

Weatherman learned to like small town living

WEATHER, from Page 1

Goodland for weather service jobs in other states.

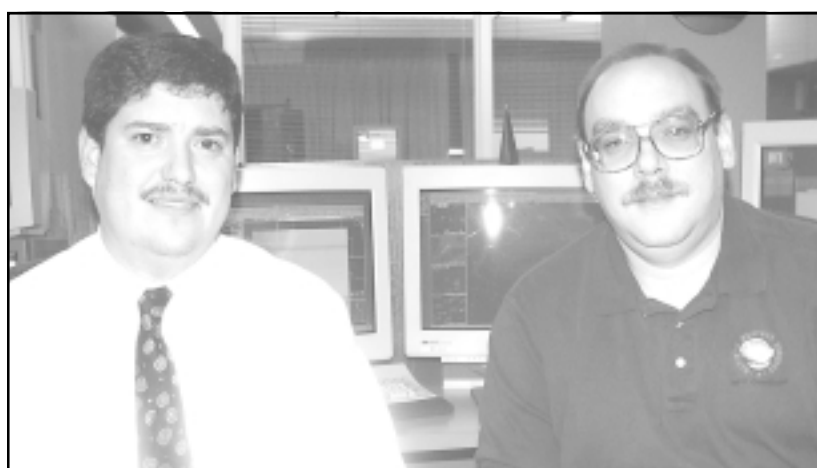
Lynott is leaving for Silver Spring, Md., just outside Washington, this weekend to take a hydrologist position at headquarters. He said it is a step up for him. He will lead development of an advanced hydrological prediction service on the Internet.

In March, Barker said he will move to Lincoln, Ill., a small town where he will fill a position similar to the one he is in now. Though they will miss Goodland, he said, he and his wife Sue want to be closer to family in Chicago and Ohio.

"It was a really hard decision," he said. "We really like Goodland a lot." The office here hasn't found replacements yet, and Barker and Lynott said it could be a few months before both positions are filled.

Lynott, whose last day was Wednesday, said this will be his third career move and probably won't be the last. He said he was 26 when he came here in 1994 from Wyoming to take a job as a hydrologist. He eventually became a senior forecaster and then moved into his current position, which is basically spokesman for the weather office.

"I'm going to miss doing my job," he said. "I love interacting with the media, emergency medical workers and city and county officials. I love



After a combined 17 years at the National Weather Service office, Kevin Lynott (left) and Lyle Barker both recently accepted jobs with the service in other states. Photo by Rachel Miscal/The Goodland Daily News

traveling around and getting to meet people."

Lynott, 34, said he and his family will miss Goodland and the people who live here. He said they'll have to adapt to living in a big metropolitan area.

"It will be a very big change," he said. "The culture is completely different there."

The job Lynott is taking opened right after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, but he said that didn't stop him from applying. He said it probably increased his chances. "It may have stopped some people

from going," he said, "but it didn't faze me one bit."

Lynott said it has crossed his mind that it will be more dangerous living in a city, but he said, bad things can happen anywhere.

"You can't let it deter you," Lynott said. "You must go for your goals and dreams."

He said his wife and three young daughters are looking forward to the adventure, and he's excited about starting a new job in a new place. Lynott said he'll be working less with the public and more with other government agencies.

"It will be a major challenge, but I'll adapt," he said. "If you want to have a successful career, you must move around a little bit."

In eight years at the office, Lynott said, he's dealt with more big storms and tornadoes than he can remember.

He said he won't forget the tornado that touched down on May 10, 1995 north of Colby and Hoxie. It wasn't particularly powerful or damaging, he said, but it was the first tornado he worked in Kansas.

Lynott said weather stopped him from getting to work in October 1997, when a storm dumped 20 inches of snow on Goodland. A few forecasters were trapped at the office for two days.

"It was crazy," he said. "The whole area was blasted. I remember 10-foot drifts in front of the office."

Lynott said he always enjoyed his job, but the severe weather season in northwest Kansas during the summer months could be stressful and tiring.

"When the end of August rolled around," he said, "I was ready for a break."

Barker said it's a coincidence they are leaving at the same time, and it's not due to changes at the office. "Situations just arose that met our goals," he said.

Barker said he and his wife decided a few years ago that if a position opened in a city of their choice, they'd move. He said they want to get closer to his father in Ohio who has been ill, and

other family in the East.

"It's kind of like moving home a little bit," Barker said, noting he worked at the University of Illinois in Champagne when he joined the service.

He said he and his wife had lived in cities before they moved to Goodland, but now they prefer the small-town environment.

"It was one of the best moves of our lives," he said. "We've really grown to like small-town living." Barker said a hurricane brought them here.

He was working in Miami in August of 1992, when Hurricane Andrew pounded the coast, a major natural disaster. Barker said he had to work through the storm and a crew from CNN volunteered to go out and check the staffs' homes. They came back with mostly bad news.

Barker, 39, said he was already looking for another job, but the fact he was homeless sped up the process. He and his wife moved to Goodland shortly after and now have two boys, Matthew, 8, and Kevin, 4.

"We may not have come to Goodland if our home wasn't destroyed," he said.

Barker said the hurricane made them appreciate small-town life because society had basically broken down in Florida. He said that probably wouldn't have happened here.

It will be hard to leave, he said.

"We're very connected to the community," Barker said, "but sometimes opportunities arise and they're hard to pass up."

He said it will also be tough to leave behind his job, which has allowed him to do things he never thought he would.

In 1996, Barker said, he was one of 18 forecasters chosen from around the country to work at the summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Working in the Olympic Weather Support office, he said his job was to provide forecasts and warnings for the various Olympic event venues across Georgia. He said they had to do some odd forecasts.

For example, Barker said, the office had to release dew warnings for the bicycle tracks and predict when the dew on the tracks would evaporate.

He said his interest in lightning began that summer. It was important to have accurate lightening forecasts, he said, because the event organizers didn't want to have to postpone anything for a false alarm.

"It had to be a legitimate threat," he said. "I realized then how little we really know about lightning."

Barker said he's looking forward to new projects and opportunities in Illinois. But, he said, they're hoping to find the same feel Goodland has.

"We decided if we were going to move, we wanted a similar environment," he said.

Board to meet college chief

The Goodland School Board will meet with the new president of the Northwest Kansas Technical College on Monday and hear a patriotic speech that won a high school student a trip to Washington.

Ron Schilling, a school board member who represents the district on the college board, will introduce Ken Clouse at the regular meeting, starting at 7 p.m. Clouse took over as college president in July. Schilling will give a report on the college.

Amanda Hoffman, winner of the state Veterans of Foreign Wars annual Voice of Democracy Speech contest, will give her speech. Hoffman competed against students across Kansas and won a \$1,000 scholarship and expense-paid trip to

Washington. The board will also discuss money-saving suggestions from teachers, set goals for the year, approve a 2002-2003 school year calendar, hold an awards presentation and hear reports from principals and Superintendent Marvin Selby.

Schylar Goodwin, president of the Goodland Development Corp., will talk about the group's idea for an endowment fund. Selby said Goodwin wants two board members to serve on a board that will oversee the fund. Schilling and Jane Philbrick have said they would be willing to fill the seats.

The board may go behind closed doors to discuss personnel matters and annual teacher contract negotiations.

Court system will close three days to save money

TOPEKA (AP) — State courts will have to close for three days between now and July unless the state provides more money quickly, the judiciary's top official warned legislators.

"We can't meet the payroll," Supreme Court Chief Justice Kay McFarland said Thursday.

In testimony to the House and Senate budget committees, McFarland said the court system needs an extra \$600,000 in the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, and additional \$3.6 million for the following year.

Gov. Bill Graves has proposed both appropriations, but the \$3.6 million for

fiscal 2003 depends upon passage of his proposals for \$228 million in tax increases.

Because salaries consume 97 percent of the court system's budget, McFarland said, personnel costs are the only place to save money.

Already, she said, vacancies at the district and appellate courts are going unfilled for at least 90 days, making extra — and unpaid — days off for employees the only other way to cut expenses.

"I'm sitting here, preoccupied with trying to keep the doors open," McFarland said. "We can't change the

rules and say, 'OK, no more divorces in Johnson County, we don't have time for them.'"

Legislators told McFarland she had made a case for the court system, but said they're not sure the Legislature will increase taxes.

"Why don't you just sue the heck out of us?" said Sen. Paul Feleciano, D-Wichita.

McFarland replied: "Suing won't get you anything soon."

The judiciary's current budget is almost \$79 million, about \$554,000 more than in the previous fiscal year. But that increase did not cover raises

granted to employees by the Legislature, or other costs such as health insurance.

In addition, the number of cases filed in Kansas courts rose nearly 46 percent over the past 15 years, while the number of judges rose 8 percent and court workers, 10 percent.

McFarland compared the judiciary to nesting hens that have more eggs placed in front of them. She said the hens will try to sit on all the eggs, no matter how many.

"Because they're sitting on so many eggs, they can't hatch anything," she said.

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Children to make decorations for Valentine's dance

Children have a chance this weekend to create artwork that will be used to decorate an after-Valentine's Day dance.

Members of the Goodland Development Corp. are holding a free program from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday at the Carnegie Arts Center, 120 W. 12th Street.

Schylar Goodwin, corporation

president, said supplies will be provided and the creations will be displayed at a dance the group is holding from 8 p.m. to midnight on Saturday, Feb. 16, at the Goodland Elks Lodge, 1523 Arcade. If parents want the artwork back, he said, they can pick it up at the dance.

The dance will be free, Goodwin said, and couples can buy food and

drinks from the Safari Steakhouse, which recently moved to the lodge and is holding a grand reopening today.

He said a disc jockey will spin tunes; Jan Thomas, owner of A Moment in Time Photography, will take couples' pictures; and members of the Christian Youth Fellowship will be selling flowers. Goodwin said the fellowship is raising money to take a trip this sum-

mer to see the Pope in Canada.

People can stay after the dance, he said, for the free coffee and donuts that will be served from midnight to 1 p.m.

Goodwin said the after-Valentine's Day dance is a second chance to celebrate the holiday.

"If you didn't have a good Valentine's Day," he said, "you can try again."

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