

Rain brings green grass, optimism

It seemed like it rained and rained and rained last week, leaving the area greener than it has been in quite a while.

That's good news for farmers with wheat in the field or corn about to go in.

The skies opened up at the beginning of the week, and just about every day a slow steady rain fell. In all, Oberlin measured 1.33 inches.

The storm brought rainfall to date for

Oberlin to 4.37 inches, compared to normal at this time of 4.85, said Peggy Alander of the National Weather Service.

Brian Olson, area agronomist with K-State Research and Extension, said most of the wheat is jointing now. Spring-emerged wheat, basically the crop that didn't come up over the winter because of the drought, may have low yield potential, he said, but the fields that established in the fall have a

chance for a decent yield.

Whenever there is a little rain, people seem to get optimistic, said Mr. Olson. Some areas had just received an inch of precipitation before it started to rain, so those farmers are sitting on some decent subsoil moisture.

Mr. Olson said the recent rains not only help the planted wheat, a but farmers are getting out this week to plant corn and it will

help that crop, too.

Mr. Olson said some farmers got out before the rain started.

The recent rain will give a little buffer for the crop, since farmers will be putting the seed into some subsoil moisture. Theoretically, the crops could still do well without subsoil moisture, said Mr. Olson, if the area gets timely rains.

The area hasn't been getting timely rains,

though, and the sub soil moisture will give the plants a little something to fall back on.

The crops aren't the only thing helped by the rain. Mr. Olson said it looks like pastures are starting to green up a little.

Last fall wasn't very kind to the pastures, he said, so people may want to leave cattle off of them for a little longer this year or decrease the grazing pressure. In the long run, he said, that will help the grass.

Tourist groups look overseas for new visitors

Scott Allegrucci with Kansas Travel and Tourism and Lisa Weigt talked about breaking into international tourism with economic development people from northwest Kansas during the Tri-State Initiative conference at The Gateway last Thursday.

They said state tourism officials have been successful in getting trips in Kansas printed in the British and German travel magazines.

Mr. Allegrucci said Kansas never will be a mass market destination, but the state can offer an authentic experience off the beaten track. There are people who are looking for a more "authentic" travel experience, he said.

Everyone in the Midwest can say they have a good quality of life and are off the beaten track, he said. Kansas can say that too. What can make Kansas competitive is how we decide to capitalize it.

Ms. Weigt said they are looking for a well-traveled demographic on a global basis. The traveler they want is someone who has been to the United States five or six times already and travels independently.

She said with those things in mind, Kansas is targeting the British and German markets. The typi-

cal German traveler is adventurous and wants something off the beaten path. So does the British traveler, she said.

Many want the American cowboy experience.

Ms. Weigt said with the beef industry, Kansas can give a true cowboy experience while travelers get the romantic side of cowboy life from Hollywood. People also are interested in the life of the early pioneers.

There is also the nature market, said Ms. Weigt, especially with Germans. They enjoy hiking and biking.

She said she wants to help the region create these opportunities for travelers, package it together and get it published in the tourism guides that agents use to book trips.

Although communities might have the opportunity for outdoor recreation, she said, they don't offer a guide, rental bikes or rental canoes. She said she wants to work directly with the communities to create a hands-on experience.

If Kansas is going to go with nature or heritage-based experiences, said Mr. Allegrucci, then someone needs to arrange access to land. He (See TOURISM on Page 10A)

Tri-State Initiative draws participants from three states

Around 60 people from Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska took the opportunity to learn about tourism and economic development at the annual Tri-State-Initiative conference last Thursday at The Gateway.

Oberlin-Decatur County Area Economic Development Director Connie Grafel said she was a little disappointed in the number of people coming from Colorado and Nebraska. She said people from the Northwest Kansas Travel Council turned out in force, which was nice. The council knows how to work together as a region, she said, which is the purpose of the initiative.

Ms. Grafel said she was happy with the number of area people who attended the banquet that evening, even though the keynote speaker, Lt. Gov. John Moore, wasn't able to make it because of weather.

She said she owes Sen. Stan Clark a big thanks for stepping in. Sen. Clark had Lt. Gov. Moore's speech, so he was able to use that as a guide.

That followed a day of presentations on tourism and economic development topics.

Ms. Grafel said those who attended had good things to say about the presentations. The 4 p.m. session, by representatives from the Goliath Company out of Culbertson, Neb., drew around 30 people. The company was started

when a farmer had an idea for the marine lights. Those who left early missed out, said Ms. Grafel.

There is quite a turnover in the region in economic development positions, she said. People move on or find another job that doesn't involve economic development. Anyone who works in the job has to make a commitment to travel and take part in things.

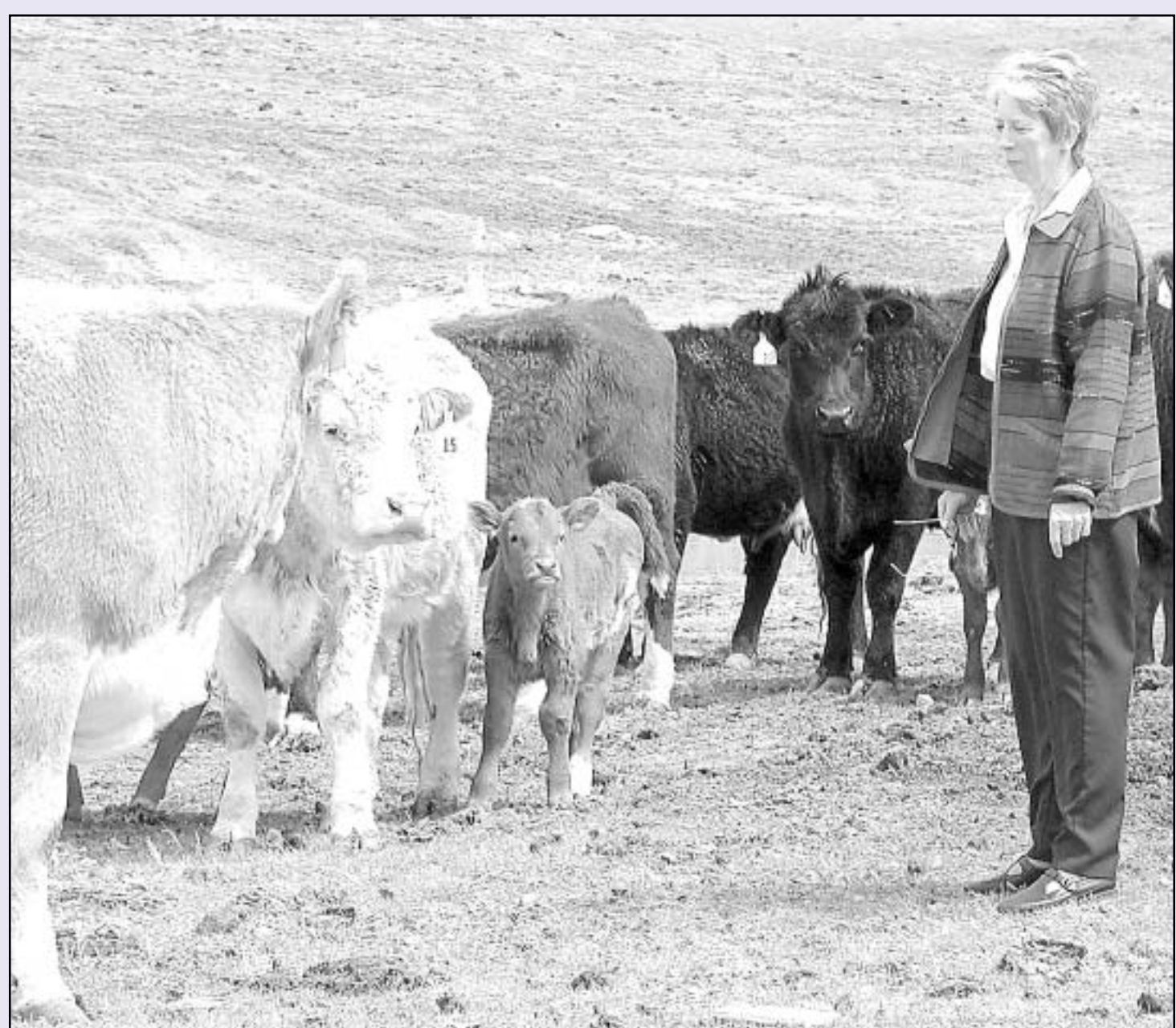
Ms. Grafel said we need to work as a region for things to happen, not just as a state.

In Decatur County, she said, they work on tourism year round. She said they have tried to get farmers here interested in agritourism, but they haven't found any participants yet.

Before the speakers for international tourism got to Oberlin, she said, they toured the area. Ms. Grafel said she thinks they saw a lot of things in the region that they didn't know were here. Hopefully, she said, that will help get Topeka to pay more attention to this part of the state.

Ms. Grafel said the Tri-State Initiative, which has 40 members, will have a meeting in July in Colorado and then one in October in Nebraska, then head back to Kansas.

The annual conference, once a staple at The Gateway, will be held next year in Colorado.



ON HER FARM NEAR TRAER, Gisela Humes Fisher (above) walked with the cows in front of her house. A young Gisela (below) held her first-born daughter, Evelyn Katherine. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Woman shares history in book

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Standing at the gate, Gisela Fisher cups her hands to her mouth, lifts her head and calls.

The high-pitched sound prompts the cows, calves and bull in the front yard to call back. The cows and calves start walking to her.

Mrs. Fisher walks in between the animals, talking to them. She said her first husband, Donald Humes, used to call the cattle from the gate, and she learned to do it from him.

Mrs. Fisher moved to the farm, 2 1/2 miles southwest of Traer, when she was 17 after marrying Mr. Humes, an American soldier, in her native Germany. Mr. Humes brought his young bride and their daughter, Evelyn Katherine Humes, to live on the farm in 1962.

Since then, the farm has been Mrs. Fisher's home.

This is where she wrote the story of her life, "It Is Well..." Mrs. Fisher said she started to write the book four years ago. She had a week off from her job and someone had asked her what she was going to do with the time. Mrs. Fisher said she had been meaning to write the story for her family.

For two or three years, she said, she wrote on and off, and then this last year started to get serious.

Last January, said Mrs. Fisher,

she decided she wanted to get the book published. She said she checked around. The man who had loaned her a laptop computer to start writing had a brother-in-law who published books.

She contacted Rex Rogers of Kansas City in January 2003, and the whole thing got set in motion. Through the publishing process, she said, the book was edited five times. Most of it, said Mrs. Fisher, was to make things more chronological.

"He did a good job," she said, "because everyone loves it."

Mr. Rogers also helped with picture selection. Photos in the book include shots of Mrs. Fisher when she was a girl to today on the farm.

Earlier this month, on April 7, Mrs. Fisher finally got a copy of the finished book. It was one day before her 60th birthday party.

The book, at 105 pages, covers Mrs. Fisher's life from growing up in Germany to her life on the farm and how God has become a part of her life.

Mrs. Fisher says in the forward that, "My prayer is that this story gives you courage. It is not just about adventure and difficulty, but most of all what God has done and continues to do in my life."

She said God called her, but that it wasn't until she had difficulties in her life that God got through to her.



Mrs. Fisher said that she decided hoping to encourage people that to publish the book because she is (See BOOK on Page 10A)

Oberlin hospital fitness center ready to open on Monday

People of all ages can lift some weights and get some aerobic activity with the opening of a fitness center at the Decatur County Hospital.

The center will open on Monday said Deb Klima, registered respiratory therapist at the hospital and a leader of the groups which is setting up the center.

Mrs. Klima serves on a committee for the center with Cheryl Timm, registered physical therapist; Teresa Shaughnessy, activities director at Cedar Living Center; and Jonathan Fick, manager of Cottonwood

Home Health Care.

She said this month, hospital staff members have been using the center so they could work out any kinks before opening it to the public.

At one time, they had planned to put the center in downtown in the former Duckwall's building, which the last owners donated to the hospital. Mrs. Klima said they decided they could manage the center better if it was at the hospital. At the hospital, they can use the equipment for phase 3 cardiac rehabilitation and other needs.

The fitness center is open to everyone, she said. Just sign up at the front office, fill out the forms and pay the fee.

The center uses two rooms. One is for aerobic equipment, including a treadmill, recumbent bike and stair stepper. The second is for resistance training, which uses weight equipment.

Mrs. Klima said the cardiovascular workout people will get at the center will be good for their overall well-being. She said using the equipment can be part of a weight-management program, and building muscles

doing weight-bearing exercise can help prevent osteoporosis.

Mrs. Klima said the gym will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

A pass for the center costs \$20 per person for a month. A family pass costs \$20 for the first person, \$15 for the second and \$5 for each one after that. The senior citizen rate is \$15 per month. A daily pass is \$3.

Those using the center need to be at least in junior high, she said.

Mrs. Klima said the committee will offer training classes to learn to use the equipment on Monday, May 3; Wednesday, May 5; and Saturday, May 8.

The fitness center won't be managed all day, she said, but someone will stop by from time to time. Questions should go to the front office.

Mrs. Klima said they are asking people who want to use the fitness center to park in the main parking lot north of the hospital and then go in the west door, which is the Cedar Living Center door.

Jail gets a paint job

The Decatur County sheriff told commissioners that the prisoners are almost done painting the jail and asked for a pay raise for the undersheriff.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said at the meeting April 6 that they probably had about a half day left on the painting project. The bill for the paint will be under \$500. After the work is done, he said, the commissioners could come check it out.

Sheriff Badsky put in a pay increase request for Undersheriff Michael French. Sheriff Badsky said he is a good employee. Sheriff Badsky said Undersheriff French works hard and is trustworthy. He said he would like to keep him around.

He asked for a raise of \$100 a month. The commissioners didn't make any decision.

Commissioner Patricia Glenn asked about the sheriff's blotter that had recently shown up in *The Oberlin Herald*. She said she had received calls about it. Sheriff Badsky said it is something new the office is doing. The blotter will appear each week on Page 2A.

Sheriff Badsky said he received paperwork from Safe Secure Transport, a prisoner transport service out of Norton. They are up and running. He said he will keep it on file just in case the county needs to use them.

In March, he said, the office did 33 vehicle inspections, worked three accidents, five incidents, four offenses, served 44 papers and wrote 13 tickets.

The officers also took four trips, going to Larned twice, Norton and Phillipsburg.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Talked with Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy, who said he had received \$1,200 in payments for ambulance runs in the last week.

- Held a closed session for 15 minutes to discuss attorney/client privilege. There was no action taken.

- Ratified a decision made by Chief Dispatcher Jeanne Pachner to buy two main boards for the dispatch computer at \$750 each.

* Tourism ideas shared

(Continued from Page 1A) said he isn't talking about buying land, but having the access. Most historical places or nature experiences are on private land.

Tourism based on bird hunting and other outdoor sports needs to continue, he said. That land can also be used for nature tourism.

If the state brings in nature lovers, things are just starting, said Mr. Allegrucci. The hunting things are taken off the walls in the lodges and more pictures of live animals go up. The animals are still watched, but for a different reason.

People will pay for that kind of nature tourism, said Ms. Weigt, because it is exclusive.

Mr. Allegrucci said if the hunting tourism areas can just transform their space for the summer and guide and outfit for nature instead of hunting, it would work.

"The resource is there," he said. "It can do double duty."

In the last 12 to 15 years, Mrs. Weigt said, Kansas has dabbled in international travel. It has been a good effort, but there hasn't been much focus. In the last three to four years, Kansas teamed up with New Mexico and Oklahoma to offer packaged deals and focus on British and German markets.

The goal is to get into brochures printed in that market, Ms. Weigt said, and Kansas is in them.

The ultimate success is the economic impact, said Mr. Allegrucci. On average, a German traveler spends around \$91 a day. They travel in parties of two to three people, spending an average of \$202 a day.

Travelers, he said, don't ask for Kansas; they ask for cowboy life, Native Americans or the Santa Fe Trail. The travelers, said Ms. Weigt, don't care what state they are in or what county. They care about the experience they get.

Mr. Allegrucci said the idea of a lodge doing everything for a tourist can work, but it can also spread the owner out. The lodge can do one thing, someone in town can rent bikes, while another person can do horseback riding.

The states pays for entries in travel catalogs, said Ms. Weigt. It can cost anywhere from \$4,000 to \$6,000, which is split between Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Ms. Weigt said something to keep in mind is that the target travelers get a lot of time off in a year. They normally take one long haul a year for around three weeks.

In the first year, the travel catalogs had the Kansas packages included, she said, and 3,500 were sold.

Ms. Weigt said she would work with communities with ideas, packaging and prices.

Fashion show, 'Settin' Pretty' to be Saturday

Decatur County Stand Against Violence has 19 tables lined up for the Northwest Kansas Family Shelter fund raiser at 3:30 p.m. Sunday. Area groups are taking part in a table setting contest. Themes include best children's table, best use of a theme and most creative. Tables can be set for two or four people.

The event, called "Settin' Pretty," will be held in the upstairs meeting room at The Gateway.

The Dresser, a woman's clothing store in Oberlin, will be holding its spring fashion show and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Admission will be \$10.



AT HER 60TH birthday party, Gisela Humes Fisher spent time with her family, including Kenneth, Daniel, Mike and Andrew Johnson (back row), Michael Humes, Evelyn Johnson, Karen Wolf and John Wolf (middle row), Christopher Humes, Gisela, Cassandra Humes, Dennis Brown, Abigail Wolf and Benjamin Wolf (front row).

* Book signing planned for Traer woman

(Continued from Page 1A) no matter what happens in their life, they can make good out of it. People can grow from tough times, she said. "There is more to life than just enduring it."

Mrs. Fisher said she learned that through her own life. She grew up in Germany and was the daughter of Johannes Karl Merkel and Edith Marie Luise Bremer.

Her father was drafted into the German army, and toward the end of World War II, he was taken prisoner.

While she was growing up, Mrs. Fisher's parents were divorced. She lived mostly with her father, but was sent to live with her mother and then back to her father again.

In her teens, she met Mr. Humes and the couple moved back to the United States after having their first child, Evelyn Katherine. They had two more children, Karen Elisabeth and Michael Kenneth.

Over the years Mrs. Fisher learned to run the farm, got in touch with her mother, built her relation-

ship with her father until his death, and made a friend, Dennis Brown, who became like a member of the family.

Her first husband died in 1988, and in 1990, Mrs. Fisher married Cleo Fisher. Three years later, she buried her second husband.

Today, Mrs. Fisher works for Cottonwood Home Health Care, helping people with everyday activities that they can't do themselves.

She also has a prison ministry which started at the Norton Correctional Facility and now is carried out at the Nebraska prison work camp in McCook.

Mrs. Fisher said the story in her book is very personal, but it is easy for her to share her story with others. Her early history, growing up in Germany, is so different than what her kids know.

Some who have read the book say they can relate to a certain part or theme, she said. Mrs. Fisher said others haven't said a lot. Still others said that it is very personal and they

wouldn't be able to let another person into their lives like she has.

Mrs. Fisher's children and grandchildren all have copies of the book, she said. Some have read it and others have not.

"Everyone has a story," she said. "Just because I am from a different country, mine is interesting, but everyone has a story to tell."

Lots of people have asked if Mrs. Fisher will write another book, but she said she doesn't know.

She said she figured people here would like to read about people they know. She said Mr. Brown read the parts about him before it was published and her friend Anita Hirsch read the book, too.

She said she was careful how she presented things. She wanted it to be truthful, but didn't want anyone to get hurt.

Mrs. Fisher said she has been a Christian for 25 years and has learned not to be a preachy person. She said she wants to share her faith and wants others to be comfortable. "I want to speak to their needs,"

she said.

She said she loves all her jobs, working with people at their homes, her ministry and running the 25 head of cattle on the farm.

She says she loves the farm and always has; it is home.

Her life has taught her, she said, that "Whatever happens is OK."

"Trust God and what he does is OK," she said.

The title of the book comes from the song, "It Is Well with my Soul," which Mrs. Hirsch sang at the funerals of both of Mrs. Fisher's husbands. The song, she said, was written by Horatio G. Spafford after he lost all of his children in a ship accident.

Mrs. Hirsch will be throwing a book signing party for Mrs. Fisher from 2 to 4 p.m. on Thursday, May 6, at Hirsch and Pratt Law Office in conjunction with a Chamber of Commerce coffee hour.

The books are on sale at Addleman Drug Store, Oberlin Mercantile and Ward Drug Store, and will be available the day of the signing.

Council decides to continue looking for new city truck

The Oberlin City Council received a bid for a new truck for the city crew, but it was \$5,000 over the budget and the council decided to keep looking.

The truck found by Jr's Used Cars was a 2002 Chevrolet Silverado for \$20,000.

The city had budgeted \$15,000 for a used pickup.

City Foreman Dan Castle said at the meeting April 5 that there is some warranty left on the vehicle. He said the average age of the city vehicles is 1981 with the exception of three.

The city is going to have to start getting rid of some of the older vehicles, he said. If the city can get 15 to 20 years out of the new truck, then it would only cost around \$1,000 a year.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said the truck was too new, too elaborate, and in his opinion, too much money.

Councilman Jay Anderson said the city should buy what it needs, not what it can get easily. City Administrator Gary Shike said he thought they would be able to find something a little older, but haven't had any luck.

Councilman Joe Stanley asked if there was anything available with an extended cab.

Mr. Castle said it would be tight to get something with an extended cab parked in the shop.

Mr. Stanley said he would like to

stay closer to what was budgeted. The council agreed to keep looking.

Mr. Castle said he has a young man who wants to return to work for the city for the summer for the third year in a row.

He asked if he could pay him \$6.50 an hour. The council approved.

New summer employees will make \$5.15 an hour, with those returning getting a \$.25 raise.

In other business, the council:

- Heard Police Chief Wade Lockhart's monthly report. He said they had two criminal reports, nine incidents, two accidents, six tickets, seven funeral escorts, one ambulance call, no fire calls and 47 public assists.

- Heard that Mr. Shike talked with Penco engineering recently about street replacement. They said new pavement would cost \$40,000 to \$50,000 per block.

- Heard they are still waiting on a third bid for the library roof.

- Heard that the city will receive results of the requests for proposals for a new electric contract soon.

- Held a 20-minute closed session for attorney-client privilege with Chief Lockhart and City Attorney Steve Hirsch. There was no action taken.

- Held a 35-minute closed session for non-elected personnel. There was no action.

At the dance



AT THE LAST HERNDON PROM, Alicia Bergling rested on the lap of her date, Abe Marintzer, as they took a break from dancing. The high school is closing this year, after the Herndon School District merged with the Atwood district last year.

— Herald staff photo by Dave Bergling

Museum scrapbook day Saturday

The scrapbook work day at the Last Indian Raid Museum from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday is fast approaching.

The fee to register is \$25. Call Megan Carter at 475-8920 or the

museum at 475-2712. Mrs. Carter said some people have registered, but there is room for more.

She said two of the vendors signed up for the day are Precious Memories from McCook and a

Stampin' Up representative. Mrs. Carter said everyone is welcome to come in and shop from the vendors.

Registration includes lunch, beverages and snacks. All the money raised will go to the museum.

Notice Taxpayers

May 10th is the Deadline for the Last Half of 2004 taxes. If not paid on or before May 10, 2004, these taxes will bear interest.

Please bring first half paid receipt or tax statement information when making payment.

Jean Hale
County Treasurer
Decatur County, Kansas



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