

weather report

56°

at noon



Today

• Sunset, 7:45 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 5:40 a.m.
• Sunset, 7:46 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temperature 52 degrees
- Humidity 71 percent
- Sky cloudy
- Winds variable at 6 mph
- Barometer 30.33 inches and falling
- Record High 95° (1966)
- Record Low 29° (1978)

Last 24 Hours*

High 63°
Low 42°
Precipitation trace

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Partly cloudy, low 40-45, south 5-15 mph. Tomorrow: Partly sunny, high 70-75, low 45-50, southwest wind 5-15 mph.

Extended Forecast

Wednesday: dry, high 80-85, low 50. Thursday: chance of thunderstorms, high upper 70s, low 50.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

City honors hero



Surrounded by cameras and reporters, Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery and his wife Julie talked with people after the homecoming ceremony on Saturday. People stood in line to shake hands, hug the pilot and get autographs from the hero. Photos by Rachel Miscall and Tom Betz/The Goodland Daily News

Pilot hailed as hero

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News
Introduced as "Goodland's favorite son," Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery stepped to the microphone Saturday as hundreds of people jumped to their feet, waving flags, clapping, whistling, yelling and saluting.

The 27-year-old Navy pilot, with close-cropped red hair, a big smile and a soft voice, waited for the cheering to stop and the crowd to take their seats before breathing in, leaning forward over the podium and saying thanks.

A Goodland native, who has been the center of the nation's attention since he and 23 other military personnel were held in China for 11 days last month, Vignery said he thought this speech would be the easiest.

But standing in the field house where he played high school basketball, the 1992 Goodland High School graduate — who is stationed at the Naval Air Station in Whidbey Island, Wash. — looked out at his friends and family and said he was more nervous than ever.

Vignery said the overwhelming reception is something he never dreamed of, something he never thought he would deserve.

"I'm a normal guy," he said, "and I just want to be that normal guy."

But it was clear that no one else agreed. "The nation discovered what we have known all along," said Dale Schields, master of ceremonies, before introducing Vignery, "that he's an outstanding person."

Classmates and community leaders spent two weeks organizing the homecoming celebration at the Max Jones Fieldhouse, inviting state and federal lawmakers, old coaches and friends, war veterans and family to welcome the hero back.

Jeff Vignery was the last speaker at the two-hour celebration, featuring moving, funny and emotional speeches by Congressman Jerry Moran; an old friend and high school classmate, Dr. Travis Daise; an old

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Richard Hurd, a World War II and Korean veteran, saluted as the American flag was presented Saturday.

Speakers give pilot praise

By Janet Craft

The Goodland Daily News
Everyone from his old high school coach to his family and hometown best friend had a few words Saturday for Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery, and the governor, state Legislature, a U.S. senator and others sent greetings to the crowd at Max Jones Fieldhouse.

The Rev. Loren Strait, pastor at the First Christian Church where the Vignerys attend, gave the opening and closing prayers.

In his opening prayer, Strait thanked God that Vignery had come home and that the towns' people had not found themselves in grief, but were celebrating.

He said Vignery had an incredible amount of character and humility, that being a hero isn't about rewards, but about the gift of character, honor and integrity that a person has.

"You are a hero because you have shown us what we can be as a people,"

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Reporters flock to homecoming

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News
With the patience of an old pro, Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery stood in front of a trophy case at Max Jones Fieldhouse on Saturday to face the television cameras and news reporters.

He was calm as each television station produced a wireless microphone to clip to his tie and into his belt. Curtis Duncan of Goodland's KLOE radio was the only one holding a microphone to Vignery's face to catch his comments.

The reporters expected a news conference with Vignery following the official ceremony, but that got delayed as hundreds from the audience came forward to hug Vignery, shake hands or get an autograph from the Navy pilot.

When the news conference began, he was asked about how he felt about the welcome.

"I got chills when I saw all the people



KSN television's Don Grant of Wichita and Julie Kennedy of Oberlin were hosting the live television coverage of the celebration.

and when they all stood up," Vignery said.

There was no frenzy among the media, but there were representatives from all the major networks and several state newspapers including *The Salina Journal* and *The Wichita*

Eagle.

The welcome ceremony was broadcast by KLOE in Goodland and by KSN television. Don Grant from Wichita and Julie Kennedy from Oberlin were the hosts for the KSN coverage.

Schools hang up budget

Lawmakers work to resolve impasse

By John Hanna

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Republican House leaders were prepared to drop an important element of a budget-balancing plan to end an impasse, but the Legislature, hung up on school finance, was unable to finish the 2001 session early today.

The Senate recessed at 3:30 a.m. and the House a half-hour later — more than 13 hours after both chambers had convened Sunday afternoon. The Senate was to resume work at noon today, the House at 1 p.m.

A bill to raise \$10 million by increasing a tax on insurance companies received final approval Sunday night in the House, which had defeated the proposal earlier. That gave legislative leaders hope that adjournment was possible.

But negotiators were unable to close a deal on school finance, a key to finishing work on the year's final spending bill.

That meant legislators would have a 13th day of work since returning from their spring break and a 98th calendar day. This year's "wrap-up" session is the longest ever, although the 1991 session, with a 12-day wrap-up, lasted a total of 103 days.

The Senate approached chaos before recessing, with members grumbling and snapping at each other as they tried to decide when to reconvene.

President Dave Kerr apologized for keeping them in session. "That was certainly not expected," said Kerr, R-Hutchinson.

As they kept the two chambers on standby early today, House and Senate leaders kept promising that adjournment was near. They had seen progress on budget issues, particularly on the insurance tax bill.

The bill was part of a plan that closes the \$206 million gap in the budget for the 2002 fiscal year, which begins July 1, and is designed to avert similar problems next year as legislators draft a budget for fiscal 2003.

Besides the insurance tax, the plan hinged also on a measure increasing the tax on gasoline and diesel fuels by 1 cent a gallon on July 1, to raise \$16.5 million a year. The fuels tax increase was approved by legislators two years ago, but was not set to take effect until July 2003. The tax measures and the overall budget plan won Senate approval Friday night.

Historic house tops agenda

Computers and insurance for Sherman County and the historic Handy House top the agenda for the Sherman County commissioners' regular meeting at 8 a.m. Tuesday.

Mary Messamore, director of the county dispatch system, is to present bids for a new computer which she requested at the April 30 meeting. The commissioners asked for her to get bids for the type of computer she needs to connect to the network in the City Administration Building.

Evelyn Ward, representing the Historical Society, will be asking the commissioners about helping with the insurance on the historic Handy House, which the society recently decided to acquire.

Mike Niemberger of American Fidelity Insurance will meet with the commissioners about the short term disability program and the outcome of the employee survey on a "cafeteria" insurance plan.

The commissioners meet in the commission room on the main floor of the Sherman County courthouse, Eighth Street and Broadway Avenue.

local markets

Noon

- Current wheat — \$2.78 bushel
 - New wheat — \$2.80 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$2.76
 - Corn — \$1.86 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$1.76
 - Loan deficiency prmt. — 23¢
 - Milo — \$2.96 hundredweight
 - Soybeans — \$3.83 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$3.82
 - Loan deficiency payment — \$1.06
 - Millet — \$6.00 hundredweight
 - Sunflowers
 - Oil current crop — \$6.65 cwt.
 - Oil new crop — \$5.90 cwt.
 - Loan deficiency prmt. — \$3.02
 - Confection current — \$15/\$7 cwt.
 - Pinto beans — \$14
- (Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.



Train robber back in prison

LONDON — Fugitive train robber Ronnie Biggs, one of the 20th century's most colorful criminals, returned home to Britain today and was promptly arrested by Scotland Yard, which had hunted him for years.

The ailing 71-year-old Biggs, barely able to speak or move after a series of strokes, flew from Brazil aboard a jet chartered by the tabloid Sun newspaper, which reportedly bought the rights to exclusive interviews with Biggs.

"Got Him," said a banner headline in today's editions of the tabloid, with a full-page picture of Biggs in his wheelchair, wearing a cowboy hat.

Biggs, who was part of the gang that pulled off the audacious "Great Train Robbery" in 1963, was arrested aboard the plane by Scotland Yard detectives.