

## Storm freezes mail, roads, schools

### Classes out two days; carriers miss rounds

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**  
Snow and freezing drizzle Thursday and Friday didn't completely close down the town, but they did stop the mail and close the schools.

Starting Thursday morning, the area was covered in fog, with drizzle leaving the roads icy. Schools were cancelled in Oberlin and Jennings.

Brian Simonsson, district transportation supervisor in Oberlin, went out and drove the roads that morning. He didn't like what he saw.

"It wasn't much of a question," said Superintendent Duane Steele. "If cars got out there in two-wheel drive, they would slide down the street."

The decision to call school is based on whether it is safe for kids to be driving or riding a bus, he said. Thursday and Friday, it just wasn't safe to have them on the roads.

Before making the decision, the superintendent said, Mr. Simonsson tries to drive to all four corners of the district. There are times, though, when he only has to drive around town to know it isn't safe.

By Thursday evening, snow had started to fall, blanketing Oberlin. The roads were more dangerous and schools were canceled again Friday because there was a sheet of ice under the snow.

The school board built enough hours into the schedule for about five snow days, Mr. Steele said. School has been closed three days this year for snow and they have had a few delayed starts, but Mr. Steele said that they do have some hours left.

"We want to make sure that we don't get them out there," he said, "and then get caught in the weather."

The U.S. mail didn't make it into Oberlin on Friday. Postal officials said the truck was not able to make it out of Colby. With no truck, mail didn't leave the area, either.

That afternoon, travel was discouraged on Interstate 70, with the section between Russell and the Colorado border down to one lane with windy conditions and drifting.

Events at the school had been rescheduled for nicer weather, including a basketball game with Hoxie now scheduled for Feb. 19, a speech tournament at Wheatland, and junior high girls basketball at Monument and junior high wrestling at Oakley, both re-

scheduled for Feb. 12. Canceled because of the storm were wrestling at Hoxie, a Valentine's Day dance and junior high wrestling at Phillipsburg.

Storm clean-up has been normal, said City Administrator Gary Shike. During the storm, the city didn't experience any power outages even though branches were weighed down with snow.

Unlike cities in the east, Mr. Shike said that here the Oberlin crew doesn't treat streets for freezing rain. He said that since the area doesn't get it that frequently, they don't plan for it.

The crew got out Saturday and started cleaning the streets and could be seen on Monday putting piles of snow from the middle of the road into trucks to be dumped south of town. Mr. Shike said the crew takes the snow south of town on Penn Ave., over the bridge and dumps it in a field to the east.

So far this year, the area has received 1.28 inches of precipitation, with the storm at the end of January and this one. For the next few days, there is no snow forecast, but there was a possibility of freezing drizzle Tuesday night and today.



**SCHOOL WAS OUT** but Steven Corcoran, 9, (above) was busy shoveling snow from in front of his house on Friday afternoon. Merrie Scott (lower left) was taking the day off on the sledding hill

on Wolf Avenue near Scout Park. In the morning, Laurie Wasson (lower right) was all bundled up on her way to work.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes



**SWEETHEARTS** for more than 70 years, Glenn and Pearl Alexander were married on Aug. 26, 1931.



**GLENN AND PEARL ALEXANDER** will celebrate their 70th anniversary this year with events in August.

## Seventy years, they're still sweethearts

By **MARY LOU OLSON**  
Valentine's Day will bring many happy memories to Glenn and Pearl Alexander of Norcat, who have been sweethearts for over 70 years.

The couple first met in 1928 at a track meet in Oberlin.

Pearl Bowser was a sophomore at Decatur Community High School. Mrs. Alexander said that she was spending that weekend with a friend, Ruth Long, and they decided to attend the meet.

Mr. Alexander's sister, also Pearl, was teaching at rural Vernon School, and after the meet she invited the two young women to have Sunday dinner at the home of her parents, Harve and Mae Alexander, and siblings Glenn and Ivah, at their farm home in Grant Township.

That was all it took, Mr. Alexander recalls: "When I looked across the table at Pearl, I said to myself, 'That's the girl I'm going to marry!'"

Mrs. Alexander said their first date was a double-

date with her friend, Ruth Long, and Haddow Vernon.

"Glenn and I continued to date and usually went to the Opera House in Oberlin for a movie," she said. "And after a three-year courtship, he carried out his promise and asked me to marry him."

They were wed at the Norcat Methodist Church parsonage by a Rev. McClellan. Their attendants were her brother and his wife, Howard "Sport" and Ethel Bowser. The newlyweds went to Bigelow (a town which later went under Tuttle Creek Dam near Manhattan) to visit a sister, then on to Topeka for their honeymoon.

"When Glenn and I had our wedding pictures taken at Fawcett Studio in Norton later," Mrs. Alexander recalled, "our good friends, Gerald and Marguerite Temple, also of Norcat, were there for their wedding pictures."

"I'll never forget how hard Marguerite and I worked to get that 'spit curl' just right on our fore-

head, and we remained close friends over the years."

At the time, Glenn was farming with his father, so the newlyweds set up housekeeping on a nearby farm. They later moved to the Harve Alexander farm, where they raised chickens, milked cows and had a garden to get through the "Dirty '30s."

"We did have a generator for electricity and water in the house most of those early years," Mrs. Alexander said. "We took our eggs and cream to Norcat and the cream was shipped to Orleans, Neb., by train."

The newlyweds formed a club in 1933 with seven other couples. The eight women had an afternoon club called the E.E. Club (Energetic Eight), but as they all began having babies, they changed the name to "Everbearing Eight."

"We became the parents of two daughters, Maryllin and Beverly," Mrs. Alexander said.

Her husband suffered a cracked pelvis when the (Please see **COUPLE** on Page 8A)

## Treasurer quits before term over

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**  
Decatur County Treasurer Pat Fringer told commissioners Tuesday morning that it is time for her to leave office even though her term isn't up until October.

She said that she wanted to know what type of paperwork needs to be started so she could resign. She said she would write a resignation letter, which was to be accepted on Tuesday.

Although Republican Jean Hale was elected to the position last November, she legally can't take office until October, so the position will be filled the same way the vacant commissioner seat was a month ago.

This means that since Mrs. Fringer is a Democrat, party precinct people normally would determine who will replace her until October. Democrat Party Chair Judy Gaumer, the newly elected register of deeds, would have 21 days from the resignation to bring the precinct members together and appoint a new officer.

However, it's possible that the treasurer might switch parties before leaving the job to the Republicans. All the commissioners agreed that they hate to

## Ag land value raised by state

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**  
Decatur County commissioners were told Tuesday morning that valuations on agriculture land will increase this year about 8 percent, meaning that the total county valuation will also increase.

County Appraiser Alan Hale said that agricultural land makes up about 45 to 46 percent of the county's total, so the county's valuation should go up about 3.4 percent. He said that the assessed valuation will increase as well. The agricultural valuations, he said, come from the state Department of Revenue. Officials at the department crunch the numbers (Please see **LAND** on Page 8A)

see Mrs. Fringer leave but said they respect her decision. Mrs. Fringer asked how long it would (Please see **OFFICE** on Page 8A)

## Senator to speak here

Sen. Sam Brownback will be at the Decatur Community High School auditorium at 10:30 a.m. next Wednesday as part of his statewide listening tour.

The senator plans an hour-long talk with the student body and anyone from the public who would like to attend. He will take the first 20 to 25 minutes to talk with the students and then open the session up for questions and discussion. One of the topics may be the transition at the national level.

He will be accompanied by Dennis Mesa, of Garden City, who is his western Kansas regional director.

The two men have stops planned in Norton, Atwood and Hill City also.

Sen. Brownback has served since Nov. 1998, when he was elected to a six-year term. He is on the Health, Education; Labor and Pensions; Commerce, Science and Transportation; Foreign Relations; and Joint Economic committees.

# \* Office will be vacant

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 take to get the paperwork done. Commissioners thought about three to four weeks and since the office closes everything out at the end of the month, they decided that if she got a letter of resignation in by Wednesday, then the 21 days would be the end of the month. Commissioner Ralph Unger said that she didn't want to tell her what to do, but did say that her changing parties might simplify appointment of another officer, since then the Republicans could name Mrs. Hale. Mrs. Fringer said that she didn't have a problem with that. She said she started in the treasurer's office as a clerk in February 1981 and has been there since.

Also during the meeting, the commissioners toured the law library on the third floor of the courthouse where the Juvenile Justice Authority is housed. Over the weekend, Commissioner Unger said he received a call from Peggy Pratt, regional director for the authority, asking to use the prisoners to paint her office. He gave her permission.

On their tour, the commissioners learned that Mrs. Pratt was interested in moving the law library and building a wall so there could be another office to house Barry Richards, who has an office based in Smith County, but he covers Decatur County. He works with a diversion program for first time offenders for kids and if they work the program they don't have a record. They also wanted to know if they could replace the green and orange carpets with granite money.

The law says that a law library has to be available for prisoners, so commissioners searched for alternative areas for the five bookshelves. County Attorney Steve Hirsch said rarely does anyone use the library, but they are still required to have one. Commissioners looked at putting the books behind the courtroom, in the basement and behind the ambulance director's office. None of these worked.

Back in the commissioner's room, Mr. Unger said that they didn't see why a wall needed to be put in and thought that if the library was moved, they could leave a bookshelf as a partition. When Peggy Roe, with the Kansas State University Extension Office, asked for a wall on the first floor, commissioners declined. They said that she could use one of the spare rooms in the courthouse for counseling. They said that if Mr. Richards needed to counsel someone in private, he could use those same rooms.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn said that before the commissioners make a decision to do work on the third floor, they need to talk to others in the courthouse. She said the office is supposed to help kids, yet she doesn't see that happening. The carpets in the law library and office next to it are the same as the carpet in the commissioners room, and they aren't asking for it to be replaced. Mr. Hirsch said that Juvenile Justice is willing to pay for the carpet. Mrs. Horn said, right, they are willing to pay for it with grant money that is from everyone's tax dollars.

Commissioner Doyle Brown said that he thought the carpet is in good condition and doesn't need to be replaced. The commissioners agreed to not allow the new carpet to be put in and the law library move is on hold until they can talk to other people in the courthouse.

# Police check assault at ranch

Oberlin Police officers were called to Sappa Valley Youth Ranch the morning of Feb. 4 on a battery call. Two boys at the ranch, one 14 the other 17, had committed an act against two ranch workers. Ranch officials settled the situation, but called the police department to report a battery. The reports will be sent to the city attorney, said Chief Lockhart. On Feb. 3, Scott Taylor, 23, hit a

# Who's walking whom?



PICA, A GERMAN SHEPHERD, and her owner Roth Chapin were out playing in the snow on Friday afternoon. Pica seemed to enjoy it more than Roth.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

# \* Land values take jump despite continued low prices on farm

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 and then send them to the counties.

Last year, he said, the department tried to raise the valuation numbers and people stopped it, but he doesn't see that happening this year.

Commissioner Doyle Brown asked what they are basing the increase on. Mr. Hale said they take the last eight years' average production for different types of land and base the new numbers on that. He said agricultural land use value is based on income.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn said that if that happens, they may be cut the levy but will still have to collect the same tax dollars.

In other business, commissioners:  
 • Talked with Alan Marietta of Oberlin Milling about flood plain insurance. He said that the county doesn't have regulations flood plain insurance although there have been floods in the past with Beaver and Sappa Creeks. He said he wanted to apply for a Small Business Administration loan and in order to do this, he has to have flood plain insurance.

Mr. Hirsch said the commissioners would have to publicly designate where

the flood plains are and the long-term cost would be adapting to changes that would need to be made.

Mr. Marietta said that if it didn't cost anything, they should participate in it. Mr. Hirsch sent an e-mail to a man with the state who could come out and talk about it and the commissioners agreed to wait until he hears back from him to make a decision.

• Heard from Bob Berls, county maintenance man, who said that the electric eye in the elevator which tells the elevator that there is someone in the path of the doors isn't working. He said that instead of fixing it, they needed to replace it, and the suggestion is an infrared eye which will cost about \$1,495. They agreed to the repair.

• Held a closed-door session for an attorney-client session for five minutes, but no action was taken.

• Heard from Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley, who said they had a few township bills outstanding from last year. He said that a notice was sent out.

Mr. Huntley requested a closed session for 10 minutes for non-elected personnel. No action was taken.

# State legislators to be here on Saturday

State Sen. Stan Clark and Rep. John Faber will be in the foyer of the Decatur County courthouse at 1:30 p.m. Saturday to talk with people about issues

in their committees and what is going on in state government.

Sen. Clark said that they hope to take the first 20 to 25 minutes of the hour-long session to go over things and then open it up for discussion or questions. The idea is to talk about issues that the two think will make it out before the "turn around" date on Feb. 23.

Each session, Sen. Clark said, he tries to make it to 30 to 35 towns in the 15 counties that he represents. This week, he will be traveling with Rep. Faber to Bird City, Atwood, Norton and here.

The senator said that issues he will talk about may include things related to

# Board sets bond issue, vote

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

After over three hours discussing Decatur Community High School last week, the Oberlin School Board decided on a \$5.813 million construction project, with the district putting in \$200,000 to bring the bond issue down to \$5.613 million.

Work will include \$4.8 million at the grade school, plus heating, ventilating and air conditioning the hottest wing and electrical work at the high school.

At a special meeting to discuss the bond issue last Monday, the board first heard Bruce Mortimer, an architect from Wilson and Co., giving a report from the electricians who were out recently to check the system at the high school at the board's request.

They found at least two areas that they recommend be fixed right away. This includes two switches in the 1936 system which need to be rewired and wired, and covering live wires in the auditorium stage panel with plastic or metal so people can't touch them.

They also provided a list of other projects, including a new panel in the boiler room and replacing six feeder wires. This would cost about \$107,000, which the board decided to add into the

bond issue. President Barb Olson asked if these improvements would then allow them to add more electrical outlets and if the system could supply them. Mr. Mortimer said that it could.

Part of this goes back to technology changes which the board talked about at the beginning of the bond issue discussion. The improvements would cost about \$130,000 and would provide technology to each classroom.

Mr. Mortimer said the electricians didn't find that the building was unsafe with the exception of the two items that need to be done right away.

In the 1965 part of the building, he said, there weren't any electrical problems and there is adequate capacity there. Mr. Mortimer said that part of the building has the backbone to support technology.

At its last meeting, the board had cut projects at the high school down to \$776,000, including heating, ventilating and air conditioning hot areas.

Superintendent Duane Steele asked if the board wanted to throw in some of the capital outlay money. Member Dan Wasson wanted to know how much they could use and still have money in case of an emergency. Mr. Steele

thought that would be \$200,000.

The board has almost \$1 million in the capital outlay fund, which can be used only for building improvements and repairs. The plan is to use \$100,000 a year for the next three years for improvements on the plumbing, locker rooms and a new curtain in the cafeteria at the high school.

One idea which was brought up was spending another \$635,000 so that the steam head system in the high school could be turned off. Board Member Dewayne Jackson said that one of his concerns was running both the steam and hot water systems.

This would bring the bond issue over the \$6 million mark. The board talked about throwing in more of the capital outlay money, which would bring that fund down to \$600,000. Then the district won't have the money in case a school needs major repairs, said Member Delayne May.

After discussing the idea of shutting off the old system and throwing in the \$600,000, they decided that what they could do is the \$5.613 million and use the \$100,000 each year for the next three years to make other improvements.

# \* Couple finishing 70th year

(Continued from Page 1A)

tractor he was driving hit a hole in the road on the way to a field in 1954, so the family moved to Norcat. They operated Alexander's Grocery for three years and Mrs. Alexander worked alongside her husband at the store. She later worked at Safeway in Oberlin when the late Wayne Grose was manager.

"We joined a square dance club after we were married," Mrs. Alexander said, "and even after working all day at the store, we still loved to go square dancing. Glenn often played the accordion and French harp at party dances.

"Glenn was always a farmer first, and as soon as he was able, we returned to

farming. He was also a stockman, carpenter, picture painter, served on the township and church board and is still a member of the Norcat Commercial Club.

"Eventually, we gave up farming to retire in Norcat, but Glenn continued to enjoy carpentry for many years."

She said she loves bridge, pinochle and pitch, her plants, hand crafts and coffee clubs. She said that they felt blessed when their daughter Maryllin and her husband, Jay Locy, also decided to retire in Norcat.

Beverly and her husband, Barry Lengst, a pilot, live at Syracuse, Ind. There are seven grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

"A special thrill," Mrs. Alexander


said, "was when Barry and Beverly surprised us by taking us back to my old hometown, Cross Roads, Pa., where my father ran a grocery store for three years. The store is still in that tiny town."

All of their children and grandchildren plan to be in Norcat on Aug. 26 to honor the couple on their 70th wedding anniversary with a family celebration.

"We have had a good and happy marriage, with two lovely daughters and no real problems," Mrs. Alexander said. "Glenn has been a wonderful husband.


"My advice to young couples planning to marry today is, 'Just love each other a lot!'"

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