

Veterans get diplomas



Carl Nemecheck received his high school diploma at the Senior Citizen Dinner put on by the school district and the National Honor Society last Friday. Nemecheck was one of 12 veterans who didn't receive a high school diploma because they were called away to fight in World War II. They were honored with diplomas as recognition of their services to the country during six years from September 1940 to December 1946. Others to receive their diplomas were Maurice Daise, Lowell Daniels, Theodore Daniels, Billy Ray Daniels, Eugene Elliott, Dee Gotchall, Pete Jensen, Lewis Nowak, Harold Van Vleet and Dale Way.

Photo by Dana Sulsberger/The Goodland Daily News

Bush makes treasury nomination

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — President-elect Bush named Paul O'Neill, a businessman and veteran of another Republican administration, to be his secretary of the treasury, saying Wednesday that signs of an economic slowdown made it "incredibly important" to have a man of vast experience and a steady hand in the job.

O'Neill said he'd spent 16 years in public life and had thought he was immune to returning until Bush urged him to become treasury secretary. He said he is dedicated to helping the president-elect "achieve the greatness" he aspires to as president.

"Our economy is showing warning signs of a possible slowdown and so it's important for me to find somebody who has vast experience, who has a steady hand, and when he speaks, speaks with authority and conviction and knowledge," Bush said. "I found such a man in Paul O'Neill."

Bush, his transition truncated by the 36-day election standoff, also planned later Wednesday to nominate longtime friend Don Evans as commerce secretary, former Cuban refugee Mel Martinez as housing secretary and Californian Ann Veneman as agriculture secretary.

At a news conference after the O'Neill announcement, Bush was asked whether there was a risk that talking down economic prospects might lead to such a downturn. He said he hopes the economy will remain strong, but that his job as incoming president is to "think ahead, just in case."

"We are going to play the hand we have been dealt," Bush said. "Our hope in this administration is that the economy remains robust. But should it not, we have a plan."

The president-elect said that would include his \$1.3 trillion tax cut, free trade, Social Security and regulatory reform.

On energy, Bush said increasing U.S. production of natural gas should be a priority because there are vast untapped supplies. He said he also would seek funds for clean coal technologies to use those reserves without ruining the environment. Bush said he also would seek "a hemispheric energy policy" to make sure there are ample supplies.

He said "there are some ways to move natural gas expeditiously to the market in ways that protect the environment." Bush also said international producers — "our friends in the Middle East" — must respect the needs of the United States and other democracies.

He said he will work with OPEC nations to convince them to open up the spigots and ease price pressures.

Bush declined to comment on the possibility that President Clinton might still go to North Korea before leaving office. He said there can only be one president at a time. Bush aides have been reportedly opposed to a Clinton trip to the reclusive Communist nation.

Bush was meeting later in the day with black clergymen to "begin a dialogue" on promoting faith-based programs to help meet social needs.

"My hope is that when people who may not have supported me get to know me," they will see that his commitment is to help deal with their needs in an America "that is hopeful and vibrant and strong" for everyone.

"Look forward to the chance of healing a nation that has been divided as a result of the election," Bush said. "... Ours will be an administration that focuses on what's right for America, not what's right for a political party."

Bush said his proposal to put part of Social Security taxes into private investments will work long term, despite "ups and downs in the marketplace," to improve the rate of return on the funds and keep the retirement system sound for future generations.

Bush said he had found "the absolutely right person" for Treasury, and that people who are savvy on Wall Street will agree.

O'Neill got the last answer, saying he has known and worked with Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan

since 1969, when he was beginning the administration service that led to his tour as deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget.

"I am here substantially because I believe that the president-elect has the right ideas about where our economy should go," O'Neill said.

In the morning, Bush received congratulations by phone from Ariel Sharon, Israel's Likud party chief and contender for prime minister, and the president of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski. Bush sounded nostalgic after stopping by the governor's office in Austin, Texas, to pack up his collection of autographed baseballs.

"I'm going to miss this place, I have a lot of fond memories," he said. "On the other hand, I'm looking forward to my new assignment."

O'Neill, 65, has been chairman of Alcoa Inc. since 1987. He was deputy budget director under President Ford when Vice President-elect Dick Cheney was President Ford's chief of staff. O'Neill and Cheney now serve as directors of American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

The Senate, divided 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats, must confirm Bush's nominees.

Evans, 54, is chief executive of Tom Brown Inc., a Denver-based oil and gas company with an office in Midland. He was instrumental in helping Bush raise a record \$100 million for his presidential race, then helped guide the campaign to a narrow victory over Vice President Al Gore.

Chamber makes progress with funds

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would be feasible for them to move to Goodland.

"After we get done with that," West said, "I think it would be good if some of the committee went out and saw their operation to see if it is something we would want in Goodland."

Another project this year was working with the Sunflower USA Association, which helped to get Canadian artist Cameron Cross here to paint an 80-foot high replica of a Van Gogh painting in his sunflower series.

"Sunflowers are an industry we have been trying to support," he said.

The committee assisted in getting a grant for research on the NuSun Sunflower oil which was recently adopted by Procter and Gamble for Pringles

chips.

A food processing plant is seriously considering moving to Goodland, he added.

"For some reason, they think Goodland would be the prime spot for a plant," he said, but added he wasn't sure when anything would come about from that.

Finally a Goodland business owner wants to build a newer building and increase production and is considering moving out to the industrial park.

Commissioner Curtis Hurd said there might be some confusion as to who owned the industrial park and asked Harding to explain it.

Harding said the Chamber is in charge of a sub-committee which owns the park and makes decisions about who can move there. Donors actually

own the property.

He said that when SIGCO Sun Products Inc. moved to the industrial park, the owners of the park helped to get them started.

Private investors built the building for them and the company had to meet certain commitments like employment numbers over time in order to get the property.

West showed the commission a breakdown of what the money given to them by the city is being spent on. He said a good portion of it goes to running the chamber and economic development office.

Mayor Chuck Lutters thanked Harding and West for the information.

"It will be good to be able to explain to the taxpayers where their money is going," he said.

Harvey County commissioner wants counties to get railroad scrap

NEWTON (AP) — A Harvey County commissioner has asked a regional organization to lobby for a law allowing counties to collect scrap from abandoned railroad lines.

One railroad spokesman called the idea "ludicrous."

Rails, ties and gravel from abandoned railroads would partially compensate the counties for road-maintenance costs they bear when thousands of tons of freight — mostly agricultural products — are carried by trucks instead of trains, said Commissioner Ken Meier.

It's unclear how much the scraps from abandoned lines would be worth, said Wayne Dieleman of The Yard of Omaha, a Nebraska company that specializes in railroad salvage.

Meier presented his proposal Monday to the Regional Economic Area Partnership, a consortium of 30 local governments in the seven-county area around Wichita.

"Abandonment shifts the movement of commodities from rails to county highways that are not built to take that kind of an impact," Meier said. "There's no mechanism in place for counties to derive enough money to fix the roads."

"If we could write something into abandonment laws, it would allow the taxing jurisdictions to at least get something out of it," he said.

Meier asked that the proposal be considered as a part of the organization's agenda for lobbying the Legislature in its upcoming session.

But Bill Frederick, president of Central Kansas Railway, called the proposal "ludicrous."

"If you abandon your homestead,

should the county come in and salvage your house?" he said.

The proposal met mixed response from the regional partnership, with some members saying it was a good idea and others questioning whether it would be constitutional to take the railroads' property.

The group didn't have a quorum to take any formal action because several members were unable to make the trip due to icy roads.

Keith Lawing, the organization's executive officer, called Meier's proposal "a new and creative approach" to the problems caused by rail abandonment. He said it might even be possible to get some railroads on board.

"If we can help them see some community benefit to it, I can see them sup-

porting it," he said.

Dieleman said the steel alone could range from \$60 a ton for scrap steel to \$500 a ton for high-quality rails that could be picked up and re-laid elsewhere.

There are about 80 tons of steel per mile in the type of rail commonly abandoned in Kansas. Roughly 400 miles of rail are currently proposed for abandonment statewide.

Railroad ties can bring either a profit or a loss depending on their condition, Dieleman said.

Max Graber, who serves with Meier on the Harvey County board, said the gravel the rails are laid on might be the most valuable commodity to the county because it could be used to repair the damaged roads.

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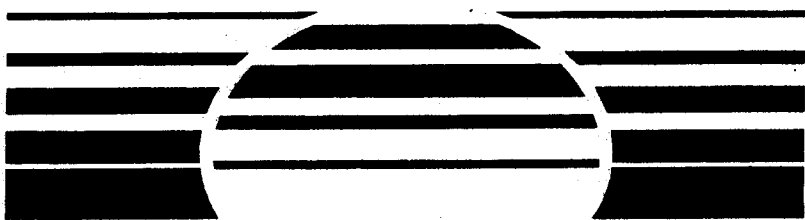


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Happy Holidays!