

Oberlin airman dies after shooting

Friends mourn loss of 'special person'

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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A community mourns the loss of one of its young people this week after a shooting in the early morning hours Sunday.

Many said they're speechless at the loss of Airman Corey Cook, 22, who graduated from Security Forces Technical School in Texas at the beginning of the month.

Corey, said his dad, Todd Cook, was part of the 823rd Special Tactics Unit out of Moody Air Force Base in Georgia. He had been at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio for school, graduated and was on his way to Georgia. His dad said he had two weeks to get there and had come home for a visit.

His dad said that his son was an organ donor. Even after his death, he said, Corey will continue to help people.

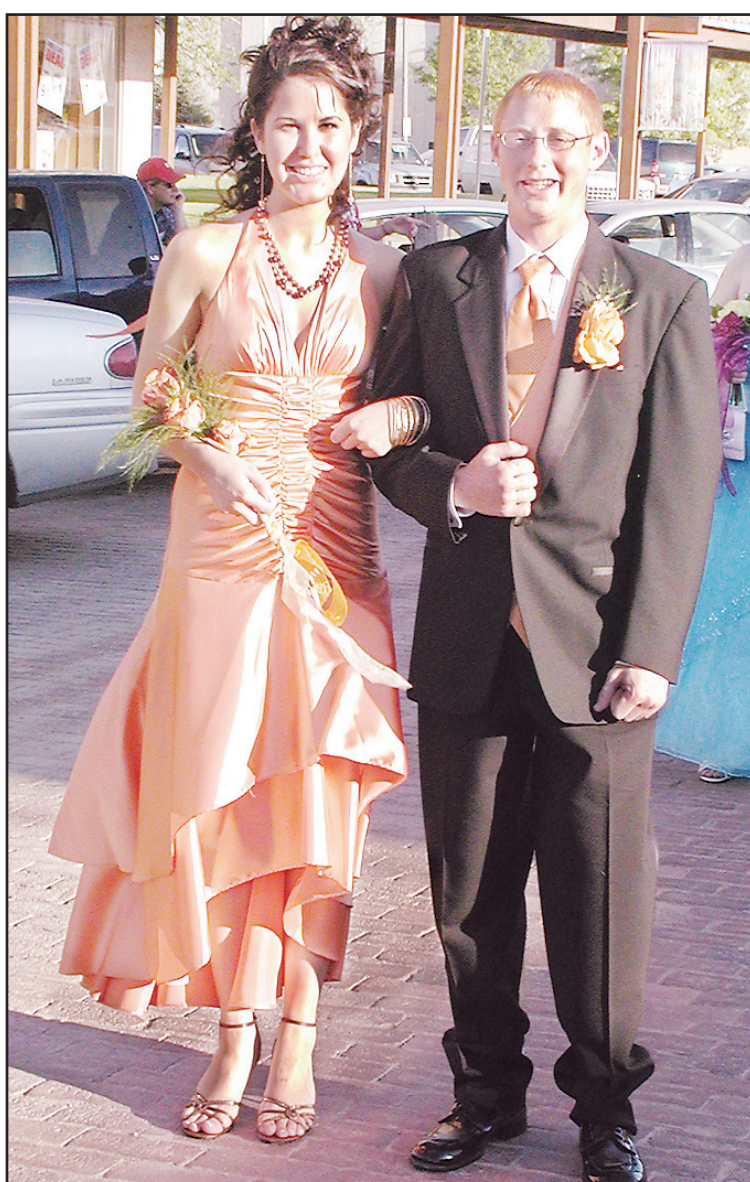
Mr. Cook graduated from Decatur Community High School in 2007 and is remembered with kind words from his friends, family and others.

"Corey was such a special person," said Ron Jansonius, technology coordinator for the Oberlin schools, who worked with the young man for several years and considers himself a friend. "I always cherished the time we spent together.



AIRMAN COREY COOK (above) smiled on the day of his training graduation at the beginning of the month. Corey (right) and Amber Mason marched during the 2007 promenade for Decatur Community High School.

"I cannot find the words to fittingly describe him, his character, his integrity, his willingness to help



others, his love and compassion, his loyalty, his spirit, his determination and his desire to do the right

thing." Mr. Cook was hired as a sum-

(See MAN on Page 5A)



THE RURAL HOUSE at 2048 N Lane was the scene of a fatal shooting in the early morning hours on Sunday.

— Herald staff photo by Steve Haynes

Shooting suspect arrested and booked

An Oberlin man was booked for aggravated battery Sunday after Decatur County sheriff's deputies responded to a rural home on the report of a person being shot.

That shot killed Airman Corey Cook, 22, of Oberlin.

A release issued by the Decatur County Sheriff's Department on Sunday said that the call came in around 1:34 a.m. of a person being shot at the house at 2048 N Lane, in the Big Timber district of Alto Township. The house is north and west of Jennings and about half a mile west of the Big Timber Cemetery.

Mr. Cook was taken by ambulance to the Decatur County Hospital, then flown to the Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Neb.

Dylan Coryell, 24, Oberlin, was booked by the sheriff's department for aggravated battery. He was re-

portedly with two friends when he went to the house.

The case is being investigated by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, Decatur County Sheriff's Office and the Oberlin Police Department, the sheriff's release said.

Jeff Wagaman, deputy chief of staff with the state attorney general's office, said county officials had asked the attorney general to take the case and the office has accepted. Nicole Romine, an assistant attorney general newly stationed in Goodland to help with western Kansas cases, was in Oberlin on Monday to go over the details.

As of Monday night, no further information had been released in the case. County Attorney Steve Hirsch said no court action has been filed, no hearings scheduled and no decision had been made on whether to charge anyone else in the case.

Last murder in county was 14 years ago

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**
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Fourteen years ago, on Aug. 27, 1997, the body of Ernest J. Isenhour, 52, was found at Oberlin's Star Motel. The North Carolina man had been beaten to death.

That was the last homicide in Decatur County — until this week.

The victim had been on his way home from what relatives described as a once-in-a-lifetime "dream trip" to Alaska.

Mr. Isenhour and the suspected

killer were identified by employees at Pizza Hut, where they had dined together the night before.

The employees remembered the men because the natural gas had been out that day and the restaurant could only serve salads and cold

sandwiches. There were few customers that night.

At the time, authorities had no idea why Mr. Isenhour was killed in Oberlin.

"Maybe it was just an act of God (See LAST on Page 5A)

Recreation group gathering signatures for tax levy authority

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Members of the Decatur Recreation Commission are carrying a petition asking the Oberlin School District to establish a recreation system and levy up to one mill each year for the program.

Carrying the petition is just one step in the process, which started over a year ago with a "community conversation" about recreation put on by Decatur Tomorrow. Since then, an action team has been working on getting something started. The group first asked for help from the county, city and school board.

Deanna Castle, a commission member, said the county attorney suggested the group go the petition route. Members got permission from the school district and then

City, county help ball program

Oberlin's existing summer ball program is paid for with tax dollars raised by Decatur County and the City of Oberlin.

This summer, said County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, the county paid \$6,500 for the program, which came from the general fund. The city, said City Administrator Karen Larson, gives \$1,500 a year for the

program. The director, she said, gets \$1,000 a month. This year that was for May, June and July. The rest of the money goes for referees, umpires and equipment.

The city owns the ball fields, said Mrs. Larson, and covers the light bill, replacing the lights and mowing the fields.

got approval of the wording of the petition. Commission members started getting signatures at the end of September. They have 180 days to get the needed 89 signatures. The group, said Terry Ream, a commission member, said they are aiming for 120 signatures.

Deanna Castle, a commission

member, said organizers hope to have enough signatures on the petition soon. Then they will have it certified by the county clerk and take it to the school district clerk.

The commission, said Mrs. Castle, would like to have ballots go out in the mail and have the election over before the end of the year. If

that happens and the ballot issue passes, then the commission would be eligible for money from the 1-mill property tax in 2013.

If the election is done in 2012, she said, the commission wouldn't get any tax money until 2014.

One mill for the school district would raise just a little over \$29,000

this year, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst.

Mrs. Castle said they plan to start with a part-time recreation director, but the job could grow into a full-time position if the need is there.

The director will work out of a central location, she said, adding that office space and a computer have been donated. There will be some continuing expense, including pay, an office phone, supplies and equipment, she said.

Mrs. Castle said Shane Bird, a coach at the high school, volunteered to be the group's unpaid director until the commission is able to hire someone. He put a page on Facebook for Oberlin sports, with information about activities for kids. She said they hope to expand more into adult activities. Oberlin

already has men's basketball and women's volleyball leagues, she said, but not everyone knows when and where they meet.

With an office and a director, said Mrs. Castle, it will be possible for people to find out about any activity in town, where it is, when it is and how much it might cost.

Mrs. Castle said they were told the election could cost around \$2,500, which the group would have to pay for.

The commission is having a tailgate burger and hot dog fry from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday, before the Red Devils' football game with Ellis High that night.

For information, call commission members, including Mrs. Castle at 475-3227, Terry Ream at 470-1441 and Rusty Adleman at 475-2123.

City water problem to be top topic of meeting

The Oberlin City Council plans to discuss the new time line for the consent order on the public water system at its meeting Thursday night.

As of the meeting Oct. 6, the city hadn't received anything about a waiver allowing it to hold off on work on a water treatment plant, council members heard at their latest meeting, apparently because of turnover in the state office which should handle it.

At the first meeting in October, Chris Miller, an engineer and owner with Miller and Associates, the firm planning the city's water project, said he checked on the extension request through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He said the person they had been working with no longer works for the state. The request then went to Dave Waldo, who the city has worked with before, said Mr. Miller, but he retired last month.

Now the request has gone to a third person, who was out of the office until Tuesday.

Pointing to a map, the engineer said they plan to drill test wells

south of town. He said he gave a copy of the map to the state Division of Water Resources.

The test holes haven't been drilled yet, he said, as the person doing the work has been sick.

"Have we contacted any of the property owners?" asked Councilman Rob McFee.

Mr. Miller said he hasn't. He said Councilmen Rusty Adleman and Jim Miesner plan to do that.

Mr. Miesner said he disagrees with one of the spots, as he wants to stay a mile away from the Ogallala formation outcrop.

"Have you had any feedback from anyone?" asked Mayor Bill Riedel.

Mr. Miller said they have support from the water people out here, but the decision will have to come out of Topeka.

Mayor Riedel said he was talking to some people in Atwood who said they retained some of the city's water rights near town to use to help fill the city's lake.

Actually, said Mr. Miller, that hasn't happened yet. The idea hasn't been approved.

Redistricting group to hold meeting in Colby

By **KEVIN BOTTRELL**
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A committee redrawing the Kansas political landscape will hold a public meeting for northwest Kansas on Thursday at Colby Community College.

The Kansas Legislature's Special Committee on Redistricting will meet with the public from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Thursday at the college Cultural Arts Center.

The Legislature is required to go through the redistricting process after each census to make sure House and Senate districts are equal in

population across the state.

The population in northwest Kansas has gone down over the past 10 years, while Kansas as a whole grew by 6 percent, mainly in urban areas. This likely means western Kansas districts will pick up more territory, or one or more districts will be broken up and divided among the others.

The state Legislative Research Department has released adjusted population numbers for Kansas counties, along with information on how far above or below target population each district is.

"Ideal size" for a Senate district is 70,986 people. The 40th District, represented by Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, comprises 18 counties in northwest Kansas with 62,105 people — about 88 percent of its ideal size, or 8,881 below the target.

Sen. Ostmeyer, a member of the redistricting committee, said in a June interview he would not like to see his district grow, but acknowledged he may have to absorb some territory. He speculated either Phillips County or Rush County could be added to bring the 40th up to ideal size.

Ideal size for a House district is 22,716. The 121st District, held down by first-term Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland, sits at 19,113, about 3,600 below the target. The district includes Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and Graham counties.

Rep. Ward Cassidy's 120th District, which includes Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Norton and Phillips counties, sits at 19,855, about 2,860 people under the norm.

Sen. Ostmeyer said Don Hine-man's 118th District — which includes Wallace, Logan, Wichita, (See MEETING on Page 5A)

Crowd attends meeting on post office closing

Just under 70 people attended a public meeting Monday night in Norcatour on whether to close the town's post office.

Several residents spoke, none in favor of closing the office.

Robert Mikulecky Jr., postmaster in Abilene, conducted the meeting for the Postal Service at the former Norcatour School.

He explained that if the service does decide to close the office, people will know by the end of November. Then, he said, they would have 60 days before the change. Currently, he said, the office is in a

leased building.

With the closure, he said, residents need to put up mailboxes at their homes or nearby on a rural carrier's route, depending on where they live. An alternative would be to get a box at the post office in a larger town.

"I don't look forward to crawling across snow drifts to get to town to get my mail," said Dorothy Ward.

Pastor Ed Woods suggested Mr. Mikulecky look around the room and see the color of the people's hair. For them, to drive to Oberlin or Norton every day to get their mail

would be impossible, he said.

For some of these folks, said Pastor Woods, driving across their little town is an adventure. They use the post office as a greeting place.

Later in the evening, Pastor Woods said the post office was the key to a community which has already lost its school and grocery.

J.J. Deges of Bogue said he's been to a meeting about closing the Bogue post office and one in another town he'd lived in. Mr. Deges dominated parts of the meeting with angry statements about the Postal Service. He asked Mr. Mikulecky

what he was getting paid to attend. The postmaster said nothing other than his regular salary, adding that he'd volunteered to help with the meetings.

The comments, said Mr. Mikulecky, all are typed into the official record, which will be reviewed by postal officials. The decision on whether to close the office will be made by a committee in Washington, he said.



* Man popular with friends from school

(Continued from Page 1A) mer helper on July 19, 2004. Mr. Jansonius said. He worked the summers of 2004 and 2005 and his junior year, 2006, began helping during the school year under the work-study program. Mr. Cook continued work-study and summer work through graduation in May 2007, then during the summers of 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Mr. Jansonius wrote a letter of recommendation for Mr. Cook for the G.H. Lippelman Jr. Scholarship.

"Corey was laden with so much potential, more than he knew," said Mr. Jansonius. "I constantly reminded him of that. I anxiously waited for the leader he was to become, the lives he was going to touch, the good he was going to do, the man he was destined to be."

Classmates remember Corey as a friend who was always there for them.

"Corey was a great friend to me," said Chet Ely. "I have a lot of great memories of he and I hunting, fishing and just hanging out when we had nothing else to do."

"He was always there when something was wrong and I needed someone to talk to. Corey was like the brother I never had. Rest in peace, Corey. You will be greatly missed."

Kyle Glodt, now a student teacher at the high school, said he, Corey, Jobey Black, Seth Ritter and Breck Simonsson hung out. Mr. Glodt said they took a bunch of road trips together and went camping in high school.

Mr. Glodt said Corey had sent him a text Saturday night and wanted to hang out.

"The whole thing is 'a bummer,'" said Mr. Glodt. Corey had worked so hard to get into the Air Force, he had all his ducks in a row and something like that happens.

"He was the one friend you could always count on," he said.

"Corey and I were the two young-

Prayer vigil to start Sunday

Preachers, pastors, deacons and elders are being called to serve at a prayer and preaching vigil for Decatur County following the slaying Sunday of 22-year-old Corey Cook, an Air Force enlisted man home on leave.

The 24-hour-a-day vigil is set to begin at 3 p.m. Sunday at The Gateway in Oberlin and will last as long as there are preachers to lead anyone wanting to pray.

Organizer John Paulson said he hopes the vigil will last a week.

"People have been praying for a revival (in Oberlin)," he said, "and maybe this is how the Lord is starting it."

If you can lead at least one hour of prayer, call Mr. Paulson at (785) 386-8635.

est in our class," said Mr. Simonsson, "and I always felt like that brought us a little closer together. We shared a lot of great memories together throughout the years. He was a great person and friend. I know I'll miss him dearly."

Tricia Dorshorst said she Corey, Mr. Black and Andy Gilliam went to the same daycare and, at the high school, she had a locker next to Corey for six years.

"I knew him very well," she said. "He was like a brother."

"Everyday he made me laugh. No matter how I was feeling, he would always make me smile, and that's one of the things I will never forget about him."

His old boss summer up for all the young man's friends.

"The greatest loss of life is the loss of untold human potential," said Mr. Jansonius.

Making fall art



AT THE GRADE SCHOOL, teacher Judy Elwood put the finishing touches on her extended learning family's scarecrow, which the students made last Wednesday.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

* Last killing occurred 14 years ago

(Continued from Page 1A) that they happened to stop in Oberlin," said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, "or an act of the Devil. Only one guy knows for sure, and we won't know until we catch him."

The killer, Gary R. Grant, 50, was picked up less than a week later in Arkansas, where he had lived at one time.

Mr. Grant was arrested by Rod Pfeifer, the police chief of Dover, Ark., a small town in the central part of the state.

A driver reported a suspicious hitchhiker and the chief, who was out with his wife when the call came, stopped the man on the side of the road and asked him his name.

The man told him it was Gary Grant. The county sheriff had received notice from Kansas authorities just a few days earlier to be on the lookout for Grant, since he had lived in Dover 10 years earlier and still had relatives there.

Mr. Grant was brought back to Oberlin and had his first appearance

in District Court on Sept. 16. He was bound over for trial in December and held in the Decatur County jail on a \$500,000 bond.

Mr. Grant, who refused to enter a plea, was represented by Norton attorney Mark Whitney. The court entered a plea of not guilty when Mr. Grant refused to respond to the charges. He was also charged with stealing the victim's car, later found in Oklahoma.

Mr. Grant said he had been hitchhiking when Mr. Isenhour picked

him up. The two travelled together for a while, he said, adding that they argued and fought. He never said why he killed the man.

A jury trial was scheduled for March 16 to 20. Mr. Grant, who by then had entered a guilty plea, was sentenced to life in prison. Under Kansas law, he will be eligible for a parole hearing in 15 years.

That will be sometime next year.

* Meeting planned in Colby

(Continued from Page 1A)

Gove, Lane, Trego and Rush counties and part of Ness — could be affected since its counties are sparsely populated and continued to lose people over the past 10 years.

Rep. Hineman said it's inevitable that western Kansas districts will get larger because almost all are short on population. His is almost 4,000 people under ideal size. One or more western Kansas districts could be eliminated entirely, he said, and the seats given to eastern Kansas, where the population has been growing.

The committee will come up with a redistricting proposal to submit to the Legislature in January. If approved, the new districts will take effect for the 2012 election.

There's No Place Like Home

By Eunice Boeve
Illustrated by Michelle Meade



Chapter 9

Lincoln and the Runaway Slaves

Last Chapter: The twins meet Dave Strait who works at a POW camp where German prisoners were held during WWII. They are surprised to learn that the prisoners are often released to help the local farmers. They meet Walter, whom the Straits invite to Sunday dinners. He has a little dog, a stray he named Mary Sunshine. When he is sent back to Germany after the war, the Straits adopt the dog.

"Hush," whispered the woman raising anxious eyes toward the ceiling. Her arms tightened about the baby in her arms. The three men in the room froze, dark eyes in dark faces, alert and waiting. Footsteps sounded overhead. One of the men blew out the small candle, plunging the room into darkness.

Seconds before the twins had been in the time machine. Now they were in a cold, damp cave-like room, with floor and walls of dirt. A musty smell mingled with the odor of unwashed bodies and melting candle wax.

Above them, a door lifted, spilling light into the room. The four adults shrank back against the walls. Now Jack and Mollie saw that they were like the others in the room. Their hair and skin as dark, their clothes ragged and worn. Instantly they knew they had been transformed into runaway slaves.

"It's all right," a boy called softly. "I've brought a friend."

A collective sigh of relief followed the boy's words, and the twins could almost feel the tension seep from the room.

A tall, lean man dressed in black descended the stairs and when his face came into view, the twins barely suppressed a gasp. The man was Abraham Lincoln!

Too tall to stand upright, Mr. Lincoln sat on the cellar steps and introduced himself.

"I'm aiming to make a run for president of these United States," he said and went on to explain his interest in the slavery question. "I realize there are both pro and anti-slavery folks here in Kansas. Some, like the owners of this hotel here in Doniphan, are against slavery and will help you folks all they can. Others would report

you in the blink of an eye."

"We're aiming to get to Canada," one man said. "But it shore do seem a long ways off."

"A daunting task," Mr. Lincoln said. "I'm not sure I could do it."

"You could, suh. If you was a slave, you could."

Mr. Lincoln nodded. "I expect I could." "Many times as it takes," one of the men said and went on to tell his story of life in slavery.

"We got no life, but what the master decides. He say we go there, we go there. He say he's going to sell us, he sells us. He say we work here, we work here. He say he feed us hog slop, we eat hog slop. First time I run I was real young, hot-headed like. He put me in a place with no food no water ..."



He shrugged. "Ten days, maybe."

No one spoke, and it seemed to the twins as if the silence was a presence, something they could touch, if they reached out a hand.

"The next time I run, the dogs catch me. The master he whip me 'til my back all blood and pieces of skin."

"And yet here you are," Mr. Lincoln said. "I guess that alone tells the tale."

"It sure do," the man said. "I will be free, even if I die."

"We die, we shed of slavery," one of the other men murmured.

"And your story?" Mr. Lincoln asked turning to him.

His story was of a wife and a child sold away, he knew not where. The couple with the baby told of stealing sleeping medicine to give to the baby. "If he cries, the slave-catchers hear. The Lord willing, this child will grow up free."

"I believe the Lord is willing," Mr. Lincoln said. "It's the people that can't see the evils of slavery that hinder His work."

When the tall, gaunt-faced man turned to question Jack and Mollie, Jack said, "I'd be obliged to know the year we's in, Mr. Lincoln."

"I don't imagine you or your sister were allowed to learn to read or write," Mr. Lincoln answered.

"No suh," Jack said.

"It's 1859," Mr. Lincoln said. The first part of December."

Most of the pictures Mollie had seen of President Lincoln, he'd had a beard. This Mr. Lincoln was clean-shaven. She remembered hearing the story of Grace Bedell. She was a young girl living in New York when Mr. Lincoln was campaigning for president. She wrote to him, suggesting he grow a beard. He did and, of course, won the election. Years later, she and her husband moved to Kansas near Delphos and in later years the town erected a monument in her honor.

"I'll remember your stories whether or not I become president," Mr. Lincoln told them. "And if I am elected ..."

He was interrupted by the boy at the top of the stairs.

"Mr. Lincoln, sir. Someone is coming. You have to get out. Now!"

With a hurried "Good luck," the tall man scrambled up the stairs. The door closed and once again they were in darkness.

After a time of waiting and listening, one of the men relit the candle.

A few hours later, the boy returned with some bread and meat and a bucket of water with a dipper. No one seemed to notice that neither Jack nor Mollie ate or drank anything.

After a time, the boy returned and led them outside to use the privy. They hugged their arms, shivering in the cold darkness. The woman covered her baby with the ragged shawl draped about her shoulders.

Shocked at finding themselves in this cellar room as runaway slaves and feeling

helpless because they couldn't find their glasses, Jack and Mollie slept fitfully through the night leaning against the dirt walls. Once the baby cried, and Mollie wondered how the woman could see to take care of it. She had heard of people dying from too many sleeping pills. If in the dark, the mother gave the baby too much ... She shivered and tried to go back to sleep.

The door opened overhead, bringing the twins out of a restless sleep.

"Get up," a voice called urgently. "It's time to move out."

They hurried up the stairs after the others. It was still dark outside, but because it was winter, they knew it might be morning of the next day. A figure in a dark coat ushered them outside and into a wagon filled with hay.

"Get down," the voice commanded, "and cover yourself."

Jack purposely waited, so he and Mollie would be at the end of the wagon. He knew it would be easier to get away if, or when, they needed to. Whenever that might be.

To Be Continued.

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