

Class of 2004 graduates with honors

The list of accomplishments of the Decatur Community High School class of 2004 could go on forever.

The 44 students seem to have excelled in everything from academics to sports. They have received awards and honors in all areas.

Principal Charles Haag talked about a few of the class achievements at graduation ceremonies Sunday afternoon in the high school gym. He said he couldn't mention them all, and probably wouldn't mention everything the students remembered.

Each student, he said, has been a vital part of the class, a class which has truly left their mark at the high school.

One way the class set themselves apart from others, he said, is that there were four co-valedictorians this year, Kelsey Dorshorst, Allie Moore, Amber Reynolds and Serena Heikes.

The salutatorian was Rebekah Hasty, though she didn't have a speech because of the number of valedictorians.

Miss Dorshorst started the speeches with a poem. She said it hadn't been an easy journey, but the class had beat every obstacle.

When the students started school,

she said, recess was their favorite class. In junior high, they were giggly girls and scrawny boys. In high school, the students showed the town they weren't an ordinary class.

Miss Dorshorst said her classmates did well and worked hard in everything from sports to music to forensics to academics. Their test scores were through the roof.

Friends made back in grade school, said Miss Dorshorst, sit next to us today. She said they had been together through good and bad.

Miss Moore read a story about kites and how the kites were trying to get off the string to soar.

The Lord gives everyone adversary and restrictions, she said. Some people tug at the rules so hard they never get their string off the ground, just like a kite that escapes and crashes

"Let us rise high enough," said Miss Moore.

Miss Reynolds thanked each of her family members and her Savior Jesus, whom she said has been a refuge and a friend. She said He has been with her every step of the way.

She said she wanted to talk about character, which she related to a dog. A dog is always willing to go for a joy ride, runs to the door to greet people, practices obedience, takes

naps, runs, walks and plays daily, is loyal and avoids biting when a simple growl is enough.

It takes a good character to stay on the top, she said.

Miss Reynolds asked her fellow classmates to let their unique qualities shine through.

She challenged each one to celebrate themselves. Let those powers in you rise up and use them to make a difference.

"Dream amazing dreams," said Miss Reynolds, "and turn them into reality. You are a miracle and you can make miracles happen."

The final speaker was Miss Heikes. The class, she said, has the distinct opportunity to achieve greatness. She said she encourages each one to never pass up an opportunity in life. She said to her classmates that they should take the time to thank the people who have helped them get to this level.

"Have faith in yourself," said Miss Heikes.

Before closing, she invited her co-valedictorians up to the podium. Miss Reynolds asked everyone to bow their heads and she prayed.

During the ceremony the choir sang "I Just Want to Thank You," a trumpet trio played "Gallant Brigadiers" and the DCHS Singers sang



BEFORE GRADUATION, Teacher Leigh Davis helped Kelsey Dorshorst with her gown. Miss Dorshorst was one of four co-valedictorians.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

"The River."

Before closing, the DCHS Sing-

ers sang "The Star Spangled Banner" for all veterans and men and

women serving in the armed forces today.

Down the rope

Prisoner escapes fourth-floor jail with knotted sheet

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

An 18-year-old prisoner dropped out of the Decatur County Jail on the fourth floor of the courthouse in Oberlin early Tuesday, cutting out a security screen, kicking out a window and climbing down strips of sheets tied together.



D. Rhodig

Though he went to a lot of trouble, it was for naught. The Norcatur-area youth cut himself while fleeing, friends turned him in when he called asking for a ride, and by midday, he was back in jail, awaiting a trip to the penitentiary — and possibly facing a few more felony charges.

It was a classic escape, with the prisoner scaling the courthouse walls on a rope made of knotted sheets, but then his plans started to go awry. He wound up in Colby, staying just one jump ahead of a posse of city and county cops who finally tracked him down near the middle school.

Students had been locked down because police feared the escapee might be armed, but no one was hurt.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said Dustin Dean Rhodig, also known as Dustin Cole, was being held in the fourth-floor jail after pleading guilty to two counts of felony theft. He was awaiting sentencing.

Mr. Rhodig pleaded guilty to stealing a car and breaking into Pizza Hut in Oberlin at the end of November. He allegedly stole a car in Norton and then ditched it in Oberlin. He broke into the res-

taurant, then stole a van in Oberlin and ditched it in Norton. He had been charged and sentenced to prison in the Norton County case.

His sentencing in Decatur County was set for Tuesday, said Court Clerk Janet Meitl. The attorneys have asked for a continuance until Tuesday, June 15, although Judge Bill Elliott had not signed the paperwork as of Monday.

Sheriff Badsky said Rhodig apparently escaped sometime between 2 and 4 a.m.

Night Dispatcher Bev Reiter checked about 2 a.m., the sheriff said, and he was in his cell. Sheriff Badsky said it is the only cell in the jail that doesn't have a camera in it, but that will change.

He said Rhodig detached a piece of metal from the inside of the window and used it to cut out a 12-inch-by-12-inch square in the security screen. Rhodig then apparently kicked out the upper panel of the window with his feet, leaving some jagged edges.

The prisoner, said Sheriff Badsky, ripped his two sheets into strips and tied about nine to 10 sections together. He tied one end to his bunk, which is bolted to the floor. The other end he tossed out of the window.

Around 4 a.m., the sheriff said, Ms. Reiter got a call from a woman in Nebraska that Rhodig had called her from inside the Decatur Community High School and said he was out of jail.

Sheriff Badsky said Rhodig was looking for a ride.

Officers from both the Oberlin



STRIPS OF SHEETS knotted together hung out of a window in the Decatur County jail on the fourth floor of the courthouse last Tuesday morning. The sheets were used as an escape rope by an 18-year-old prisoner who was being held for sentencing. Bob Berls, custodian, cleaned up the glass off the front walk way.

— Photo by Gary Shike

Police and the sheriff's department were called out and sent to the high school. Sheriff Badsky said a door at the school apparently had not

been closed. Rhodig entered the school and found the teachers' work room unlocked. Using a phone there, the young man made several

calls. Sheriff's officers checked the inside of the school while city (See MAN on Page 10A)

Cold kills wheat

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The cold snap on May 14, when the mercury plunged to 28 or 29 degrees across Decatur County, may have destroyed what was left of this year's wheat crop.

Cold kills the head of wheat, said Brian Olson, regional extension agronomist with Kansas State University.

Last Wednesday and Thursday, he said, around 425 people from the U.S. Farm Service Agency, crop insurance companies and others in the business met to evaluate wheat in the area.

There were meetings in Norton, Quinter, Oakley, Goodland, Atwood and Hoxie. At both the Hoxie and Atwood meetings, there were farmers from Decatur County, said Mr. Olson.

In the two-day period, 2,400 farmers talked with the group, said Mr. Olson. The worst wheat was brought in at the Atwood and Hoxie locations.

Some farmers will have fields that escaped injury because the wheat flower wasn't out, he said, but others will suffer significant damage.

Farmers need to check their fields, said Mr. Olson. In some cases, there may be nothing in one (See FARMERS on Page 10A)

Legion to hold ceremony

Red, white and blue will wave throughout the Oberlin Cemetery Monday with the 380 plus American flags in the Avenue of Flag for the annual Memorial Day services.

In the past, the American Legion has planned a guest speaker for the services, but this year they are going to honor World War II veterans from the area.

Legion members have asked that all World War II veterans come to the service. Part of the program will include having those veterans come forward to be identified.

Post Commander Walter Pennell said there will be a national recognition of the veterans in Washington on Saturday with the unveiling of the national monument in honor of "The Greatest Generation."

The service will start at 10 a.m. Monday at the cemetery. (See AREA on Page 10A)

Council looks at low-interest loan for sewer project

The Oberlin City Council agreed to hold a special meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday to continue a discussion on locking in low-interest financing from the state Revolving Loan Fund for rebuilding the sewage treatment plant.

City Administrator Gary Shike said at a meeting on Thursday that

the city has been approved to borrow from the fund. He talked with an employee with the agency and they said the interest rate will go up next month. The rate is currently 2.77 percent and is expected to jump to about 3 percent.

The city could lock into taking the money and then wait to decide later

if they really want to do that or do a loan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mr. Shike said the city would lock in the interest rate, although they wouldn't start paying interest until the city actually gets the money.

On the amount of money the city is talking about borrowing, around

\$3 million, it would be nice to have the lower interest rate, he said.

Thaniel Monaco, engineer with Miller and Associates, said to get locked in, the city attorney would need to review the paperwork and an ordinance would need to be approved.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said

he thinks the city should jump at the lower interest rate.

If the council didn't approve the ordinance Thursday, said Mayor Ken Shobe, then there would need to be a special meeting before the end of the month. The council could at least look at the lower rate, he said. (See CITY on Page 10A)

* Man flees jail

Escapee causes a stir

(Continued from Page 1A)
 officers watched the doors outside. Sheriff Badsky said he thought the officers had just missed the escapee. He said they checked with the phone company and found out where Rhodig had called. Some calls were placed to Colby, and the police department there was notified.

Later, George Ruzicka's Toyota pickup turned up missing from his home 2 1/2 miles east of Oberlin and a mile south.

Around 5 a.m. Jody Shike and Carol Morford were out for a morning walk and saw the sheets hanging out of the courthouse window. Mrs. Shike went home and woke up her husband, City Administrator Gary Shike. He said she told him to get a picture of the rope, which he did.

Mr. Shike said it isn't something he gets to see every day, "a good old-fashioned jail break, or at least the evidence of a good old-fashioned jail break."

A little before 6 a.m., County Clerk Marilyn Horn showed up at the courthouse. She said custodian Bob Berls beat her there that morning, and as he was driving in front of the courthouse, he saw the sheets hanging out of the window.

Mrs. Horn said she walked in the back door and saw that the front door was barred shut. Mr. Berls had done that so people wouldn't be walking through the glass on the grounds.

As the two stood in front of the courthouse, she said, people drove by and stopped to laugh.

Mr. Berls cleaned up the mess in front of the courthouse and some glass on the window sill of the treasurer's office.

About 6:30 a.m., Colby Police Officer Kevin Dierks found the stolen pickup abandoned on the east side of town. Dierks told other officers that an open box of ammunition was found in the pickup.

Soon after that, officers from the Colby Police and Thomas County sheriff's office went to 170 Thompson Ave., based on the telephone calls. They searched the home and spoke with a woman, who told them she took Rhodig to 620 N. Grant Ave.

"Since officers got no response from the Grant Avenue residence," said Gary Shull, police investigator, "an emergency search warrant was obtained so that officers could search the residence."

While conducting the search, officers located one of the renters, who led them to 225 W. 2nd Street. That house appeared to be vacant, Shull said.

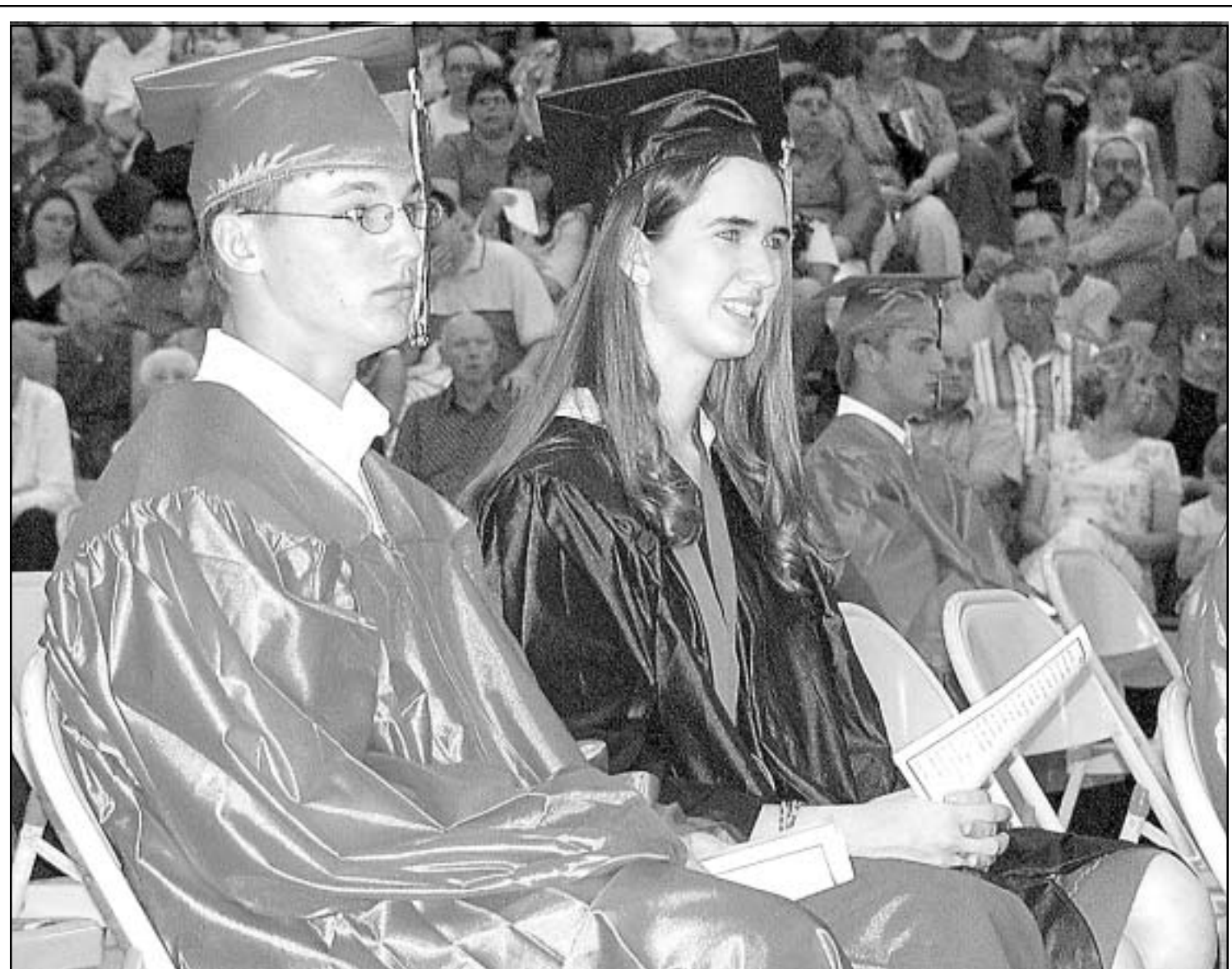
Again, an emergency search warrant was issued, but Rhodig was not there. Shull said officers found information that led them to two homes a block from the Colby school campus.

Shull said he called Principal Terrel Harrison at 10:45 a.m. requesting a lockdown just in case Rhodig was armed and might be looking for a place to hide.

Almost 30 minutes later, the two houses were cleared. Then at 11:28 a.m., Alan Wade, school transportation director, said one of his drivers radioed that a man matching the description was walking between the administration building and Colby Middle School on Third Street.

Officers moved in at 11:31 a.m. and arrested Rhodig. Decatur County Undersheriff Michael French picked Mr. Rhodig up in Colby and he was back in jail around 1:30 to 2 p.m. Sheriff Badsky said he may be charged with escape from custody and criminal damage. He also may be looking at theft and burglary charges for taking the truck.

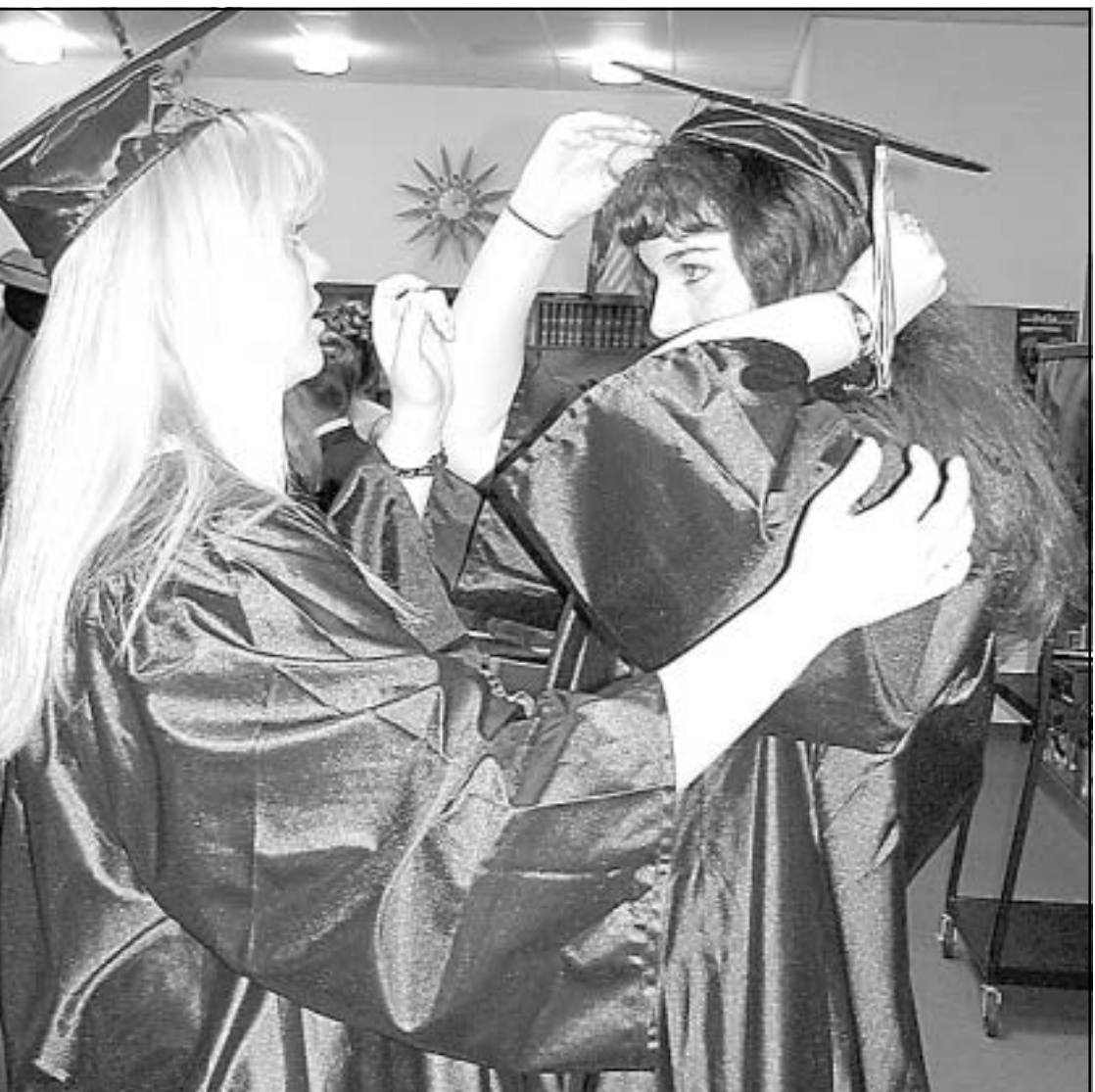
"Once Rhodig completes his court hearing in Decatur County," Shull said, "he will be returned to Thomas County to face charges of aggravated indecent liberties with a 15-year-old child ... last year on Aug. 13."



Students celebrate

BEFORE THEY RECEIVED their diplomas, Oberlin seniors Chance Harman and Rebekah Hasty (above) listened to their classmates in the choir. In the library beforehand, Andrea Marshall helped Amber Reynolds (right) straighten her cap. The 44 students graduated Sunday in the high school gym, which was packed full of family and friends.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt



* Farmers need to check wheat fields

(Continued from Page 1A)
 section and then 30 feet away there may be some wheat

At the evaluation meetings, said Mr. Olson, they tried to show farmers what they are looking for in damage.

They need to look and see if the flowers, where the wheat head comes from, are dead. He said they also need to look at the wheat berries. In many cases, the berries are starting to shrivel. If the berries are getting smaller, he said, they will surely die.

There is a lot of wheat in Decatur County that is not going to make it,

Wheat plot tour will be next week

Decatur County's annual wheat plot tour will be Friday, June 4, west of town on May family farm.

The tour, sponsored by Kansas State University Research and Extension, will start at the 4-H building at the Decatur County Fairground, where the May family

will provide a home-cooked breakfast. An official with the extension service said the family has been doing the wheat plot for close to 50 years.

After breakfast, everyone will head out to the farm on U.S. 36 for the tour.

If the berries are half filled out and are starting to shrink, they will be light enough that if a combine is run through the field, the berries will fly out the back.

Mr. Olson said farmers from the area took the news about the wheat with a grain of salt. It was just confirming their worst fears, he said, and they are rolling with the punches. This is just another curve ball being thrown at them in a bad growing season.

Anyone who needs more information on wheat freeze can call the county extension office at 475-8121 or stop by the office.

* City schedules special meeting, tables decision

(Continued from Page 1A)
 even though they don't have to take the money.

The Community Development Block Grant can only be used with the state revolving loan fund.

Would the Department of Agri-

culture look badly on loaning the city money if the council agrees to lock into the State Revolving Loan Fund? Mr. Monaco said he doesn't know, although the agency knows the city is looking at both.

Mr. McEvoy said he isn't concerned with what the Department of Agriculture thinks, because he still favors the 20-year plan with the State Revolving Loan Fund, whether the city gets the grant money or not. Councilman Ray Ward said he is also in favor of the 20-year plan.

The council decided to wait to approve the ordinance until City Attorney Steve Hirsch could look at everything. They also asked if Mr. Shike could call the Department of Agriculture Rural Development office to see what they say.

Council asks users to turn in surveys

The Oberlin City Council hopes that taxpayers will return the survey the city sent out at the beginning of the month.

So far, the city has received 452 out of 868 surveys. Although over 50 percent have been returned, the city needs 80 percent back, or 694 surveys.

Survey results are being used to determine whether the city might get grant money to help pay for the sewer plant renovation project. If a high enough percentage of the population is low-to-moderate income, a grant could help the city hold down rate increases required to pay for the plant.

Questions on the survey ask about the amount of money a family is bringing in. There is no place on the survey for a name; everything is

cross referenced with a number. Anyone who has lost their survey can get a new one at the city office in The Gateway.

CLASS OF '84 DANCE
 Friday - May 28th - 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.
 DJ's - STAN & KENT
 OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 SINGLES \$2 • COUPLES \$3

Red Crown Lounge
 Hwy 83 South • 785-475-3811
 Open Sunday

* Area honors its vets

(Continued from Page 1A)
 Mr. Pennell said colors will be presented by two Legion members. This year's flag will be from Margaret Temme's family. The Durango, Colo., woman was a Women's Air Service Pilot (WASP).

Her family was inspired by the service here and sent the flag from Tennessee, he said. She is a relative of the Wenger family of Oberlin.

The national anthem will be performed by Anita and Jennifer Hirsch. Chaplain Don Harrier will give the opening prayer and the Sons of the American Legion will lay a wreath.

The Gold Star memorial will be presented by the Legion Auxiliary and Junior Auxiliary.

Commander Pennell will present awards and certificates and then invite all World War II vets to the front. They will be taking pictures of the veterans for the Legion and the Decatur County Museum.

After a gun salute, Allie Moore and Brent Smith will close the ceremony with "Taps."

NORCATUR

The 115th observance of Memorial Day at Norcaturn will begin at 2 p.m. on Sunday. All veterans, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and school children are asked to meet at the bank corner at 1 p.m. to form the parade for the march to the Norcaturn Cemetery.

The parade will start at 1:30 p.m., with services at the cemetery to begin at 2 p.m. Capt. Gary Allen of Oberlin will be guest speaker. This will be the 32nd consecutive year that the Avenue of Flags will be on display.

BIG TIMBER JENNINGS

The Jennings American Legion will be in charge of a 10 a.m. service on Sunday at Big Timber Cemetery. A potluck will follow at 12:30 p.m. at the Jennings Senior Center. Beverages will be provided but those attending are asked to bring their own table service.

Services on Monday will begin at 10 a.m. at the Jennings Cemetery, with the Jennings Legion Post in charge.

The Czech Museum will be open from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Tours by request may be made by contacting Neoma Tachan at 678-2470.

HERNDON

Memorial Day services will be held at 2 p.m. Monday on the south side of the at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Herndon. The opening prayer will be given by Richard Cole, chaplain, and Capt. Gary Allen of Oberlin will speak. The Kansas National Guard from Norton will be in charge of the firing squad, and the Herndon post color guard will participate. A social will follow at the post home.

LYLE

The Lyle community will observe Memorial Day on Sunday. The Jack Helt American Legion Post of Lebanon, Neb., will provide services at 10 a.m. at the cemetery and a potluck dinner will follow at the Community Building.

SELDEN-LEOVILLE

Memorial Day services will begin at 9:30 a.m. at Leoville and at 10:30 a.m. at Selden on Monday. The Selden American Legion will present the colors, followed by the flag salute. The auxiliary chaplain will give the invocation and Betty Pauls will speak. The Legion chaplain will be in charge of placing of a wreath and the benediction, followed by a rifle salute by the American Legion and "Taps."

Internet tonight!
475-2206

When Severe Weather Threatens

WEATHER EYE METEOROLOGISTS
 are on duty
 nights & weekends
24/7
Watching Northwest Kansas

105.3 COWBOY COUNTRY
93.9 PRAIRIE THE ROCK THAT TALKS

NO OTHER STATION WATCHES 24/7