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Another full weekend

Valley teams face tough tests in week 5.

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State Supreme Court

Court upholds suspension for Palmer judge.

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Full steam ahead

The 557 Restoration Co. volunteers "still think they can."

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Weather

HIGH: 60
LOW: 40s

Scattered showers.
Var. wind to 10 mph.

Full forecast, PAGE A2

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Houston nixes rezoning

BY BRIAN O'CONNOR
Frontiersman.com

HOUSTON — The city council here voted 5-2 Thursday to reject a contentious rezoning measure.

Had the measure been approved, it would have rezoned two parcels of property from residential agricultural — the zoning classification for many surrounding properties — to heavy industrial. Deputy Mayor Lance Wilson had offered an amendment to zone the smaller, 80-acre portion as light industrial to act as a screen between the 560-acre heavy industrial parcel and some of the neighbors, and amendment which failed during an August planning commission meeting.

Deputy Mayor Lance Wilson and Mayor Virgie Thompson were the only two council members to vote in favor of the rezoning.

Representatives from the property's owner, Alaska Native Corporation Knikatnu, Inc., requested the zoning in order to develop the trial to act as a screen between the 560-acre heavy industrial parcel and some of the neighbors, and amendment which failed during an August planning commission meeting.

Company officials have said one possibility for construction there is a light-bulb factory to produce environmentally friendly LED lights. The company's overriding concern was to be good neighbors, said Richard Porter, executive director of the Knik Tribal Council.

"What we would start to find out is that our grandfathers raised us the same way," he said. "I think when you guys see this, you see the scary thing of heavy industry, but if you look at this, we have the same values as you guys."

The corporation was looking to

the future, said Knikatnu President Raymond Theodore.

"This is just a first step," he said. This is one of the biggest parcels we have in the Valley. We're trying to do something for our people. I don't think that's wrong."

Residents, like Charlotte Dennis, were skeptical. They pointed to the 11 enumerated uses of heavy industrial facilities in city ordinance and say they wouldn't want any of those facilities as neighbors.

See REZONING, Page A3

PALMER ART WALK



CAITLIN SKVORC/Frontiersman.com

Nicolas McCaslin, a Beatles fan extraordinaire, performs his favorite tunes outside B Bella in the Koslosky Center for this month's Palmer Art Walk.

Assembly candidates discuss tourism

BY BRIAN O'CONNOR
Frontiersman.com

WASILLA — Tourism and economic development are one and the same, candidates for borough assembly told a forum Friday afternoon.

Candidates for the fourth and fifth borough assembly districts met at Evangelo's for a forum hosted by the Mat-Su Borough Convention and Visitors Bureau Friday. Fifth district candidate Bill Kendig put it best on an answer to an audience question on supporting cruise ships.

"That's going to fuel our tourism more, which fuels our small businesses, which is the backbone of our economy," he said.

Kendig and District 4 incumbent Steve Colligan agreed that cruise ships were essential to growing the economy, and supported allowing them to dock at Port MacKenzie in the future.

Dan Mayfield, in the unenviable position of answering the question first, said he would require time to do some research.

"The port is more industrial, so my off-the cuff

See TOURISM, Page A10

Houston firefighter homeless after blaze

BY BRIAN O'CONNOR
Frontiersman.com

MEADOW LAKES — A Thursday fire left a Houston firefighter and his girlfriend homeless and injured a firefighter responding to the blaze, authorities said.

The fire happened about 8 a.m. along North Finsbury Lane, according to borough Deputy Emergency Services Director Clint Vardemann. No one was injured before firefighters arrived, but the mobile home that burned, which belonged to Houston fire fighter Shawn Stiles, was a complete lost.

"It happened so quickly that the smoke alarms didn't have a chance to go off before the house was engulfed," Stiles said.

Stiles said he'd recently returned from the Bristol Bay Borough, where he had been working as a firefighter. Officials were still investigating, but Stiles said he'd been told a malfunctioning natural gas heater was most likely the cause. Stiles said he'd purchased the house within the last year.

Some reports incorrectly said fireworks had played a role in the blaze. Stiles said he warned responders about fireworks he

had safely stored inside the residence in case they did ignite, but that the fireworks neither ignited nor played a role in the fire's ignition.

The Houston Fire station, unlike some other facilities, has no quarters, so the Red Cross was temporarily housing Stiles at a local hotel Thursday afternoon.

Stiles' sister, Kathryn Baker, whose family had suffered a house fire of their own within the last year, had been keeping some of her property at the Finsbury Lane house.

"She still had a bunch of her property there and she was going to move it into her house," he said. "I guess the fire had other plans."

Firefighters at the Houston station were accepting small items for donations. Baker had established a campaign on the popular crowd-sourcing charity site www.gofundme.com, which had raised about \$110 of a stated goal of \$3,000 by Saturday afternoon.

"His home is now gone," Baker wrote. "He lost all but a few items of clothing. Luckily, every one made out alive, and that's a lot to be thankful for."

Contact Brian O'Connor at 352-2269 or brian.oconnor@frontiersman.com



Photo Courtesy GoFundMe.com

Firefighters from Central Fire and Rescue work to extinguish a blaze Thursday morning that left Houston firefighter Shawn Stiles homeless. A GoFundMe campaign established by Stiles's sister had raised \$110 Saturday afternoon.



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KNEEJERK CHRONICLES



By Tim Johnson

Making a separate peace

Old soldiers don't die — they just redeploy — Anonymous Curmudgeon

This is about two old soldiers who knew of each other.

In 1983 one drove down a remote road in North Dakota. At a roadblock a gunfight ensued. Two law enforcement officers died and he fled. He died in another shootout in Arkansas. His name was Gordon Kahl.

I once found the other old soldier on another remote road and that is my favorite memory of him. This is his story.

In 1984 I was driving on a gravel road in North Dakota and saw a car at the side of the road. I stopped and walked to the driver's side of the car to offer aid. I was delighted to see my favorite uncle. I had just arrived from Alaska and had not seen him in years. He was reading a newspaper and my aunt was knitting. They seemed perfectly relaxed.

I asked if they needed help. My uncle replied "no" and went on to say that the car had a habit of quitting once in a while but could be restarted in a few minutes. He reasoned that he now had sufficient evidence to "puzzle through" and correct the problem in his own garage. He was 77 years old and as strong as ever. He was a skilled farmer, trapper, carpenter, and mechanic.

My uncle and my father were two of the most peaceable people I have known. They were quiet, steady men who had "made do" and "puzzled through" all of their lives. My uncle and Gordon Kahl were both North Dakota farm boys who fought in World War II. Each was an expert gunner and highly decorated, but they dealt with issues very differently. Why?

If there is an answer to my question, perhaps it will help research into the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

My uncle was the eldest of three brothers and was born in a homestead sod house in 1907. In 1917 his parents built a two-story frame house. The brothers slept upstairs. Sometimes in the winter, drinks left near the beds would freeze. In the summer they often slept outside on the ground to escape the heat of the second story.

There and then, education was in a one-classroom schoolhouse a mile walk from the farm down a dirt road. As with most rural youth, schooling ended for my uncle at the eighth grade. Then he spent almost 20 years as a farm hand.

Lodging was usually provided by the employer, but could have been in a stack of hay or a barn. Alternatively, boarding houses were available.

Food was plentiful on farms and came with the wages. A farmhand would be used to eating lots of meat, fish and poultry — both wild and raised. There was always locally grown fresh or canned produce.

At that time social life was not technology-driven, so people entertained themselves. Since farms were where the food was, farmers and farm workers ate well. This was not true of urban areas during the Great Depression.

After trying for years to get into the Army, my uncle was inducted in 1941. At the time, he could have carried everything he owned in a car. The country was getting ready for war. Many

See PEACE, Page A12

IF YOU REBUILD IT, THEY WILL COME



Courtesy photo

The partially restored Engine No. 557 has been moved outside while volunteers work to restore the tender car that will carry the coal to fire the historic steam engine.

FULL STEAM AHEAD

Volunteers with the 557 Restoration Co. still 'think they can'

BY ERIN SHAVER
For the Frontiersman



Courtesy photo

Engine No. 557 Restoration Company mechanical department volunteer machinist Doug VanWingerdon works to restore a piece of the historic steam engine to operating condition.

WASILLA — Every boy is interested in trains, quips Jerry Cunningham, volunteer for the Engine No. 557 Restoration Company, "I'm out here playing with a toy train. This one just happens to be on a one-to-one scale."

At the old Kenai Supply building just off the railroad tracks in Wasilla, volunteers are there most days, cleaning, building, learning and storytelling their way through the restoration of Alaska's last steam locomotive.

If there were a proverbial hump, halfway, or middle point in restoring an old steam engine, the 557 Restoration Company is pretty much at that juncture. But don't tell them that. They are just a bunch of old boys having a little fun.

"Most of the people I see are regular. Some of them come in almost every day," says Doug VanWingerden, retired machinist and regular volunteer. "It's amazing. Some have a real affinity to railroads, they build models, and it's a natural fit. Others just like to come down here and be part of something."

It's been exactly two years since the 557 Restoration Company began the formidable task of deconstructing and reconstructing a 70-year-old steam engine. And two summers from now, they hope to see it running passenger service on the Alaska Railroad once more.

Volunteers have logged a massive 10,000 hours in the first two years of the project. Many are retired. Most keep regular hours. Some arrive as early as 7:30 a.m. and clock a full day.

"When I walk in here in the morning by myself and I just look at the project, it could become very overpowering," says Pat Durand, volunteer and president of the 557 Restoration Company. "But the first volunteer who walks through the door changes the whole dynamic. I am now sharing the opportunity to make progress, and that gives me direction."

When George Fellers first read about the 557 restoration last fall, he stopped by to check it out on a Thursday and, by Friday, had basically started working. He has been coming in regularly ever since. As a retired boiler technician in the U.S. Navy, he had some proficiency when it came to dealing with steam.

"I really like the other guys here, teaching them things," says Feller, hands too dirty to shake from hours spent scraping the tender's trucks with a needle gun. "There's also a lot I did not know. It's all ongoing knowledge; gotta learn something new every day."

The 557 was the last steam engine to run on the Alaska Railroad, taking its final trip in 1962

See 557, Page A12



Courtesy photo

The partially restored Engine No. 557 has been moved outside while volunteers work to restore the tender car that will carry the coal to fire the historic steam engine.

PEOPLE WE KNOW

• **Kaitlyn Klapperich** of Wasilla is the 2014 to 15 Editor in Chief for the Collegian, the student newspaper of Central Methodist University. The paper is published every other week throughout the semester, with the first issue set for publication Sept. 10. Read the Collegian online at bit.ly/1uGlkrW.

• **Army Pvt. Forrest E. Powell** has graduated from basic combat training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. Powell is the son of Forrest E. Powell of Wasilla. He is a 2013 graduate of Wasilla High School, Wasilla.

• **Army Pvt. Jeremy Bliss** has graduated from basic combat training



Collegian Editor in Chief Kaitlyn Klapperich and Layout Editor Bailey Brown. The Collegian is the student newspaper at Central Methodist University.

at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. Bliss is the son of Tamera Bliss of Wasilla. He is a 2014 graduate of Houston High School, Houston.

• **Lily Eskelsen Garcia** will take office Sept. 1 as president of the more than 3.5 million-member National Education Association. She is the daughter of longtime Wasilla residents **Marcella and Bobby Earl Pace**. Garcia was the 1989 Utah Teacher of the Year and served 10 years as president of the Utah Education Association beginning in 1990.

• **Athlete Dane Tudor**, 25, of Palmer is featured in the new ski movie "Every day is a Saturday," which was shown at the Beartooth Theatre Pub and Grill in Anchorage Sept. 6. Tudor won Best Male Pro skier at the International Free Ski Film Festival this year in Montreal, Canada.

Entwisles celebrate 50th

Frontiersman staff

In celebration of their 50th anniversary, Ned and Miki Entwisle of Wasilla renewed their vows in an Aug. 31 ceremony at Lamb of God Lutheran Church on Church Road in Wasilla.

Miki works as a homemaker, herbal distributor and volunteer, and Ned's working career includes retirement from the U.S. Air Force and from the state of Alaska's Department of Corrections. Presently, he is employed as a greeter at Home Depot.

The couple's children are, Brad Entwisle, of Seward; Jeremy Entwisle, Tokyo, of Japan; and foster daughters, Mary Morgan Swift, of Seattle, Washington, and Rose Okpealuk, of Anchorage.

A potluck followed the service, which was attended by the Lamb of God congregation and guests of the family.





Courtesy photo

Mechanical Department Volunteers Pat Durand, Doug VanWingerdon, Ron Dudley, Jerry Cunnington, Lyn Willis, Jerry Peters, George Fellers, Terry Douglas, Ken Elmore. Not pictured are Jeff DeBroeck, Jerry Christensen, Dean Sawyer, James Keene and Stewart Sterling.

557

Continued from Page A11

before resting at a museum in Washington state for the past several decades. It returned to Alaska in 2012 and restoring it has been every bit as complicated as it might seem. There were no plans or directions. Volunteers had to break down the engine entirely and clean off 70 years worth of soot and grime on nearly every piece before they could really even begin.

"It had been operated without much maintenance. You wouldn't imagine how much silt was still on there from when they drove it into the overflow of the Nenana River over 50 years ago," says Jim Keene, a retired pharmacist. He adds with a chuckle: "I don't have a lot of skills in terms of welding or machining, so I typically do a lot of cleaning."

Volunteers rattle off stories of dirt and grime like a rite of passage — noting with reverence the days the soot and dust were so bad you could only see the whites of their eyes. And they laugh about taking out all those stay bolts — the bolts that hold the inner and outer firebox together — 1,042 in total that had to come out of the boiler.

Tasks have ranged from tracking original manufacturer's plans from museums all over the world to noting the exact ultrasound measurements of steel thickness on thousands of spots on the boiler. The

engine was manufactured in a war era, when corners were cut to save metal, and now it's getting its much-needed modern upgrades.

"We had some naysayers, they said, why in the world did you tear it down that far?" says Durand. "Seventy years of abuse and mis-use. Things rotted away; lots of little things. We had to."

The volunteer who has given perhaps the most of all, Durand, is the exact same age as the engine. His commitment to the project is so steadfast he usually works seven days a week, cultivating donors, managing volunteers, promoting and networking, and doing manual labor, too (during our interview he popped out to pick up a propane tank for a forklift that ran out of juice). His dedication is firm, albeit droll at times, even jibing, after I proposed writing a profile about him, "Profile? Does that mean I have to turn sideways? I'll crawl into a hot firebox if it will further the cause."

The ardor of the all-volunteer staff is a testament to both the cause and his leadership skills. Volunteer Ken Elmore, who has worked on several nostalgic engine restorations in Portland, has been coming in two days a week since the beginning to offer his experience in both restorations and industrial electrics.

"I knew Pat through model railroading and he is a very astute historian for the Alaska Railroad," says Elmore. "I think he's a pretty good leader to get people moti-

vated, give job assignments, and just gets things done."

Durand, for his part, relies in turn on the technical skills and steam experience of the 557 chief mechanical officer Jeff DeBroeck. While holding a full-time job in the Alaska Railroad shop force, DeBroeck still finds time to volunteer and direct the scope of work on 557. The company also has hired out Robert Franzen, president of Steam Services of America, to meet the exacting requirements of the Federal Railroad Administration in completing the task. In addition to the 22 regular volunteers on the mechanical side, the 557 team also features volunteer secretary/treasurer Dick Morris and grant writer Maria Keefer. And yes, there are a few ladies who get filthy in the shop on a regular basis.

Next on the horizon for these volunteers? In the immediate, it's crunch time on trying to get a new firebox in before winter hits. In the long run, it's figuring out the route details with the Alaska Railroad. On the

table is also becoming a 501c3 nonprofit — right now 557 uses the Alaska Community Foundation as a fiscal sponsor.

Fundraising is always ongoing and definitely the hardest part, says Durand, although in-kind business donations and grants have been numerous and appreciated. The Rasmuson Foundation kicked things off with a \$350,000 matching grant, and the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm Heritage Area and National Railway Historical Society have recently awarded grants.

And so long as those volunteers keep coming in, the dream of seeing a piece of Alaska's history come back to life endures.

"You get to the point in life where you'd like to have done something that's permanent, and this has the chance at doing that," says volunteer Lynn Willis, retired from FedEx, who has been with the project since day one. "We're leaving a bit of a legacy... to have touched something important. And, it's a nice way to spend time."

PEACE

Continued from Page A11

inductees from urban areas were underweight and unfit because of malnutrition. Residents of Rural America were in better shape. At 34 he was a big, powerful man, well fed and well muscled from years working on farms.

He did not talk about what he did to the enemy in combat, but he did talk about the third time he was wounded: he made a separate peace with the war. He told himself that if he survived, he would never let anything bother him again. And he never did.

News accounts are that Gordon Kahl had conflicts with government and law enforcement going back to 1967. He justified such conflicts with an extreme right-wing doctrine. Did this man who served his country against the greatest evil ever known — as did my uncle — have PTSD? I don't know. Neither do I know how my uncle lived the rest of his long life without any outward signs of PTSD.

My uncle was older than most when he entered the Army. At 34 his maturity may have been a factor or perhaps his family history. His father was a harsh and autocratic man but my grandmother was the oppo-

site. My father and my uncle were their mother's sons.

I don't have an answer, but I do believe that it is as important to understand why some veterans do not have PTSD as it is to understand why some veterans do.

My uncle was very well read and well informed. On one occasion he noticed that I was reading a magazine article and asked me about it. I told him that the article was about the most decorated Marine in history. He said, "Do you know that some big-shots tried to make him dictator?"

Next: Smedley's War

Tim Johnson is a computer programmer who lives in Palmer and is owner of AKWebsoft. Read more at TJ49.com.

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