


weather report

63° at noon



Today

Sunset, 8:12 p.m.

Tomorrow

Sunrise, 5:35 a.m.

Sunset, 8:11 p.m.

Midday Conditions

Soil Temperature 77 degrees

Humidity 93 percent

Sky overcast, rain

Winds east 7 mph

Barometer 30.20 inches and rising

Record High 106° (1936)

Record Low 52° (1927)

Last 24 Hours\*

High 83°

Low 67°

Precipitation .05

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Cloudy with areas of fog; 40 percent chance of rain; low in mid 60s; winds East 5-15 mph. Tomorrow: Mostly sunny; highs 85-90; 30 percent chance of rain Tuesday evening; winds South 5-15 mph.


Extended Forecast

Wednesday through Friday. Chance of thunderstorms all three days; High Wed 90s; low 60s. Thurs high 80s; low 60s. Friday high 70s; low 60s. (National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

\* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets



Noon

Wheat — \$2.34 bushel

Posted county price — \$2.24

Loan deficiency payment — 21¢

Corn — \$1.59 bushel

Posted county price — \$1.49

Loan deficiency pmt. — 5¢

Milo — \$1/95 hundredweight

Soybeans — \$3.64 bushel

Posted county price — \$4.12

Loan deficiency payment — 28¢

Millet — \$4.50 hundredweight

Sunflowers

Oil current crop — \$5.60 cwt.

Loan deficiency pmt. — \$4.06

Confection current — \$13/\$7 cwt.

Pinto beans — \$12 (new crop)

(Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and Prairie Pea and Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire



Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

Nearly 60 dead in plane crash

PATNA, India — A jet smashed into two homes just over a mile from its destination Monday, killing nearly 60 people on board and on the ground and leaving weeping relatives digging through flaming wreckage in search of survivors.

The Alliance Air plane crashed while making a second attempt to land Monday morning at an airport in Patna, an eastern Indian city. Several witnesses said the Boeing 737-200 was on fire before it came down, though a national aviation official denied that report.

What was left of the plane came to rest against a brick house, smashing the house's ceiling and wall. Another house next door had bricks missing from the front.

Relatives, police and airport workers rushed to the wreckage, screaming and crying as they tried to find survivors.

# Irrigation changes face of dry plains

By Tom Betz  
*The Goodland Daily News*

The state officials and the weather observers are saying Northwest Kansas is in a drought, and while that may be true, there are many areas of Sherman County where green fields continue to grow crops.

Seventy years ago when the winds blew across the parched fields, there was very little a farmer could do but pray for divine intervention in the form of rain.

However, over the past 55 years, the amount of underground irrigation has grown to the point where there are about 900 permitted wells in Sherman County today irrigating over 114,000 acres.

The Kansas Water Office report of water use for 1992-96 showed that Sherman and Thomas counties have the highest concentration of underground irrigation in northwest Kansas, with Thomas County irrigating 98,500 acres and Sherman 114,599.

Wednesday, a new discussion about the future of underground irrigation heated up with rejection by the Water Office of a proposal from the Solomon River Basin Advisory Committee seeking a review of the current policy and move toward a "sustainable use" of the Ogallala Aquifer by 2015. The proposal would mean the water use could not be greater than the rate at which water naturally recharges the aquifer.

Studies by the Kansas Geological Survey indicate that much of the Ogallala Aquifer is already 50 percent and 75 percent depleted. Some counties could be within 25 years of total depletion, the study says.

Kent Lamb, chairman of the Kansas Water Authority, said he thinks a majority of its members believe depletion of the Ogallala needs a serious look.

Lamb said authority members believe the state hasn't done enough to address depletion of the Ogallala.

Bob Hooper, chairman of the



Corn is the crop where most of the centerpivot systems are seen with the nozzles hidden in the stalks.

Solomon River committee, said he may file a lawsuit to force a public discussion of irrigation's toll on the aquifer.

Wayne Bossert, manager of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District, says such a change would probably affect between 60-75 percent of the irrigation in Northwest Kansas.

"I think it is good to have a discussion about the future of irrigation, but feel it should be up to each district to decide what policy to adopt rather than imposing something from above," Bossert says. "If the local people opt to continue pumping at the same rates, they will have to deal with the continuing depletion of the aquifer and dropping levels in their wells."

When farmers began using wells to



A number of Sherman County farms are irrigating sunflowers with the center pivot system.

Photos by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News

pump water onto their fields after the Allocation Act of 1945, most used flood irrigation, but this method is only 50-70 percent efficient based on studies by Kansas State University.

With the introduction of the center pivot sprinkler systems in the 1950s, the number of acres under irrigation climbed and the percentage of flood systems dropped. Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District, headquartered in Colby, had 374,655 acres under irrigation in 1996 and used 368,980 acre feet of water. Groundwater districts were organized in 1972 after being authorized by federal law.

The highest concentration of irrigation in Sherman County is about 11 miles southwest of Goodland, where

the township has 9,313 acres irrigated. In 1996, 53.7 percent of the irrigated acres in the district were using center pivot systems, and the percentage of flood irrigation systems had dropped from 16.9 percent in 1995 to 14.4 in 1996.

Bossert said more recent figures show a further drop in the percentage of flood irrigation. Over the five years from 1993 to 1998, the number of pivot systems has grown from 1,858 to 2,519, a 36 percent change.

Center pivot systems have improved from being about 80-85 percent efficient to where they are now 90-95 percent efficient with the development of precision irrigation. There are a few underground drip irrigation system in

the county and Bossert says these are nearly 100 percent efficient.

Corn is the crop of choice for irrigation in Sherman County, with 68,500 acres receiving water in 1996. Wheat was second with 21,900 acres and sunflowers weren't even a separate figure in 1996 being lumped in with "other" at 18,000 acres. There were 4,000 acres of alfalfa, 1,300 acres of sorghum and 900 acres of soybeans.

The 900 irrigation wells in Sherman County have 273,000 acre feet of water allocated per year, said Bossert.

"Typically, the Sherman County wells pump 40-70 percent of the allocation annually," he said, "and in a dry year it is closer to the 70 percent level."

"There have not been many new irrigation wells permitted in the past few years."

The size of the well determines the size of the pivot system, and each is designed to meet the farmer's needs. The basic system is a seven-tower circle on a quarter section which costs about \$36,000, said Marc Pottorff of Hitchcock, Inc. of Goodland, which is the distributor for the Valley pivot system.

The early sprinkler systems sprayed from the top like most lawn sprinklers, but about 10-12 years ago, dropped lines began appearing.

The nozzle size depends on the gallons being pumped, and the movement of the towers depends on how much water the farmer wants to put on in a given time.

The systems have both automatic and manual controls depending on the farmer.

The dropped lines are known as Low Energy Precision Application systems, and are why the pivot systems have improved in efficiency. Rather than spraying water high above the crop, which results in more evaporation loss, they hang low to the ground and spray a fine mist almost directly on the soil.

# Candidates remember sheriff's office investigation

Dana Sulsberger  
*The Goodland Daily News*

The opening of sealed Kansas Bureau of Investigation files last week had brought events of five years ago into the Sherman County sheriff's race.

The files contain the results of an investigation during 1995 and 1996 into vehicle inspection fees collected by the Sheriff's Department that were allegedly never turned into the county.

Vehicle inspection fees are collected from an individual getting Kansas tag. Reserve officers with the sheriff's department performed the inspections from 1988 until Sheriff Armstrong canceled the department's contract with the Kansas Highway Patrol on April 4, 1995. A fee of \$10 is collected, often in cash, with \$1 going to the state.

Later, the county claimed that \$18,000 in fees had never been paid to it and filed claims with its insurance companies for that amount. A payment of \$8,000 was received.

Commissioners maintained that any money collected by the sheriff belonged to the county, no matter what the source. Apparently, however, money from the inspection fees and some other sources was being spent by the sheriff's reserves without going to the county. Similar investigations took place in several Kansas counties about the same time.

All four candidates for sheriff in this year's election were with the department at the time. Within two days of the arrival of a KBI agent, the sheriff and his wife had resigned from the department.

Sheriff Doug Whitson was under-sheriff and was later appointed to the top post. He will be running as a Republican in the primary election in August. Rich Miller was a jailer at the time of the investigation, and is running as a Republican. Jack Armstrong, the sheriff who resigned, is running as a Republican. Arthur Albers, who was a deputy, is a Democratic candidate in the November election.

In the investigation report by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, three of the candidates this year were

## Investigation into vehicle inspection money covered 14 months

This a timeline of the events leading up to and following the investigation of the Sherman County Sheriff's Department and its handling of vehicle inspection fees was compiled from *Goodland Daily News* articles, county commission meeting minutes, and a document made for the insurance company by Janet Rumpel, county clerk.

• March 7, 1995 — First time the Vehicle Inspection Numbers appeared in the minutes of the county commission meeting.

It was suggested that Scott Showalter, county attorney, check with the attorney general's office regarding the vehicle inspection fees and whether or not the money needed to be turned into the county treasurer.

• March 23, 1995 — A response was received from the attorney general's office. Showalter shows the letter to Sheriff Jack Armstrong to prove that the money should be turned over to the treasurer.

• April 4, 1995 — Letter from Sheriff Armstrong to the Kansas Highway Patrol canceling the contract for sheriff's deputies to do the vehicle inspections.

• April 17, 1995 — County commission reviewed letters from Showalter and Wayne Hilton, county auditor, regarding the inspection

fees. Chairman Cynthia Strnad made a motion to have Showalter to get an accounting of the funds as proposed by Hilton. The motion was passed.

• June 5, 1995 — a memo was sent to Sheriff Armstrong requesting an accounting of the money from the inspections.

• June 19, 1995 — The commission asked Armstrong if he has gotten the information for the audit report on the inspection fees, and asked that the information be given to auditor Hilton by Friday, June 23, 1995.

• June 30, 1995 — Shelby Miller, county treasurer, met with the board. She said they were having problems with the vehicle inspections. She wanted to see if her office could do the inspections.

Miller said she has not received any money from the sheriff's department, despite statements that money he had in his office was to be turned over to her.

• July 26, 1995 — Letter sent to KBI with a copy of 34 questions the commission would like to see answered.

• Aug. 29, 1995 — Richard Vick, a KBI agent, arrives in Sherman County to begin investigating.

• Morning of Aug. 30, 1995 — Doris Armstrong, wife of sheriff, resigns position of matron effective next day.

• Aug. 31, 1995 — Sheriff

Armstrong submits his letter of resignation dated Aug. 28, 1995. He said he and his wife wanted to start a restaurant, the Buckboard, which they ran for a year and a half. His resignation from the sheriff's department was effective Sept. 15, 1995

• Sept. 14, 1995 — Vick reported that he believed everything was OK based on his review of the sheriff's records. Showalter advised him that perhaps an audit should be done of the vehicle inspection fund rather than just looking at the sheriff's records.

• Oct. 31, 1995 — The board discussed the accounts the sheriff's department had in their possession. Hilton had suggested that the new sheriff turn over all money to the county treasurer as prescribed by the law.

Treasurer Miller said she had not received any money from the sheriff's office since the end of August. The board instructed Sheriff Whitson to turn over all fees for prisoner care, phone use and other sources. Sheriff Whitson said the KBI had control of the vehicle inspection money.

• Nov. 6, 1995 — Whitson reported that he would turn over four accounts to the treasurer.

• Dec. 11, 1995 — Commissioners asked that Whitson turn in all money to the county treasurer by Dec. 18 so that the new year could be started clean.

• Dec. 19, 1995 — Vick sent investigative report regarding the amount that the funds were short, close to \$4,340.

• Feb. 22, 1996 — Letter from Assistant Attorney General Melanie Pfeifer stating that the investigation led to the belief that Jack and Doris Armstrong were responsible for the loss of the money, but that no crime could be proven.

• March 29, 1996 — The commission informed Showalter they wanted a lawsuit filed against Sheriff Whitson since the funds were deliberately not being turned over to the county. Showalter asked for permission to send a certified letter to the treasurer of the Sheriff's Reserves and the sheriff concerning the matter and gave them until April 6 to turn over the money.

• May 3, 1996 — Commissioners received a check from an insurance company to cover losses totaling nearly \$8,000 on a claim for \$18,000. That represented fees supposedly collected over seven years.

• May 20, 1996 — Commissioners met with Sheriff Whitson and reserve officers Jim Bowker and Roy Hinkle to discuss the status of the vehicle identification funds. \$3,202 was turned over to the commissioners.

The files for this case are still sealed at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, said Melanie Pfeifer, assistant attorney general who was in charge of the investigation. She said she could not provide any additional information without a court order.

Vehicle inspection fees are collected from an individual getting Kansas tag. Reserve officers with the sheriff's department performed the inspections from 1988 until Sheriff Armstrong canceled the department's contract with the Kansas Highway Patrol on April 4, 1995.

Currently, said Whitson, vehicle inspections are being performed by the Goodland Police Department.

listed as being interviewed, Albers, Whitson and Armstrong. The report says they all said they had turned in all the fees.

The candidates all seem anxious not to dwell on the investigation and to focus on their current campaigns instead.

"I did not take money from Sherman County," was the only thing Armstrong would say about the investigation.

He said he would continue with his campaign relying on his 33 years in law enforcement as its base, not what happened with the investigation.

He said, thought, that he felt that the opening of the files was a politi-

cal move.

Albers said he doesn't remember being interviewed by the bureau or what was said during the interview.

"I'm glad the public gets to know," said Albers when asked how he felt about the files being opened.

He said he has no plans to change his campaign strategy, however.

"I have mixed feelings about it," said Sheriff Whitson when asked how he felt about the opening of the files.

"On the one hand, it brings up some bad times at the office," he said, "and on the other, the files are public records, and if the public wants to see them, they should have access."

He said he doesn't recall exactly what happened during his interview with the bureau.

"I remember they asked if I would take a polygraph," he said. "I said yes, and that was the last I heard about it."

"They did the one interview with me and then I was out of the loop as far as the investigation was concerned."

The opening of the files will not change how he is planning to campaign, Whitson said, adding he won't bring it up because to him, it would be a violation of campaign ethics.

Miller could not be reached for comment.