

The Goodland Daily News

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Eight Pages

Goodland, Kansas 67735

weather report

74°
at noon



Today

• Sunset, 8:00 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 5:26 a.m.
• Sunset, 8:01 p.m.

Midday Conditions

• Soil Temperature 57 degrees
• Humidity 25 percent
• Sky sunny
• Winds north 30-39 mph
• Barometer 29.93 inches and falling
• Record High 95° (1939)
• Record Low 36° (1930)

Last 24 Hours*

High 72°
Low 43°
Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Partly cloudy, low 35-40, north 10-20. Tomorrow: Partly cloudy, high 60-65, low 35-40, north-west wind 15-25 mph.

Extended Forecast

Friday: dry, high 60s. Saturday: dry, high 65-75, low 40s. Sunday: dry, high 70s, low 40s.

(National Weather Service)

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

local markets

Noon

Current wheat — \$2.72 bushel
New wheat — \$2.74 bushel
Posted county price — \$2.72
Corn — \$1.72 bushel
Posted county price — \$1.62
Loan deficiency payment — 37¢
Milo — \$2.79 hundredweight
Soybeans — \$3.91 bushel
Posted county price — \$3.83
Loan deficiency payment — \$1.07
Millet — \$6.00 hundredweight
Sunflowers
Oil current crop — \$6.85 cwt.
Oil new crop — \$5.90 cwt.
Loan deficiency pmt. — \$2.96
Confection current — \$15/\$7 cwt.
Pinto beans — \$14 (new crop)
(Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, 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.

Party switch makes waves

WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont decided to abandon his party and become an independent, officials said today, a momentous switch that would end GOP control of the Senate and crimp President Bush's ability to pass his agenda.

Jeffords, a moderate in a party of conservatives, told reporters in the Capitol he had made up his mind about his political future and would fly home to Vermont to make an announcement on Thursday.

"I want to go home to my people," he said.

Senators in both parties as well as aides to the longtime Vermont lawmaker said he had told them he would leave the Republicans, become an independent and align himself with the Democrats for organizational purposes.



Running for the WALL

Vet bikers on way to memorial

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

They gathered in Ontario, Calif., on May 15 and headed toward Washington, as they have for the past 12 years, and Sunday morning the Veterans Run for the Wall make their annual gas stop in Goodland.

There is lots of black leather, bandannas, helmets and Harley's as the motorcycle riders came roaring down the off ramp from I-70.

For many, the ride to the Vietnam Memorial Wall is a quintessential vision of the motorcycle gangs of legend from the turbulent '60s. If you look closer, though, there are a lot of gray beards visible and most of the patches on the coats tell of past military service. Some tell how many years a rider has been making this pilgrimage to honor those who are unaccounted for as prisoners of war or missing in action in the Vietnam War.

These are American veterans, and most are now in their late 40s to mid-50s as the years roll by since the end of the war in 1973 and the dedication of the Wall in 1993. Ages of the participants range from 8 to 80; there are mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers (who ride their own bikes!), veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, active military personnel, supporters, and family.

The leader of the group this year was Milo Gordon of Colby, Wis., who said it was his seventh trip across the country. Before heading out, he talked to the crew in a forward support vehicle about possible road construction



Vietnam Veteran Lee Vela of Gardnerville, Nev., known as "Stump" because of his missing leg, prepared to head east on his motorcycle as part of the 13th annual Veterans Run For The Wall, which stopped in Goodland Sunday morning to refuel. This is Vela's fourth year making the trip from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Daily News

problems between WaKeeney and Hays. The group planned to spend the night in Salina. They plan to be in Washington by Friday for the Memorial Day weekend and a special observance at the Wall on Sunday as part of

the Rolling Thunder parade.

Gordon said they were glad to get to Kansas, as they got soaked traveling through Colorado on Saturday, spending the night in Limon and having a "great dinner" at Hugo.

Among the group in Goodland Sunday was "Stump," nicknamed because he lost a leg in the war. Lee Vela is from Gardnerville, Nev., and this is his

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St. Francis feedyard says packing plant unfair

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Farmland National Beef Packing Co. was warned it might break federal law if it refused to buy cattle from a feedyard owner who had criticized the company, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said Tuesday.

The testimony from Dean Alexander, a Kansas City regional supervisor for

the USDA, came on the opening day of an administrative hearing to determine whether National Beef engaged in unjust practices when it allegedly reduced its cattle purchases from the Callicrate Cattle Company Feedyard in St. Francis, Kan.

Alexander said a buyer for National Beef told him the company was consid-

ering dropping all business with the Callicrate feedyard after a manager at the feedyard criticized National Beef in a letter to the editor in the Western Livestock Journal. The Callicrate manager, Elroy Heim, testified that he wrote in the letter that Farmland wasn't paying the premiums it said it would for high-quality cattle.

The owner of the feedlot, Mike Callicrate, also had complained to the USDA.

Alexander told administrative law Judge Jill Clifton that he warned the National Beef representative that the company could be violating federal laws if it stopped doing business with Callicrate.

Board stays with plan; gives principals raises

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

The Goodland School Board on Monday decided to keep the same health insurance plan, though it will cost the district, which is already facing financial problems, \$150,000 more next year.

At a special meeting set to discuss the insurance plan and teacher contracts, the board also approved the 2001-2002 negotiated agreement, accepted two resignations, hired two coaches, a teacher and a junior high activities director and approved salaries for principals, employees and the district's psychologist.

After hearing that a majority of the insurance committee wants to keep the plan, members voted to stay with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Kansas Educational Insurance Trust plan. The insurance committee recommends a plan, but the board doesn't have to agree.

At an earlier meeting, Superintendent Marvin Selby said a high number of claims caused Blue Cross to increase

rates by 32.8 percent, which means the district will pay about \$153,000 more for health insurance in the next fiscal year — starting on July 1.

Selby said the board doesn't want to raise taxes, so they will discuss making significant cuts to save money. That could include not replacing a teacher who has resigned, he said, or cutting programs.

"We will make whatever cuts are necessary," he said. The district is already facing financial problems, as declining enrollment means it won't receive as much state money next year.

During contract negotiations, the teachers asked for the district to start paying dental insurance, but Selby said the proposition would prove to be too expensive.

"That was out of negotiations pretty quick," he said.

After talking behind closed doors for 22 minutes, the board approved the 2001-2002 negotiated agreement, which teams representing the board and

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Tropical treat



Erica Fenner, a fourth grader at Central Elementary, ate a banana split along with her classmates Friday on the school's lawn. The students, many of whom dressed up, were rewarded for reading 2,401 books since November, when Central's annual reading program began. The program had a tropical jungle theme this year.

Photo by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News

Prisoner up for parole

Man convicted of 1982 beating death

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

Gregorio Gomez Jr. has spent more than half of his life behind bars for the 1982 beating death of an 89-year-old Goodland man.

The Kansas Parole Board will decide next month whether the 36-year-old will spend up to 20 more years in prison or walk free this summer.

Gomez, 17 at the time; Ron Kernal, 18; and a 13-year-old Goodland boy, were convicted of killing Jesus Saavedra by beating him on the head with a 2x4 board.

Court records say the three went to Saavedra's home in the early morning hours of June 10, after talking about it at a party, to rob the old man.

Newspaper reports said the crew kicked in the back door of Saavedra's home at 1618 Sherman Ave., hit the old man repeatedly with the board and stole about \$1,400.

Margaret Diaz, a neighbor, found Saavedra unconscious in his home the next day and he died at the Goodland hospital four days later. While court files say three other young Hispanic men spotted outside Saavedra's home that night were investigated, they were never arrested or charged with anything.

Gomez, Kernal and the juvenile were arrested on June 28, 1982, and charged with burglary and first-degree murder. The 13-year-old was sentenced in juvenile court, while Kernal and Gomez, who turned 18 on April 11, 1983, were considered adults.

The charges were reduced to second-degree murder, and on Sept. 9, 1983 Gomez was sentenced to 15 to 40 years in prison, while Kernal — who waived his right to a preliminary hearing, pleaded guilty and testified against Gomez — got 7 to 20 years. The court allowed both of their sentences to run from June 28, 1982, when they were first arrested.

Gomez is now an inmate at the El Dorado Correctional Facility, the state's maximum security prison. Along with more than 100 other Kansas prisoners, he is scheduled to have a parole hearing in June. If granted parole, he would be released in July.

Colene Seidel, parole board administrator, said first the board wants to hear opinions from people about letting Gomez back on the streets.

One of his accomplices was allowed to walk about 10 years ago, but was not free for long.

After spending 10 years in prison, Kernal was released in June 1992, but was sent back a little over a year later, on Oct. 8, 1993. Bill Miskell, spokesman for the Kansas Department of Corrections, said Kernal violated the conditions of his release, though he couldn't say what he did.

Miskell said Kernal, who is being held at Larned Correctional Mental Health Facility, will serve the remainder of his original sentence and will be released on June 28, 2002. He said Larned is a maximum security facility for prisoners who are mentally unstable.

Sherman County court records for Kernal have no information beyond the mid-1990s, but they reveal that at one time the prisoner said he planned to live with family in Goodland and work in Colby if he was granted parole.

The file includes copies of several letters Kernal wrote to Jack Armstrong, the former Sherman County sheriff who investigated the murder. District Judge Jack Burr and Scott Showalter, the former Sherman County attorney.

In the letters, dated after Kernal was sent back to prison in 1993, the inmate says that after years of thinking about the crime, he believes the blows from the wood board may not have been what killed Saavedra.

Gomez barely touched the elderly man, he said in a letter written in 1995, and may not have deserved the lengthy sentence he received. In an earlier letter, Kernal admits he told Gomez to kill

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