Fall graduates

Students from Emporia who received degrees from the University of Kansas in the fall of 2007 included Karley Trae Ast and Cory J. House. Ast, who received a master's degree in the history of art, is the daughter of Robert and Sandra Ast and a graduate of Emporia High School. House, the son of Dave House, received a master's degree in business administration.
Search warrant criticized

LAWRENCE — A local judge, the district attorney and the Kansas University police department are being roundly criticized by First Amendment advocates for a search warrant that sought access to online subscriber files of the Journal-World.

On Dec. 10, an investigator with KU's Office of Public Safety delivered a search warrant to the Journal-World demanding access to the newspaper's computer servers. The search warrant — applied for by the office of public safety, reviewed by the Douglas County district attorney's office, and issued by Douglas County District Judge Stephen Six — was seeking information about the identity of an individual who had posted anonymous comments on ljworld.com, the newspaper's Web site.

Investigators were seeking the identity of a poster with the screen name a2there, who had posted comments related to articles about a Kansas University student who was found dead in an Oliver Hall dorm room. The poster had made comments indicating the death was heroin-related.

First Amendment advocates said the decision by local authorities to serve a search warrant on a media organization was troubling.

"Issuing a search warrant to a newspaper is completely inappropriate," said Mike Kautsch, a KU law school professor and former dean of KU's School of Journalism. "It is a way of chilling the process of gathering and reporting the news."

Journal-World leaders also objected, and said they were concerned that future searches could paint the Journal-World as an investigative arm of local law enforcement.

— The Lawrence Journal World
www.ljworld.com
Longtime Kansan gets degree at age 85

By Sophia Malines

Lawrence Journal-World

LAWRENCE (AP) — Bob Nelson’s 85-year-old body may be slowing, but his handshake is as strong as a vise.

It is a grip that reveals the passion of a man widely considered to be one of the greatest sports fans in Kansas University history.

"Arguably, there’s never been a better Jayhawk fan," men's basketball coach Bill Self said.

It’s a little-known fact that the man simultaneously referred to as "Nelly," Kansas Superfan and The Old Jayhawk never received the diploma he worked toward in the 1940s. Nelson recently celebrated his receipt of a general studies diploma from the institution where he spent his life working and cheering.

Coaches, players and friends gathered for the party.

"This is the thing that he would cherish more than anything else — to have a degree from the University of Kansas," said Don Fambrough, a former KU football coach who planned to attend the festivities.

Nelson lives in an assisted-living facility in a room filled with photographs of memorable KU sports moments. Several KU caps hang from a hook. One sits on his head. The television is perpetually tuned to ESPN.

A stroke in 1998 affected Nelson’s speech. He is unable to vocalize all he feels about receiving the diploma. Instead, his eyes well with tears.

"It’s going to be pretty special for him," his wife, Eleanor, said.

Nelson was raised in the Coffeyville area. The eldest son of an oil gauger, he grew up in a strict household where dancing and other pleasures were restricted, Eleanor said. But the young Nelson found he could sneak off to watch a baseball game and come back clean, and his parents wouldn’t notice.

"It was kind of forbidden fruit when he was younger," Eleanor said.

In adulthood, Nelson followed his passion in the open. He studied journalism at KU. At 5-foot-8, he wasn’t collegiate-athlete material. He became a big fan instead.

He spent more than 30 years working at KU as a program coordinator in continuing education. A bachelor until he married Eleanor in 1991, Nelson devoted his time to sports and KU.

Over those years, he cemented himself in the KU community, his fun-loving spirit and zeal winning him a wide circle of friends.

All have a story about Nelly. "If he wasn’t around, then something was wrong," Fambrough said. "The head coach could have been missing and we wouldn’t have missed him as much as we would Bob Nelson."

Howard Mossberg, retired dean of KU’s School of Pharmacy, recalled trips across the state with Nelson in the 1960s and 1970s. Mossberg and others would play tricks, like stuffing Nelly’s hat with tissue so it wouldn’t fit on his head.

"He was always jovial," Mossberg said. "He never met a person that he didn’t like. He never met a person that he couldn’t talk to."

Nelly was a mainstay at KU sports practices and games. He went to too many games to count.

"When people asked him about how many games he went to, he said: ’I went to almost as many as Max Falkenstein, except I had to buy tickets and he got in for free,’” Eleanor said.

Even if Nelly didn’t have a game ticket, he could finagle his way in.

Fambrough said he once asked Nelson how he got into the bowl games, and Nelson revealed one of his secrets. He would bring a piece of equipment to the ticket booth and say that he had to get the equipment to the radio people pronto. Once inside, Fambrough recalled, Nelly would wait for someone to page a doctor for assistance.

"He said doctors were the best ones, because when they called: ’Dr. So-and-So, report to gate four,’ most of the time it would be an emergency, and the doctor would never come back,” he said. "Nelly would see him leave … then he’d go up to his seat and watch the game on the 50-yard line."

Nelson also brought the game to others. John Novotny, former Williams Fund director, recalled how Nelly managed to persuade the athletics program to share the game footage with a club comprised mainly of faculty.

"He was unselfish," Novotny said. "He was just unbelievable, and that’s why we called him Mr. Jayhawk."

Dave Robisch, an All-American who led KU to the Final Four in 1971, said he formed a bond with the Nelsons as a student-athlete, and now he considers them part of his family.
Goodland teen named runner-up in pageant

By Sharon Corcoran
slcorcoran@nwkansas.com
Goodland Star-News

A Goodland High School junior was chosen first runner-up in her first time at the Miss Teen Kansas U.S.A. Pageant, surprising even herself.

Brooke Lennington, 16, daughter of Carol Lennington of Goodland and Rich Lennington of Syracuse, went up against 32 girls from across the state at the pageant Dec. 13 to 15 at the Lied Center on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence.

Surviving three days of rehearsals, evening gown and swim suit competition and the interview, she said, she listened anxiously as the top 15 girls were announced. Just as she thought she wasn’t going to make the cut, they called her name.

When they announced the top five, she was the first one called and was so shocked she just froze. But she recovered and was able to answer three questions asked, ended up being the girl who would replace the winner if she is not able to serve her term. She’s hoping, however, that won’t happen.

“I think it’s really sad,” Lennington said, “when ones who win get into trouble. I don’t want to get the crown that way.”

She says the idea that pageants are all about shallow, pretty girls is an inaccurate stereotype. Anyone who wants to do pageants should give it a try, she said; you learn a lot.

Lennington said she has learned to do interviews a lot better than she did before and has seen girls gain a lot of personality from the experience. And she said the contestants were glad to see Jessica Colonna of Leawood win.

“We wanted someone to win who is real,” Lennington said. “With some girls, we were like, ‘They met with too many coaches.’ They were so rehearsed.”

Lennington grew up in Goodland and says she was born in the house she still lives in. She has two sisters and a brother here: Nichole O’Brien, 22, who has two children, one nearly a year old and the other 2 months; Hunter Lennington, a fifth grader; and Sarah Lennington, 3.

Her mother, who works at Shear Dimensions, a Goodland salon, is able to help with her look. Her father, owner of two Syracuse businesses, Rich’s Refrigeration and Cynthia’s Pizzeria, sponsored her pageant run. Her grandfather, Harold Sullins of Syracuse, also provides support and attended the pageant.

“Normally you get sponsors to pay for your expenses,” Miss Lennington said, “but I had my dad do it since he has two businesses.”

She said she hopes to have more sponsors for her next competition. “I saw all these girls with a long list of sponsors at the pageant,” she said, “and I only had two.”

Though this was her first trip to this pageant, it was not Lennington’s first competition. She started three years ago, competing in the junior teen division of the National American Miss, a small pageant in Wichita.

“Top 15 is all I got,” she said.

Lennington said she got into pageants because she wanted the crown.

“It’s pretty,” she said. “As a little girl, that’s what I wanted. Now that I’m more grown up, I realize that pageant contestants have a chance to be role models.”

Lennington said she would have loved to win the pageant at Lawrence, so she could represent Kansas at Pasadena, Calif., and compete against 49 other girls from across the country. She plans to try again next year and hopes to compete in other pageants as well.

One she would love to compete in is the Miss Kansas Pageant, where the winner competes for the famous “Miss America” title. It’s a big scholarship pageant, Lennington said. She received a $6,000 scholarship to Newman University for first runner-up in Lawrence but would like to have more.

She said she may attend the University of Kansas and hopes to become a news anchor or possibly a talk show host.

“I think it would be cool to have a talk show on TV,” she said.

She was hoping to be in the top 15 at the pageant and thought for a moment she wouldn’t make it.

“I was called 12th,” she said. “By then, I thought I wasn’t going to be called.”

But then she was called first for the top five.

“I couldn’t move for a few seconds,” she said.

Then she realized she should have paid better attention during the rehearsals.

“They taught us top-five stuff,” she said, “and I kind of tuned that out because I didn’t think there was any chance. They called me first, and I wasn’t sure where to go.”

Before going to the pageant, she trained with Krista (Burr) Hamilton and Jessica Kannady, both of Goodland, and Liz Plunkett of Syracuse.

And she takes modeling classes at Models and Images in Wichita. They help you learn to walk better and stand better, she said. She had heard a lot about the classes from Chris Baumfalk, a 2006 Goodland graduate who also went to Models and Images and has some modeling experience.

Lennington would like to share her pageant experience.

“I would like to start a pageant here,” she said, “not necessarily for girls my age, but for little girls.”

Being runner up was no snap, she added, but she was a шооіn for the Miss Northwest Teen Kansas title at Lawrence.

“I was the only girl from northwest Kansas who did it,” she said.
Lance Mall, son of Mr. and Mrs Durwin Mall, Clay Center, was among the fall 2007 candidates for degrees at the University of Kansas with a BSE bachelor of science degree in business/accounting. Laura Wurtz, daughter of Raymond and Mary Jo Wurtz of Clifton, was also a candidate for a BSB degree bachelor of science degree in business/accounting and business.

Alicia Moore, a health services administration major, graduated cum laude with a bachelor of health science degree during the Dec. 14 fall commencement ceremony at Washburn University. She is the daughter of Robert and Barbara Moore, Green.
Guest Editorials
KU site in China

The world is becoming ever smaller, which is why it is welcomed news that Kansas University is forging important new relationships with higher education in China.

KU recently announced that it had signed an agreement to develop a direct exchange with the prestigious Peking University.

Leaders at the Chinese university reportedly are particularly interested in sending more graduate students to KU and in fostering strong exchange programs for faculty and scholars from the two schools.

Although KU has direct exchange programs with three other Chinese universities, the partnership with Peking University is significant because of the school’s international reputation. The university has about 30,000 students, more than 200 research institutes and 42 colleges and departments, according to a KU press release ...

At about the same time the Peking University pact was being signed, KU’s Confucius Institute was being honored as a Confucius Institute of the Year by the international organization that covers about 210 institutes around the world. It was one of only four institutes in the United States and 20 in the world to receive the designation.

This is quite an accomplishment for an institute that was only dedicated in May 2006 ...

Both because of its huge size and its focus on building its economy, China is perhaps the most important developing nation in the world.

Forming ties with China and its top universities gives KU an important connection to that country's economic and educational growth.

Much emphasis has been placed on giving university students in Kansas broader experience with international cultures and education.

The Confucius Institute honors and the new partnership with Peking University are important steps in KU's efforts to accomplish that goal. — The Lawrence-Journal-World
County students among scholarship recipients at KU

LAWRENCE — More than 5,400 students at the University of Kansas will receive about $26 million in privately funded scholarship support during the 2007-08 academic year. This is a 10.6 percent increase from the 2006-07 school year, in which KU students received $24.3 million in scholarship support.

This year’s recipients represent 101 of the 105 counties in Kansas, 44 other states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 50 other countries.

So far, 7,603 scholarships have been awarded for the current academic year. Many students receive more than one scholarship. KU divides many scholarship awards between the fall and spring semesters, and there are some students who receive scholarship support for the summer term as well.

Virtually all scholarships, awards and fellowships awarded by KU come from private contributions to KU Endowment.

“Donors understand that without financial support, some deserving students would not be able to attend KU,” said Dale Seufferlein, president of KU Endowment. “KU students are benefiting from the financial support provided recently and many generations ago by loyal alumni and friends.”

Though KU Endowment raises support for scholarships and other student aid, KU determines the distribution of available support. The figure fluctuates each year based on several factors, such as the number of students who apply for and receive them, the investment performance of endowed scholarship funds and new gifts for scholarships.

Scholarship funds are managed by KU Endowment, the independent, nonprofit organization serving as the official fundraising and fund-management organization for KU. Founded in 1891, KU Endowment is the first foundation of its kind at a U.S. public university.

Virtually all scholarships, awards and fellowships given by KU come from private contributions to KU Endowment. Private money available for scholarships this year increased 10.6 percent over last year. Students from this area include:

Abilene

Rachel L. Berry, daughter of Martin and Judy Berry, Pre-Business, sophomore, John T. Stewart III Endowed Business Scholarship, $500, (Abilene High School);

Jennifer A Brussow, daughter of William and Marjorie Brussow, English, junior, Noma V. Riley Scholarship, $600, Harley S. Nelson Family Schol. - Humanities & Social Science, $4,776, (Abilene High School);

Steven Joseph Elliott, son of Gregory and Vicky Elliott, Music Education, junior, band scholarship, $500, Mary Berry Hocker Memorial Music Scholarship, $830, (Abilene High School);

Shannon Leigh Hilton, daughter of Ralph and Judy Hilton, Juris Doctor, Prof 3 Seigfreid, Bingham, Levy, Selzer, Gee Scholarship, $250, (Abilene High School);

Melanie Kristine Luthi, daughter of Lorin and Judy Luthi, electrical engineering, freshman, George C. Shaad Memorial Scholarship, $1,000, Albert Pardee Memorial Fund, $1,102, Garmin Electrical and Computer Engineering Scholarships, $2,500, Paul and Virginia Bassett Miller - Endowed Scholarship, $23, Madison A. and Lila Self Engineering Leadership, $2,000;

Joanna Linn Hamel daughter of Greg and Julie Hamel, pre-journalism, freshman, KU Scholarships, $750, (Chapman High School);

Emily Elizabeth Markley, daughter of Joe and Sheila Markley, voice, sophomore, Joseph M. and Emma B. Ketchum Scholarship, $375, Jellison Fund, $600, (Chapman High School).

Enterprise

Shannon Rae Terry, daughter of Edward and Judy Terry, art - basic studies, freshman KU Scholarships, $750, (Chapman High School).

Herington

Brian N Blackwell son of James and Beth Blackwell, mechanical engineering, freshman, J.L. Constant Scholarship, $1,500, Summerfield, $2,250, Robert M. Carey Scholarship, $750, (Herington High School);


Solomon

Meghan L Misenhelter, daughter of Kimm Misenhelter, theatre and film, senior, Larry D. and Donna Manning Horner Study Abroad Scholarship, $1,000, Peter and Ann Thompson Undergraduate Film Scholarship, $1,250, (Shawnee Mission East High School);

Jay A Montgomery, son of Kent and LaVeda Montgomery, medicine, Prof 1, Harry F. and Christine H. Lose Medical Scholarship, $2,500, (Solomon High School);

Evan Michael Riodan, son of Dennis and Monika Riodan pharmacy, Prof 1, Plough Pharmacy Student Scholarship, $800, (Solomon High School);

Talmage

Laura Margaret Gibson, daughter of
William and Sandra Gibson, piano, freshman, Janicke Freshman Honor Scholarship, $1,500, Muriel C. Marshall Piano Scholarship, $50, W. L. Hancock Piano Scholarship, $1,500, (Chapman High School);

Carlton
Adam Burke Reel, son of Rodney and Mary Reel Pharmacy, Prof 1, Plough Pharmacy Student Scholarship $800, (Abilene High School).
TOPEKA -- Everyone is invited by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas to attend their 90th annual banquet on Friday, Jan. 25 to honor nationally renowned photojournalist Jim Richardson, Lindsborg, as Kansan of the Year and Marc Asher, M.D., noted orthopedic surgeon and inventor, Kansas City, Kan., as Distinguished Kansan of the Year. John Carlin, 40th Governor of Kansas, will receive a Distinguished Service Citation.

Membership isn't required to attend the banquet to take place at the Sunflower Ballroom, Maner Conference Center, Kansas Expocentre, 17th and Western, Topeka. Social hour will be at 5:30 p.m. with the dinner and program to follow at 6:30 p.m.

Banquet tickets are $40 per person and may be ordered from Native Sons and Daughters, Box 346, Topeka, Kan. 66601-0546. Tickets will be mailed for all ticket orders received by Friday, Jan. 18. Ticket orders received after that date may be picked up from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on banquet day at the coat check area in the Capitol Plaza Hotel, immediately adjacent to the Maner Conference Center. After 5 p.m., tickets may be picked up at the banquet door.

Native Sons and Daughters was formed to preserve Kansas history, uphold our pioneer ancestors, encourage youth to embrace Kansas ideals and honor outstanding citizens.

Whether or not you are a Kansas native, you are invited to join the organization. Lifetime dues are just $10. To join, add $10 to your banquet ticket order or you may join outside the ballroom on banquet night. Honorees will be:

Distinguished Kansan of the Year: Marc Asher, M.D.

Upon graduation from high school in St. John, farm kid Marc Asher headed to Kansas State University to become a veterinarian and ended up becoming a world famous pediatric orthopedic surgeon, helping millions along the way.

Asher was born in Stafford County, Kan., on Aug. 15, 1936, to James Manley Asher and Pratt native Lucile Turner Asher. He grew up on the family farm near St. John, where he attended public schools. Following graduation from Kansas State University, he enrolled in the Kansas University School of Medicine (was a preceptor with the late Mac Frederick, M.D., Hugoton) and graduated in 1962. An internship at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center, Portland, was followed by two years of service in the U.S. Public Health Service at the Federal Penitentiary in Leavenworth.

In 1972, after 15 months on faculty at the University of Texas San Antonio Health Sciences Center, Asher returned to Kansas University Medical Center as assistant professor of orthopedic surgery. He progressively sub-specialized in pediatric orthopedics and spinal deformities and worked with the Kansas Crippled Children’s Commission (now Special Health Services) field clinics. He also participated in the circuit courses conducted by the postgraduate medical education department at KUMC. As a result of these experiences and his knowledge of Kansas life, Asher developed a series of clinics based on the principle that it was easier for one person to travel to patients than for a full clinic of patients to travel to one person.

Eventually clinics were established in Colby, Garden City, Hays, Hutchinson, Parsons, Salina and in Topeka at the Kansas Neurological Institute and the Capper Foundation. Most of the clinics are still maintained by Asher’s successors.

Asher became acquainted with the late Paul Randall Harrington, a Kansas City, Kan., native, KUMC graduate, renowned Houston surgeon and originator of the world’s first successful spinal implant system. The relationship led to the development of the Mary Alice and Paul R. Harrington Distinguished Professorship of Molecular Orthopedics at KUMC. In addition, Harrington willed his academic materials to KUMC. The timing between the development of the Harrington Archives and the maturing of Asher’s practice led to his participation in the development of the Isola Spine Implant System. From 1991 through 2003, Asher hosted many visiting surgeons and traveled worldwide teaching and demonstrating his techniques.

Asher has received many honors including five awards from the Scoliosis Research Society: community service, 1987; basic research, 1991; clinical research, 1999; and clinical posters, 1996 and 2002. In 1997, he served as president of SRS. He was editor-in-chief of the first Orthopaedic Knowledge Update: Home Study Syllabus, published in 1984, for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. This publication became a centerpiece of the AAOS educational offering, has been repeated every three years since and has been emulated by many sub-specialty societies. From 1986 to 1989, he was treasurer of the Pediatric Society of North America and in 2004 received that organization’s Distinguished Achievement Award. In 1999 he was selected KU School of Medicine Alumnus of the Year.

Kansan of the Year: Jim Richardson

Jim Richardson is an American photojournalist working for the National Geographic Society and as a social documentary photographer recognized for his explorations of small-
town life and rural landscapes. He is one of the Society's most productive contemporary photographers. As a contract photographer for National Geographic Magazine and a contributing editor of National Geographic Traveler, he has researched and produced a combined 30 stories since his first assignment was published in 1984.

Richardson teaches photography workshops throughout the world and speaks about exploring the world through travel and about small-town leadership qualities as applied in larger settings.

In his work, Richardson regularly calls upon his Kansas roots. Most recently, he proposed and later photographed an April 2007 landscape story for National Geographic magazine about the state's Flint Hills area.

Richardson's Flint Hills photographs are now traveling through 2009 in a 32-piece exhibit sponsored by the National Geographic Society, the Kansas Division of Travel and Tourism and Epson.

In 2004, National Geographic shared with nine million readers a retrospective of Richardson's 30 years of documentary photography in Cuba, Kan., population 230. Richardson's ongoing work in Cuba has been profiled twice by "CBS News Sunday Morning," first in 1983 and again in 2004.

Richardson is also known for his first book, "High School USA" (St. Martin's Press, 1979), a three-year photographic examination of adolescents at Rossville (Kan.) High School.

Richardson was born in Belleville, Kan., on Dec. 5, 1947, the son of Ralph and Elizabeth "Beth" Richardson, owners of a small wheat
and dairy farm north of town. He began using his father's second-hand box camera as a youngster, photographing the world of the farmstead. He developed negatives in the family kitchen and won awards at the Republic (Kan.) County Fair. In 1969, he abandoned a psychology major at Kansas State University to begin a photographic internship at the Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal, where he worked until 1979. While in Topeka, Richardson's work also was published in many major publications, ranging from Life and Time magazines to Sports Illustrated and The New York Times. After a brief stint at the Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald, Richardson worked as a roving western states photographer for The Denver Post until departing in 1986 to begin a full-time contract photography career that continues today. He is a Nikon "Legend of the Lens" and is represented by National Geographic Image Collection and the photograph agency Corbis.

Richardson and his wife, Kathy, returned to their native Kansas in 1997, having lived 18 years in Denver. They now live in Lindsborg, Kan., where they operate Small World: A Gallery of Arts and Ideas on the town's Main Street (www.smallworldgallery.net). Richardson's Web site is www.jimrichardsonphotography.com.

Distinguished Service Citation - John W. Carlin

John W. Carlin, the state's youngest 20th-century governor, was born in Salina, Kan., on Aug. 3, 1940. He grew up on the family's dairy farm, which had been homesteaded four generations earlier by his mother's family. He is a graduate of Lindsborg (Kan.) Rural High School and Kansas State University with a bachelor of science degree in dairy science. Upon graduation he returned to Saline County to manage the family farm.

Carlin was elected to the state legislature in 1970 as a Democrat in a primarily Republican state, serving four terms from 1971-79. In 1975, he was elected assistant minority leader and later minority leader. Carlin was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1977, only the second Democrat to serve in that position at that point in Kansas history.

In 1979, he moved from the House of Representatives to the governor's office after defeating the Republican incumbent. Four years later, Gov. Carlin became the first person to win a second four-year term. In perhaps his greatest achievement as governor, Carlin led an exploratory trade mission to China in 1979. Thanks to this visionary expedition, our state now exports more than $200 million worth of products to China each year.

In 1987, Carlin served as a visiting professor of public administration and international trade at Wichita State University.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton appointed Carlin as the eighth Archivist of the United States and administrator of the National Archives and Records Administration, an agency essential in our democracy for protecting citizens' rights, holding government officials accountable and documenting the national experience. Surrounded by a lot of criticism from professional archivists, Carlin took a moribund agency and essentially transformed it into a modern one through reorganization and the adoption of a 10-year plan envisioning the use of electronic archives. At the close of his term in 2004, he was awarded the Council Exemplary Service Award by the Society of American Archivists, many of whom criticized his appointment in 1995.
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Graduate Selected to Clerk for U.S.
Supreme Court

A 2003 University of Kansas graduate who earned a law degree this spring at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA is the second Kansan recently selected for a U.S. Supreme Court clerkship in the 2008 term. Jameson Reece Jones of Wichita, who earned degrees in American studies and civil engineering at KU, will clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia during the 2008-09 term. Jones is currently a clerk for U.S. Sixth Circuit Judge Jeffrey S. Sutton in Columbus, OH.

Jones passed the Kansas bar exam this summer. He is the son of Bishop Scott Jones and Mary Lou Reece of Wichita and is a graduate of Edward Marcus High School in Flower Mound, TX. At Stanford, Jones was a member of the team that won the awards for best team and best brief in Stanford's 2007 Marion Rice Kirkwood Moot Court Competition. He also participated in the Stanford Supreme Court Litigation Clinic, providing students opportunities to work on various cases being prepared for the court.

At KU, Jones was among the small percentage of engineering students who seek two degrees. He combined his interests in history and culture with his engineering skills for his honors thesis "Water, Cultural Perspective, and Engineering Responsibility." Jones grew up in Texas but spent summers visiting his maternal grandparents, H.W. and Marynell Reece, in Scandia. He interviewed many Scandia residents for his honors thesis.
Legislators talk about coming issues

By Barbara Axtell
Call Editor

Representative Clay Aurand and Senator Janis Lee were in Beloit Thursday prior to the start of the 2008 Legislative Session to visit with area residents about upcoming issues.

The Legislators met with the Leadership Mitchell County Class prior to the meeting.

Rep. Aurand said the state is kind of quiet outside of the power plant shutdown in Holcomb. “All Senators and Representatives are up for election so there will be more games played,” Rep. Aurand said.

The shutdown came at Holcomb after Sunflower Electric Power proposed building a pair of big, 700 megawatt, coal-fired plants in the western part of Kansas, at a cost of about $3.6 billion. One unit would have supplied power to parts of Kansas, the other to be owned by another rural co-op, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, would have provided electricity to fast-growing eastern Colorado.

On October 18, Roderick L. Bremby, secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, rejected an air permit for the generating plant. KDHE was the first government agency in the United States to cite carbon dioxide emissions as the reason for rejecting a permit for a proposed plant.

Both the Speaker of the House and Speaker of the Senate are from Western Kansas where the Holcomb power plant is located so they will be working together on that issue. Aurand said they have not seen eye to eye on a lot of issues in the past.

The Senate president has worked with the Governor in the past, but they are not together on the Holcomb issue.

“The ramifications on efforts in Western Kansas will play into a lot of issues,” Aurand said. “It remains to be seen what the Legislature can do.”

Ethanol plants also emit carbon so they and other power plants will be affected, he said, so the shutdown will be a big issue.

Sen. Janis Lee said, “The Holcomb situation will be a major portion of this year’s legislation. It will be the first issue dealt with in the House Utilities Committee (which Lee serves on). There are a number of proposals as to what will happen.

"Some of us hope we can find some common ground," Lee said. “All of the major generation plants will be up for re-certification in the next few years. I hope we can find some way to deal with this issue that is not divisive.”

Power plant issue

Addressing the power plant issue, former Representative Cliff Campbell said, “Will the Supreme Court settle the issue? I think they will overrule it (the decision).”

“I hope your are right,” the Senator said. “The overriding issue is CO2.”

The Legislature is supposed to set the policy, Lee said. KDHE has never risen a question about CO2. The plant at Holcomb exceeded all the requirements, both state and federal.

As far as discussion about sending the product (electricity) out of the state, Lee said, “We are an export economy.” Kansas exports grain, livestock and other commodities, she pointed out.

There is also an issue of equity, Senator Lee said. “We have a number of plants that are far dirtier than that one (Holcomb).”

“It is not an easy issue to deal with,” Lee said. “Did the secretary overstep his authority? That needs to be dealt with.”

Rep. Aurand said, “Politics will play into the issue.”

The Chairmen of the House and the Utility Committee are trying to find a workable solution, the Senator said.

When asked about nuclear power as a solution, Lee said nuclear endeavors are so expensive Kansas does not have a state utility that could build a nuclear plant.

There have not been any nuclear plants constructed in the United States in the past 30 years.

Nuclear energy is the cheapest energy in the state, Lee said. The eastern portion of the state uses nuclear and coal for power while the western part of the state uses coal and natural gas. Power rates are almost twice as much in the western part of the state compared to eastern Kansas.

“Frankly I do not think we should turn to natural gas,” Senator Lee said, “which is all tied up anyway. There is no black and white. It will be very difficult to deal with.”

Education

Rep. Aurand serves as chairman of the education committee. He said, “We will be looking at the teacher shortage in the state. It is moving from a problem to a crisis. A lot of teachers will be retiring, so how to solve the problem will take a variety of things.”

There are not a lot of overriding issues, Aurand said. This will be the final year of
the three year plan for education.

Another issue to be addressed is the pre-kindergarten program in terms of school readiness.

Aurand said there are different schools of thought as to whether to do a multi year funding plan for education. The multi year plan is good in some ways because it gives the administrators a good idea of what to plan for as far as funding. However, if something bad happens, education could suffer some cuts in funding, such as what happened after 9/11.

Senator Lee said it will be an intense year because it is an election year. "A number of issues will be brought up because they (the Legislators) want to get your vote," she said.

The budget will be somewhat tight this year because funds did not come in as high, as expected, Sen. Lee said: "We do not have very much extra money. Some of the revenue coming in has already been spent."

Lee said she does not anticipate much action on K-12 education this session.

Talking about KPERS, Lee said the teachers are the major members of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. The state has increased dramatically the amount they put into KPERS, she said. The state's share will increase until the KPERS system is sound, she said.

Dealing with the shortage of teachers, a suggestion has been made which would use retired teachers to fill some vacancies. If you are retired, you can only earn $20,000 per year, Sen. Lee said. Looking at the shortage, if we bring retired teachers back in, we will have to deal with that issue, she said. If a retired teacher goes to another district, that district will have to pay 13% to KPERS, she said.

"For the first time we now have a state level board responsible for technical education," Senator Lee said. "Our post-secondary institutions are very important to the state."

Lee reminded those present that two local people serve on the state boards. Clark Coccia is a member of the Technical Education Authority and Jerry Boettcher is a member of the Board of Regents. Lee is also a member of the Technical Education Authority.

Lee said she hoped the Legislature could address taxes in a more equitable manner. One program they are looking at which Lee said may not pass, is persons with revenue of $60,000 or under may be able to defer part of their property tax for their home which the state would be responsible for when the estate is settled.

Another proposal would change the rate of taxes paid by senior citizens, however Lee said she did not think it would pass because young families face the same problems when trying to buy homes.

Health care continues to be an issue, the Senator said. One suggestion to help fund health care would be to raise cigarette taxes. However, Lee said that could encourage smokers to buy cigarettes in other states or over the internet.

Aurand said there are a few programs that allow teachers to get into the classroom with less requirements. Most all certification is done through the State Board of Education, he said. There is a whole range of issues, he said, but the concern is what level will it take to get quality teachers in the classroom.

"We cannot do a lot as State Legislators," Aurand said. "There are some things being looked at and addressed."

Senator Lee said, "Just because you are very good at what you are doing, does not mean you would be a good teacher. Knowledge of the subject is important, but you also have to be able to teach other people so they can get it."

USD 273 Superintendent Joe Harrison said, "There are alternative avenues for certification you can go through, but in our area it is very difficult."

Jerry Boettcher said, "The teacher thing has got a lot of people's attention, not just in Kansas."

Boettcher told about a program at Kansas University called "U Kan Teach" where they actively recruit kids already enrolled in chemistry, math, etc. to be teachers. It looks very promising, he said.

"It took us a long time to get into this mess," Boettcher said, "and it will take us a long time to get out of it. It will be a long arduous task and it will cost money."

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Senator Lee pointed out there are 30,000 teachers in Kansas that are not teaching because they can earn more in other fields. “We will have to address the salary issue compared to other jobs,” she said.

Eldon Kadel, who served as chairman of an education organization in Kansas in the 1960’s, said it is hard to pull teachers to Western Kansas because they like to go to the big cities.

**Highway funding**

Engineer John Cashatt pointed out the State is nearing the end of the current highway bill and asked where the Legislature is headed with the issue. “Will it be discussed this year,” he asked.

Lee and Aurand agreed discussion will start this year but it will be another year before much is done.

It would be very difficult to increase gas taxes at the current time, Lee said. The last two programs were for 10 years each which have been very successful, she said.

“There will be another highway program,” Lee said. “We will have to be more creative to have the funding.”

One of the areas of funding the Legislature may look at is if the courts find the expanded gaming constitutional there could be some funds available there.

“I believe it will happen,” Lee said. “It will just take more work.”

**Technical education**

North Central Kansas Technical College President Clark Coco said last year was a very volatile year for technical education in the State.

“These two people here have a great deal of impact on helping us stabilize some of the issues in technical education,” Coco said. “They did a tremendous job.”

Both Rep. Aurand and Sen. Lee serve on the State Education Conference Committee. “I believe it is very positive for education in our part of the state,” Coco said.

**Water situation**

Former House of Representatives member Cliff Campbell asked about the Kansas/Nebraska water situation.

“Nebraska is over a barrel right now,” Rep. Aurand said. “They put it off and did not do what they needed to do. It’s going to be ugly.”
Fielding questions

Representative Clay Aurand listens to a concern from one of those attending the Legislative Coffee Thursday at the NCK Technical College in Beloit.