

# commentary

from other pens...

## Workers spruce up the White House

By Jennifer Loven Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The White House is a mess. With President Bush away for a month, a noisy horde of sweaty construction workers and heavy machinery has descended to give the executive mansion a facelift — about 270 projects ranging from replacing the odd door knob to ripping up and repaving an entire driveway.

The result is a far cry from the ship-shape home that only a few weeks before staged one of the most formal and pomp-laden of presidential events — a black-tie state dinner.

The flurry of activity is in part an effort to spruce up the West Wing ahead of events this fall celebrating its construction 100 years ago to house Teddy Roosevelt's growing staff in the "Temporary Executive Offices." Among those projects are re-sanding the wood floors in the Oval Office, new upholstery for couches in the main lobby and refinishing some exterior doors.

But daily life also places extraordinary wear and tear on the nation's most famous house as it is pressed into nearly constant quadruple duty as a residence, office building, entertaining venue and tourist attraction. With Bush hardly ever gone for more than a day or two, the to-do list of needed repairs piles up.

"The White House is a historical home — it's the people's home — and it requires a tremendous amount of upkeep to keep it in tiptop condition," said White House spokeswoman Anne Womack.

On a recent day, aides allowed to give West Wing tours to friends and family had little to show off with the president's office entirely bare of its peaches-and-creme-hued contents. All that could be seen was a lone worker sliding a buffing machine across the blond-and-dark wood parquet floors.

"Please pardon our appearance," said a sign in the hallway, "while we prepare for the commemoration of the West Wing's 100th Anniversary."

Outside, huge trucks filled the driveway leading to the West Wing, lifting materials to workers putting a new roof and drainage system over the area that houses the White House press corps, the briefing room and the Colonnade Bush traverses each day from his home to the Oval Office.

Parts of the main residence and the West Wing are dotted with scaffolding as a project to repair and paint various crumbling patches continues.

Next door, the racket was deafening as machinery ripped up the drive that runs between the West Wing and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building — mostly used as a coveted parking space for the highest-level aides — and cement trucks rattled through to replace it.

Amid all the clamor, workers could be seen trying to escape the stifling heat in the shade of the North Lawn — normally such a no-no that a fence was built years ago to discourage reporters from lounging on the grass even in an area invisible from the street.

Other projects include replacing the \$30,000 jogging track on the South Lawn that was custom-built in 1993 for former President Clinton, like his successor an avid runner. Bush, who normally takes to a treadmill or the Army's nearby Fort McNair for his four-times-a-week runs, is using the nearly quarter-mile-long track more often now that E Street, which runs on the south side of the grounds, has been closed, Womack said.

West Executive Drive, meanwhile, has not been repaved since the 1950s, she said.

The newly polished West Wing will be on display in November, when a special tour will be given during events planned by the White House Historical Association to commemorate the centennial, Womack said.

As for those Oval Office floors, they were just redone during Bush's vacation last August. Even though a rug mostly fills the room, one White House regular recalled the president noticed with his first step inside last year that the job wasn't up to snuff — the wood had been incor-rectly stained against the grain.

The redo he promptly ordered, along with the rest of the makeover, will be ready for Bush's inspection when he returns from his Texas ranch around Labor Day.



## Wedding plans move ahead with minor hitches

Plans for oldest daughter's wedding are moving right along. And so are the usual problems.

Felicia and Nik are getting married in Augusta, Ga., on Aug. 29. That's a problem in itself. We live hundreds of miles from Augusta, and while it's hot in Kansas, I can't imagine what it's going to be like in nice, humid Augusta the last of August.

However, since Steve and I got married in Kansas the last day of July, we'll probably all live through it.

We flew to Augusta a few months ago and helped lay out the basic wedding plans — place, flowers, clothes, music, pictures and transportation were all discussed.

Felicia set up a wedding account and we and her future in-laws paid into it. She will do the work.

The wedding will be small, just immediate family and the judge. Music from a CD player and pictures by the dads, all set in a grand old hotel with dinner served afterwards.

Since we were going to China, the kids asked us



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

to get their wedding clothes made for them in Hong Kong. Felicia gave me a simple sheath dress to copy and we got Nik's measurements.

In Hong Kong, the tailor took the short dress and made a long copy out of white silk. He took Nik's measurements and made up suit, vest and shirt.

Our measurements were apparently a little off. The vest was too tight and the pants too big, so the suit is at a tailor's in Augusta being refitted.

The dress however, was perfect. Felicia hung it in her closet and forgot about it until last week, when the new cat sprayed it.

The cat had just been declawed and was very upset, she said. It went to hide in her closet and when she went to get the cat, it just went off all over her long dresses — including one long, white silk gown.

Felicia cleaned the stain out with vinegar and took it to the cleaners. The hem still smells a little vinegar, she says, but not of cat. And if someone is sniffing her hem, she has more problems than just a scared cat.

She told me yesterday she's going to make her own bouquet. After finding out that the florist charges \$150 for a bride's bouquet, she's feeling very creative.

We have our plane reservations, but with the way airlines seem to be going belly up, we may be using our thumbs to get to the wedding. I don't think my mother would like that, however. She wouldn't allow me to hitchhike when I was young, and I doubt if she'll feel very kindly about doing it herself at 79.

Felicia has offered to give me her cat. She points out that he's declawed.

Hey, I just gave my cat problem to my son; I'm not in the market for another one. Maybe her brother will take the wayward feline.

I'll suggest it. After all, the kids are always fighting about something. They might as well have a good excuse.

## Can't we use our judgment in watering lawns?

To the Editor:

Where is our freedom going? Do we have any right to use our own judgment?

I thoroughly agree that in our situation right now, we do definitely need to conserve water wherever we can.

I also believe that everyone should have the freedom to do whatever he or she can, in the best way possible. For years, I drug the hoses around to water my yard and I would soak it good once and make that last for a week.

Everyone might not agree, but I thought that twice a week would conserve more than three times a week. The new ruling on odd and even days really shoots that plan in the head.

Anyway, I had my lawn mowed the last time on Aug. 6, and I watered that evening. I wasn't sure when the next mowing day would be, so on the night of the 13th my yard was getting so dry that I was worrying about it in the night and couldn't sleep. So, I got up and turned on my sprinklers at 3:30 in the morning. Before I could get back to bed, a car stopped in the street. I looked out the window trying to figure out who it might be. I finally went to the front door in time to see a policeman going back to his car leaving a ticket on my front door. It was a warning. So, I shut my water off because it was the 13th.

Then I set my sprinkler for 4 a.m. on the 14th. This morning (Wednesday, Aug. 14) I had another ticket on my door telling me to plead guilty or come to court on the 26th at 8 a.m. Costs to be remitted will be \$136.

I really don't believe that this is right. I thought the main thing to be accomplished was to save water.

Esther M. Studer  
Goodland

*Editor's note:* The city ordinance set the water restrictions based on odd and even addresses with the odd addresses watering on Monday and Thursday and the even addresses watering on Tuesday and Friday. The times for watering are from 6-9 a.m. or 7-10 p.m. There is no watering allowed on Wednesday or Saturday and Sunday.



**from our readers**

• to the editor

water conservation in general study the information available at this site and also at www.kwo.org, especially the Ogallala Aquifer Management Advisory Committee Report of October 16, 2001.

J.M. Butler  
Goodland

To the Editor:

I want to express to the people of Goodland how fortunate you are to have the exceptional dental care of Dr. Terry Imel, Paula Crabtree, registered dental hygienist, and the staff of Goodland Dental Arts.

I've been a working hygienist for 27 years in the small town of Estes Park, Colo. I recently had the privilege to observe the teamwork of the entire staff. Their professionalism is beyond compare, and the new Dental Arts complex is technologically astounding. Even living in a small town, you can be assured you are receiving the most modern care available.

I am impressed by the mutual respect shown by Dr. Imel and Crabtree. This benefits the staff and patients of Goodland and the surrounding areas. Thank you! You are a credit and a great example to the dental profession.

Celeste Reeves RDH  
Estes Park, Colo.

To the Editor:

This column was written by Frank Finnegan, who used to be in Goodland and was married to the former Judy Kear of Goodland. I thought it was interesting and worth being seen by a wider audience.

Al Ryan  
Goodland

**Going Postal**

There are times — and this is one of them — when I feel like an old man.

I turn 50 later this year and while I may not act my age, I certainly feel it. It's Monday morning as I write this, and every bone in this body aches from the week end. My arms, legs and lower back have that familiar sore sensation — and believe it or not, it's all the fault of the United States Postal Service.

Of course, that's not new, we blame postal workers all the time for all sorts of things. One or two bad apples coupled with a little publicity and suddenly hundreds of thousands of people are tainted with a negative image. We've even coined a catch phrase for "it ... going postal." But since Sept. 11, we have developed a new perspective on a number of things. We think differently about our security, our airplanes, our policeman, and our firefighters. And now it's time to consider redefining that catch phrase.

Last year, going postal meant delivering mail

with the threat of anthrax in any envelope. In Washington D.C., the House and Senate debated closing up shop and leaving town as federal office buildings closed to be inspected for contamination. Of course, the mail was still delivered each day. Letters, cards, birthday gifts, magazines, all of it was delivered day in and day out by your local letter carrier.

After NBC announced Tom Brokaw had received anthrax-tainted mail, the offices of all the national news media started screening their mail and instituting additional security measures. But local postal workers continued to deliver our letters, cards, birthday gifts, and magazines.

Two weeks ago, a young misguided individual (read lunatic) started putting pipe bombs in rural mailboxes rigged to explode when opening. So what happened? Rural postal workers continued to deliver the mail.

Saturday, letter carriers around the country collected food for those in need. Battling a negative image, pipe bombs, and anthrax, their commitment to feeding the hungry didn't waiver. The National Association of Letter Carriers' food drive has become the largest single-day food drive in the country. In our area, they collected 240,000 pounds. They didn't have to do it and they didn't get paid for it. For the past 10 years, they've volunteered to pick up the canned goods on our front steps and they've lugged them back to the post office.

Other than giving me a sore back from helping out on Saturday, what does going postal mean? It means keeping your wits about you, even when others are screaming the sky is falling. It's following through on your commitments, being a team player, and pulling your own weight. And it means putting into action your concern for others less fortunate.

We should thank our local letter carriers for a job well done, not just for last Saturday, but for the last year. They deserve it. And we should consider going postal ourselves.

Frank Finnegan  
Executive Director  
St. Louis Area Foodbank

## Letter Policy

The Goodland Daily News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with phone numbers, by e-mail to: <daily@nwkansas.com>.

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