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— M A Q U O K E T A —

SENTINEL—PRESS

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Heart-shaped box leads to marriage

By KELLY GERLACH

A smitten eighth grade boy walked to the corner drug store. He plunked \$1.25 down on the counter in exchange for a “sizeable” heart-shaped box of candy.

It was Valentine’s Day and he had mustered up every ounce of courage he had to deliver that box to the object of his affection.

But when he handed the decadent candy to the girl of his dreams, she simply thanked him and... “She went on down the street and left me behind wondering which way the wind blew,” Ralph Knickrehm recalled.

“It took all the courage I had to ask you if you would take this box, then you took off... whoosh,” Ralph said, slapping his hands together as he looked over the kitchen counter at his fiancée some 60 years later.

“I was probably waiting for my ride or something. I was only in the seventh grade. We didn’t have boyfriends and girlfriends at that age,” explained D.J. Collington.

The couple now laughs about their first Valentine’s Day, even though Ralph continues to tease D.J. about the way she left him standing, clueless, in the snow outside Holy Family School in Davenport all those decades ago.

Ralph Knickrehm, who now lives in Maquoketa, and D.J. Collington, who moved to Maquoketa Feb. 1, couldn’t be happier with the way their Valentine’s Day “romance” played out. The couple was scheduled to marry Saturday, Feb. 14 to make the day even more special; however, health issues forced them to temporarily postpone the wedding.

They will say their vows April 25 at Sacred Heart Church, Maquoketa. But the brief delay makes their story no less

■ LOVE,
Please turn to page 2



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

Love is in the air even six decades after D.J. Collington and Ralph Knickrehm went to school together. They led separate lives but came together last year. They will marry in April. And it all started with a heart-shaped box of chocolates.

Services lost due to budget restraints

By DOUGLAS MELVOLD

Jackson County will lose the services of District Court judges for civil cases for at least four months as a result of an order to reduce travel costs of judges.

The cutback means that attorneys, witnesses and other parties to civil matters will have to travel to another county, likely Clinton County.

The criminal caseload also is likely to back up.

County Attorney Chris Raker described the scenario to the Board of Supervisors Tuesday morning, Feb. 10.

He said the cutbacks resulted from an order issued Feb. 2 by Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Marsha Ternus, which was put into effect Tuesday by District Judge Bobbi Alpers, who is chief judge for the Seventh Judicial District.

The cutbacks will begin in March and continue at least through the end of June, Raker said.

He said the changes are designed to cut travel costs for judges as part of economizing state spending.

He said Ternus ordered that travel expenditures be reduced by 60 percent for the remainder of the 2008-09 fiscal year, which ends June 30.

As a result, Jackson County will lose the services of a district judge who comes to Maquoketa on Mondays and Tuesdays on the first two weeks of each month.

The county will continue to have the services of a district judge on Fridays, who presides over criminal matters.

Judges David Sivright and Charles Pelton are scheduled to preside on Fridays through June. Both are based in Clinton.

The reductions will push back the criminal caseload, Raker predicted. He noted that for defendants who have waived their constitutional right to a speedy trial “the court is saying we can put them on the back burner because they’re not time sensitive.”

Raker said a criminal trial currently is scheduled to begin on Monday, March 2, in Maquoketa. He said he doesn’t know whether or not that schedule will hold.

Civil cases, such as civil lawsuits, divorces or child custody agreements, likely will go to another county, Raker said.

“If you have a civil trial, there’s going to be an effort to get you to change venue and move it to where there is a domiciled judge,” Raker said.

He said Jackson, Cedar and Muscatine counties, which are in the Seventh Judicial District, do not have domiciled judges, or judges based in those counties.

Alpers lives in rural Maquoketa, but is considered based in Scott County, Raker said.

The Magistrate Court will remain unchanged, the county attorney said. Jackson County’s two magistrates, Ron Besch and Corliss Baty, will continue to hold initial appearances of persons charged with crimes and handle misdemeanors.

Traffic citations and small claims cases will continue to be handled through Magistrate Court and the Clerk of Court office.

Supervisors criticized the action, saying that while it cuts travel expense of judges, it increases the travel expense of everyone else participating in the trial.

“They’re saving fuel costs, but our residents are picking it up,” noted Supervisor Larry “Buck” Koos.

The supervisors said they would be better off paying the mileage to have the judges continue to come to Jackson County.

Meanwhile, the supervisors agreed to at least temporarily halt a remodeling project to convert the law library in the Courthouse into a second judge’s chambers.

“This puts us in a situation where do we proceed with that or do we put it on hold until we know exactly what the future of the court system

is,” said Supervisor Jack Willey.

“If we’re not going to have one judge here on a regular basis, or two judges, it’s foolish for us to be spending money to do that.”

Willey noted that the supervisors proceeded with the remodeling after receiving reassurances last year from Alpers “that as long as there was a need, there would be a judge here and if we needed two, there would be two.

“That’s why we proceeded with the renovation of the law library, so that we’d be able to house the second judge and have an office and all that.”

Until the renovation, the Courthouse had just one judge’s chambers. When a second judge was in Maquoketa, he or she would have to use as a chambers a table in the law library that lacked such amenities as a telephone and a computer hook-up.

Supervisors said they also understood that no one could have predicted the current economic situation at the time of Alpers’ statements.

Supervisors said they would like to meet again with Alpers to get her views of the future of the court activity in Jackson County to help determine whether to complete the remodeling project now.

They asked Raker to either schedule another meeting with the supervisors or for him to meet with Alpers and relay her response to the board.

Raker said he hoped that the travel restrictions on judges “is just a Band-Aid and not a baby step toward budget cuts or consolidation” of court services.

He noted that attempts have been made in recent years to consolidate court services.

Raker also noted that there’s an effort under way to eliminate court reporters and use electronic recording instead for transcripts to save money.