limp and became unresponsive, Suhr said.

The state medical examiner performed an autopsy and ruled the cause of death was blunt head injury, consistent with what Cratty told police, Suhr said.

Cratty's appointed defense attorney, public defender Travis Finck, did not add anything to the factual basis for the plea but *Continued on 11A*

Pomeroy responds to ethics query

By REBECCA BEITTSCH
Bismarck Tribune

An investigation into the fundraising of eight U.S. House members, including Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., was brought to light more than two weeks ago. Now, as the Office of Congressional Ethics moves to continue its investigation for another 30 days, Pomeroy is speaking publicly about the matter.

Pomeroy told the Tribune that he has no idea why he's being included in the investigation, nor does he have much insight into why the ethics office is extending it, other than to have more time to review records. He is hopeful OCE will wrap up its probe soon.

"They're looking at whether or not an event close to the (vote on the financial reform) bill influenced my vote," Pomeroy said Tuesday. "I voted for the reform; I voted against Wall Street, so I don't see how there's any connection at all."

Pomeroy said he believes the investigation is continuing for all eight members of Congress whose finances were originally called into question.

All eight had fundraising events in the nine days preceding the vote. Pomeroy's was organized by a former staffer, and both say it was planned seven weeks in advance of the vote and held the day before it.

Pomeroy said the event was held specifically to benefit his re-election campaign and included "a wide range of groups. It was not a bank event."

Federal Election Commission records show Pomeroy got five campaign contributions the day of the fundraiser, only one of which was from a bank.

Now, the ethics office has another 30 days to review those finances. It can extend its investigation *Continued on 11A*

Standing up for the First Amendment

We the People...

Every July 4th, we celebrate the Founding Fathers who gave America the gift of liberty. Except that they didn't. Actually, the operative word is "fathers." These gentlemen did a fine job of building a nation founded on freedom — unless you happened to be a woman, a slave or poor.

For all the poetic flourish of the Declaration of Independence, the most powerful passage in America's history can be found in the First Amendment to the Constitution. The five freedoms guaranteed there gave Americans the right to speak out against injustice, to report about inequality, to protest and petition and to draw strength from freedom of faith. In the centuries that followed this nation's founding, the First Amendment was used to free the slaves, extend the vote to women and ensure equal protection under the laws. Yet, despite its pivotal role in making America what it is today, there are no fireworks celebrating the First Amendment. The anniversary of its ratification on Dec. 15 goes largely unnoticed. More tellingly, most Americans have no idea what the First Amendment says. Surveys indicate that only one American in 25 can name the freedoms of the First Amendment and that a majority — when pressed — can come up with only one, typically freedom of speech. It's Constitutional *Continued on 4A*

BY KEN PAULSON / FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER

Connie's lasting legacy

By LEANN ECKROTH
Bismarck Tribune

Legacies are not easy to come by in the fickle world of local government.

Yet, newly-retired Bismarck City Commissioner Connie Sprynczynatyk has achieved one on many levels — 20 years on the Bismarck City Commission and the 12 years on the city's park board before that.

On Tuesday, the Bismarck Mandan Chamber of Commerce celebrated her dynamic public career at the Bismarck State College National Energy Center of Excellence.

Sprynczynatyk's entry into public office started in 1978, when city forester Gene Blackwell suggested she run for the city park board.

"I went door-to-door and

"I believe she will be remembered as one of the best city commissioners that Bismarck has ever had."

Bismarck Mayor John Warford

printed out 5,000 brochures. The city had just gone from hand-written ballots to punch ballots," she recalled. Using the slogan, "You don't have to spell 'Sprynczynatyk' to vote for Connie," she took that first park board race with a 26-vote margin.

Bismarck Parks and Recreation Director Steve Neu said Sprynczynatyk has proven a very important influence and advocate for parks.

"She was a strong advocate of park site development," Neu said. "She had a real impact on the city's trail system."

Sprynczynatyk said she

pushed for more and safer walking spaces after she saw that the lack of paths created accident risks. Her efforts continued.

"When we first started, Bismarck only had three-quarters' mile of paved trails," she said. "Today, we have 50 miles."

Neu also credits her for helping obtain resources and set policy at the state level for local park systems.

Sprynczynatyk said it was done through multiple state and local partnerships. She said she has always been a big fan of collaborative efforts. *Continued on 11A*



WILL KINCAID/Tribune

Connie Sprynczynatyk gets a hug from friend Chuck Peterson at a reception on Tuesday night. The reception was held to honor Sprynczynatyk, a long time Bismarck city commissioner.

Consumer woes

A drop in consumer confidence may stall economic recovery — 2A

Water restriction

Plant is running at capacity, but city urges restraint — 1B



Thursday

Harsh winters have dropped numbers of birds and hunters

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