

## Snow at last! Waiting is finally over

It finally happened! After months of waiting and numerous predicted storms, the area finally received a significant amount of snow, more than a trace.

Forecasters started in last week, saying the region would get a snow storm, and by Saturday the chance had grown to a 70 percent chance of rain starting some time late Sunday night and changing to snow. This time, forecasters were right.

Early Monday morning, the snow started and the wind blew, leaving drifts through-

out Decatur County. In all, the official weather service for Oberlin was listed as 1 inches with .13 of moisture.

That was enough to close schools in Oberlin and Jennings, and to give the winter wheat crop something to drink.

Oberlin Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the decision to cancel classes Monday morning was easy, with the lack of visibility and the forecast for more bad weather during the day. The district, he said, has a procedure for making the decision. Transportation Director Brian Simonsson drives

the roads in the morning to see if the buses should be sent out or kids should be driving to school.

Monday morning, Mr. Simonsson went out at 5 a.m. He reported that he was driving five miles an hour and could barely see. It was still snowing and the wind was blowing. Mr. Glodt decided to cancel school for the day.

He added that he didn't hear of any schools in the region that were going to be open.

In some cases, if the district knows that

the weather will close the school, the call will be made the night before. Mr. Glodt said in this situation, the call couldn't be made until Monday morning, but the district tried to let people know as soon as possible.

With this being the first snow fall of 2003 and with very little moisture at the end of 2002, the wheat crop has waited a long time for a drink.

Brian Olson, Kansas State University Multi-County agronomist, said it is never too late for the moisture, since it is winter and the wheat is still dormant.

The area is eight to 14 inches behind in moisture, he said, and although this storm will produce less than an inch for the crop, it will help. Mr. Olson said the moisture helps wet the topsoil. When the topsoil is dry, it is more susceptible to getting cold which means there is bigger potential for winterkill.

The little bit has helped, he said, but the area can definitely use a lot more.

There may be no way to catch up, but he said if the crops get snow and rain before (See SNOW on Page 10A)

## Council faces huge increase in insurance

The cost of medical insurance for city workers will jump 44 percent this year, according to a notice the city received from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, forcing the council to look at a state insurance plan which may be cheaper.

Councilmen had talked about joining the state plan, which is administered through Blue Cross/Blue Shield, but had decided to wait until they knew what kind of increase they were looking at on the old plan.

The council knew the insurance would go up, but didn't know by how much. Last year, they had a 10 percent increase.

City Administrator Gary Shike said with the 44 percent increase, he didn't think they had any choice but to look at the state plan. There really isn't any other option, he said. At least the state plan assures the city that the increases for the next three years will be fairly level.

Mayor Gary Walter asked if there are any options they could consider with Blue Cross/Blue Shield which would make the current plan less expensive than the state.

City Clerk Martha Nemeth said she called the company and they said the increases seemed to be between 40 to 50 percent across the board this year. They didn't talk about options, but did say a representative would be out in March to get everything set up.

"Is there a recommendation now?" asked Mayor Walter. Mr. Shike said he would like to study the plans until the first meeting in February.

Mayor Walter said he would like to know what the effect would be on the employees if they changed to the state plan. Councilman Stan McEvoy said he would also like to see what the 44 percent increase does to the rates they have now.

Here are rates for both plans:

- For a single person, it costs \$284 for the city plan now and \$346 for the state plan.

- For an employee with a child, \$535 now and \$684 for the state plan.

- For an employee and spouse, \$610 now and \$733 for the state plan.

(See CITY on Page 10A)

## Herndon will join with Atwood if people vote yes

By KATHY DAVIS-VRBAS  
The Rawlins County Square Deal

The Atwood and Herndon school boards met in Atwood to pursue consolidation of the two school districts.

Meeting in the Atwood Grade School cafeteria Jan. 23, the boards took separate votes approving consolidation of the two districts.

The Atwood board vote was unanimous among those present, 6-0 to approve consolidation. Board member Peggy Cabrinha was not at the meeting.

Herndon's board voted 5-1 in favor of consolidation, with board member Jerry Niemeth casting the dissenting vote. Board member Joe Herzog was not present.

Members of both boards signed a formal resolution of consolidation that will need approval by the state Board of Education when it meets

Tuesday.

If approved by the state, the resolution will be published and will appear on the April 1 election ballots. The final decision will lie in the hands of Atwood and Herndon voters.

The resolution states the name of the consolidated district will be the Rawlins County Unified School District. Dr. Lee Tarrant, Atwood superintendent, said the number assigned the new district will be either 105 or 106.

The resolution also states the names of the persons who will comprise a seven-member interim board made up of four Atwood and three Herndon representatives. Appointed to this board were Kent Morgan, Pattie Wolters, Bill Beamgard and Chris Schmidt from Atwood and Andy Green, Tom Kogl and Francis Wahrman from (See SCHOOLS on Page 10A)

## Goodland paper will be twice weekly

The Goodland Star-News debuts today as an all-local newspaper for Sherman County, replacing The Goodland Daily News.

The paper changed to a twice-weekly publication, with a Midweek edition on Tuesdays and a Weekend edition on Fridays.

Steve Haynes, president of the parent Nor West Newspapers, said that the decision is a matter of economics and focus.

"With a declining population base and business base, the support no longer exists for a daily newspaper," Haynes said. "The business base, dozens of downtown merchants, that supported the Goodland Daily in 1932, no longer exists. There are no grocery stores left, and far fewer small merchants than there once were.

"Even after the merger with the Sherman County Star, we have lost money as a daily and this seemed to be the best way to continue to provide a quality newspaper in Goodland."

While the paper has been successful in delivering a quality product, winning 53 state and national awards in the last five years, it has lost money every year since the Gibsons Discount Store and Jubilee Foods closed, Mr. Haynes said.

The Star-News will include improvements which he said he believes will be positive for the newspaper and the town, including more local news, a better television guide, same-day delivery all over the county, a copy of The Country Advocate and American Profile magazine. (See PAPER on Page 10A)



SABRINA DELLERE (above) rolled colored bread dough with her hands during a Kansas Day activity on wheat last Wednesday at Oberlin Elementary School. Andrew Richards (below) stretched his dough between his two hands.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

## Students cook up colors

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Not many people bake pink, yellow, green, purple, orange or blue bread — just the students at Oberlin Elementary School.

On Kansas Day last Wednesday, students had a chance to learn about wheat and make bread that had wheat flour in the colored dough.

Normally bread dough has little or no color, but Lois Keller, a spokesperson from the Kansas Wheat Commission, colored the dough for the students.

Mrs. Keller was brought to Oberlin by the Decatur County Farm Bureau to talk to the students about wheat and bread.

She asked students how many lived on farms, which was found to be the majority. She also asked them if they knew what kind of wheat their parents raised. One said there were many varieties, but Mrs. Keller said she was referring to the class of wheat.

One student said a hard winter wheat, which was right. Some farmers in this area, said Mrs. Keller, are getting into a hard white winter wheat so they can get into a different market.

In September, she said, the wheat is planted. During the winter months, although it goes dormant, it is still growing. Mrs. Keller held up a half dozen wheat stalks and said planting one little kernel will make many stalks



grow.

She said, of course, it helps if there is a good mixture of rain and sunshine to help the wheat grow.

Farmers then harvest the grain and store it before it goes to the mill and is ground into flour.

Mrs. Keller had a small jar full of hard red winter wheat which she said she would grind in her portable mill. The mill had two stones to grind it into fine flour.

Good products are made from the wheat flour, she said, foods which

help keep the body in balance.

Mrs. Keller said she had made the colored dough from wheat flour for students to use to make bread and they could make bumble bees, bears and other shaped bread.

Each student received a handful of colored dough with a pattern to copy. They could then add a glaze then place the colored sugar on top. After the dough was baked, each participant got to taste their creation.

## Woman meets the chief

### Farm gal visits White House

By CAROLYN SUE KELLEY-PLOTTS

It's not what you know, but WHO you know.

In my case, it was my daughter, Halley Roberson. She works in the Executive Office of the President as a confidential assistant to the associate director, who is an assistant to the director of the Office of Management and Budget. Her office isn't actually in the White House. It's in the Eisenhower Building, right next door.

Traditionally, during the Christmas holidays, the President and First Lady host parties for the people who actually do the work of running the country. Dining in the White House, pictures with the First Couple, few are the refusals. This year Halley received an invitation to one of those parties with an open slot for a guest. That's where I come in.

Out of all the people in the world she could have taken, she chose to take her mother.

Finally! After all those years of doing laundry, driving car pools and sitting through endless softball games, I'm getting a return on my investment.

I arrived in Washington the Saturday night before the Tuesday, Dec. 17, party because I wanted to be thoroughly rested and relaxed. I also wanted time to make a "dry run" on the Metro so, come the big day, I didn't take the wrong train and end up in northern Virginia.

Monday morning, before leaving for work, Halley gave me detailed, handwritten instructions on how to get downtown and find her office. Right down to who to tell I had an appointment and who to show identification to.

Later that morning, she called to say her boss wanted to take us to lunch.

"Be here at 1:15; wear something nice; and don't be late!" was her admonition to me.

"Are my gray slacks and blazer nice enough?" I asked.

"No," was her terse reply.

Little did I know that I was about to experience the first of many extra-special treats in store for me.

**First Trip to the White House**

Her boss took us to the White House Mess for lunch. "Mess" might sound like a military cafeteria, but I can assure you it was on the same level as a four-star restaurant with uniformed wait staff, linen-covered tables and fine cuisine. The china, glasses and table service all carried the presidential seal. Even the salt and pepper shakers and the cream and sugar packets were stamped with it.

The dining room is called "mess" because it is operated by the Navy; a tradition that began during the administration of Rutherford B. Hayes. As we were leaving, a staff person handed us souvenir menus and boxes of M & Ms (red, white and blue, of course) with the Seal and the signature of George W. Bush.

**Party Day**

Party Day dawned cold but clear. Since the festivities were to begin at 4 p.m., I had to leave my daughter's Maryland home by 2:30 to arrive at her office by 3:30 to allow a little "freshening up" time. That meant I had to start getting ready by 1 p.m. It seemed a little strange to get all "duded up" in the middle of the day.

Since it was a long, three-block walk to the Metro station, tennis (See TRIP on Page 10A)



# \* Schools decide to join

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Herndon.

This interim board has no legal authority at present. If the voters approve consolidation in April, though, it will take authority over the Rawlins County Unified School District on July 1. This interim board would then oversee the new district for two years, until an election can be held.

Voters then would elect seven board members for the district. Some of these board members would serve two-year terms and others four-year terms.

The resolution signed last Thursday specifies that the proposed Rawlins County Unified School District will be divided into three voter districts, based on population. Each voter district will elect two board members, while one board member will be elected at-large.

On April 1, in addition to making the consolidation decision, voters will also cast ballots for regular Atwood and Herndon school board members.

Should the voters decline consolidation, the two district boards would continue to function separately, as in the present, with newly elected board members taking office July 1. However, should consolidation pass, the seven-member board named in the resolution drawn up last week will take over July 1 and the boards of the two formerly separate districts would cease to exist.

# \* City faces increase

(Continued from Page 1A)

plan.

• For the family, \$855 now and \$927 for the state plan.

At a December meeting, the council learned that coverage under the state plan is very similar to what they have now except it can't be tailored or bent in any way. The state plan has a lower deductible and has a vision plan that each person can elect. The state plan also carries a dental plan, which the city policy doesn't have.

The Decatur County commissioners considered the state plan for the county's insurance, too. They decided to stay with Corporate Plan, a private agency. The county's increase this year was just under 5 percent.

The council tabled the discussion until their meeting tomorrow night at 6:30 p.m.

# \* Paper will cover local news

(Continued from Page 1A)

zine for all local subscribers, and new lower subscription rates.

Gone will be the Associated Press report, most of the comics and features and all national commentary.

There will be a renewed emphasis on Goodland and Sherman County, Haynes said, and there will be more of it in every paper. Main local news space will increase from one full page per issue to two.

Another change is that the newspapers will no longer be delivered by carriers, but will be delivered in the mail on the day the paper is published. The Midweek edition will be delivered in Tuesday's mail to every subscriber's mail box, city or rural, and the Weekend edition will be delivered to everyone in the county on Friday.

The newspaper's single-copy price will increase to 75 cents, but the annual subscription rate will be less. Editor Tom Betz said rates have been cut to reflect the change in publication days.



CAROLYN PLOTTS and her daughter Halley Roberson stood on either side of the President and Mrs. Bush during a party they attended at the White House near Christmas time.

# \* Trip not just an ordinary vacation

(Continued from Page 1A)

shoes seemed the only sensible thing to do. I DID NOT want my feet hurting during the party. But the picture of a lady dressed to the nines is slightly askew when your eye is drawn to the hem of her dress and see a pair of Easy Spirits poking from underneath.

I learned one thing: female government employees are no different than female employees anywhere. Girls were primping and fussing in every office. This was a big deal, even to them.

Shortly before 4 o'clock, everyone began the hike to the White House. It was a small but steady stream of suited men and coifed women heading for the first of several checkpoints to gain admittance.

For a few minutes, we thought the party was over before it even began. When I gave my name to the Secret Service agent at the first gate, he took a look at his list. Said, "No 'Plotts' here. Step aside, please."

Halley remembered she had submitted my name as "Kelley-Plotts" and asked him to check again. Bingo! I was on his list after all, and had passed the first checkpoint. My heart started beating again.

Next we entered a small gatehouse with screeners, scanners and more Secret Service. I felt slightly less intimidated when my daughter and one of the agents struck up a conversation regarding their respective work-out schedules. Seems they're old friends. This was the final hurdle. Once past this point, we were able to walk into the White House like it was an everyday occurrence.

The grandeur of the whole thing began to sink in as we checked our coats and began to mill about in some of the lower level rooms. Portraits of former First Ladies graced the walls and paper mache images of former White House pets, keeping with this year's theme of "All Creatures Great and Small," were displayed on side tables and mantels. Since cameras were allowed, we snapped candid of each other

posed by our favorite First Lady, looking at a book in the library and standing by a Remington sculpture in the hall.

Strains of Christmas carols coming from upstairs led us to the Entrance Hall, where a small military orchestra was playing and guests were veering off to the dessert buffet on the left and hors d'oeuvres on the right.

The line to meet the president had formed, and as soon as we had filled our plates, we too, took our place on the queue. As we trailed along through the State Dining Room, the Red Room, and the Green Room, we had ample time to admire the holiday decor. Fresh greenery hung over the mantles; flowers and fruit accented the 28-foot long mahogany center table laden with caviar, petite lamb chops, prime rib and hors d'oeuvres galore.

Striking up a conversation with one of the waiters, I remarked, "I sure hope you're having half as much fun as we are!"

To which he replied, "I wish I was too. We still have five more of these (parties) to do."

I suppose to them it gets to be "old hat" and we just become a sea of faces. But, to me, it was, perhaps, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I didn't even try to act like I wasn't impressed. I was.

As we approached the Blue Room where the president and Mrs. Bush were posing for pictures with the guests, a young, officer introduced himself to us and explained the procedure. Using a form my daughter had filled out as we entered the White House, he would introduce her, her position, me and my relationship to her. He asked which one of us would be standing next to the president. When Halley conceded the honor to me, she was instructed to stand by the First Lady, I was to stand by the president, two pictures would be taken and we would exit to the other side of the room.

Maybe it was his first White House party, too, because he flubbed his lines and accidentally

introduced me as my daughter's "wife". I knew he felt awful, and he apologized later, but because of it my brief time with the president was even more memorable.

My daughter laughed as she shook Mrs. Bush's hand and said, "Uh, that's my mother."

At that point, obviously trying to ease an awkward moment, the president put his arm around my shoulders and said, "Hi, Mom."

It was all very surreal but I remember thinking what a kind gesture that was.

Two flashes later and it was over. But I did manage to say the few words to Mr. Bush that I had rehearsed for more than a month.

My husband, Jim, and I are volunteers at Norton Correctional Facility for a prison ministry program called, "InnerChange Freedom Initiative". It is a Bible-based, Christ-centered, voluntary program where inmates learn Christian principals and change their lives from the inside out. Bush introduced the program to this country when he was governor of Texas. When the president speaks of his faith-based initiative program, he often refers to IFI.

Before I stepped away from the president, I took a deep breath and said, "Mr. President; I'm an IFI volunteer from Kansas and I want you to know that it is changing lives....and every night a couple hundred men are praying for you and your family."

He looked me in the eye, shook my hand and answered, "Thank you. Good job."

That was it. We stepped into the adjoining room (I don't remember what color it was) and collected ourselves. All the planning, all the shopping, the time, the expense, it was all worth it. For a few moments, we were in the presence of the most powerful person in the world. Pretty heady stuff for this country girl.

### The Fun Continues

After the party, the wife of my daughter's boss drove us to the Kennedy Center, where she had tickets for us to a performance of a

hilarious "whodunit" entitle, "Shear Madness".

It was two tired girls riding the Metro home that night. I was just glad I didn't have to work the next day, but Halley did.

### Tour of the West Wing

One of my daughter's co-workers has the security clearance needed for admittance to the West Wing and offered to make arrangements for a tour. The time was set for 9 p.m. Friday, after all staff and officials had left.

Our guide was most informative, pointing out the Situation Room where the president, his advisors and high-ranking staff gather during a national crisis. It is lead lined to prevent spy satellites from observing the activities in the room.

Our guide pointed out Norman Rockwell drawings on the wall, valued at over a million dollars; let us look into the Oval Office; and toured us through the room where dignitaries wait for their appointment with the president.

We were stopped by a very polite White House security guard as we were on our way to the press briefing room. He advised us that we would have to wait a few minutes before we could go into the press room.

The President and Mrs. Bush were hosting a party and we would have to wait until the guests left before we could proceed.

This turned into a delightful delay because several of the guests exited through the doors and hallway where we were waiting. Passing by and offering season's greetings were: James Carville and his wife Mary Maitlin; Chief of Staff Andy Card; Mitch Daniels, director of the Office of Management and Budget National Security Advisor Condeleeza Rice; Press Secretary Ari Fleischer and his wife Becky; upon a senator or two.

On that note ended my week in Washington. If I get to attend these kind of events in the future, I may never let my daughter quit her job.

# District receives plaques

The Oberlin School District received "In God We Trust" plaques for each classroom from a mystery woman.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said a woman called in July and told him instead of setting up a scholarship with her money from Kansas Public Employees Retirement System she was buying the plaques for several school districts in the state.

Mr. Glodt said they received enough to hang one in every classroom in the high school and grade school.

The district received the plaques at the beginning of the year. Unsure if they could be hung in the schools, Mr. Glodt said, he called the Kansas Association of School Boards. A representative of the association said there was no problem with putting them in classrooms as long as they aren't used to promote religion or start religious conversations.

Mr. Glodt suggested the plaques be given to the schools and then teachers could decide if they want to hang them in their classrooms.

The board accepted the gift. Mr. Glodt said that he doesn't know who gave the plaques because he didn't get the woman's name in July and when she delivered the plaques, he wasn't in the office.

# \* Snow gives crop a drink

(Continued from Page 1A)

coming out of dormancy, the wheat could be OK, come harvest.

The recent moisture isn't important just to the wheat crop, he said, but to the pastures too. The grass is very fragile now and producers are going to have to start looking at cutting back on grazing, sending cattle to other places to graze or cutting the size of their herds.

Everything can be solved if the area gets more moisture, said Mr. Olson, but it will take longer for the pastures to actually bounce back.

# County to sell cars

Decatur County will start the silent auction to sell confiscated and used county vehicles on Monday.

The commissioners decided at their meeting Tuesday morning to keep the auction open until Friday, Feb. 28.

The vehicles will be parked on the lot behind Ward Drug Store the week of Monday, Feb. 24. Sheriff Ken Badsy said if someone wants to see the vehicles, they can call dispatch at 475-8100 to set up a time.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn said the county will also have some computers and other items in the silent auction in the main hallway on the first floor of the courthouse.

# Art show opens Feb. 28

The Dane G. Hansen Memorial Museum will hold the "Annual High School Art Exhibit" from Feb. 28 through March 30.

Participants will include art instructors Peggy Stull, Norton; Lee Smith, Palco; Jerry Blank, Smith Center; Rene Thompson, Logan; Julie Peterson-Shea, Phillipsburg; David Chalfant, Hill City, and Ronald Schultz, Grainfield.

The show will include a variety of art forms. Hours are Monday-Friday, 9-12 and 1-4; Saturday, 9-12 and 1-5, and Sunday and holidays, 1-5 p.m.

# Roads may be changed to minimum maintenance

The Decatur County commissioners decided to table a decision on minimum maintenance roads in Harlan Township after first approving and then rescinding the motion.

The township board asked for several roads to be changed to minimum maintenance roads. The commissioners at first approved the plan until talking with Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman, who questioned whether the board wanted to have one of the roads closed or changed to minimum maintenance.

The commissioners asked Mr. Stallman to check on the road before they approved the request. The commissioners haven't heard from Harlan Township Officers yet, but


County Clerk Marilyn Horn said there was a question on several roads and whether the group would want to close them at this time. She didn't know what roads they may want to close.

Mrs. Horn said she was sending notification out this week so she needed to know which roads would

be changed for sure.

The commissioners decided to table the decision until they had all the information.

Once the request is approved, there will be a hearing so landowners can let the commissioners know their opinions about changing the roads to minimum maintenance.



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