

## Headline season begins in Topeka

The Legislature is back in session, and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has challenged the members to work together to handle the issues of school finance and health insurance.

In her State of the State speech last week, the governor suggested the legislature look "outside the box" to find ways to solve the state's financial problems.

She said the Kansas economy is improving, and that the improvement should continue through the next year, noting that the state added 25,000 jobs last year.

School finance took top billing because the state Supreme Court has given the Legislature a deadline of April 12 to "balance" the funding formula. Sebelius did not give a specific solution to the school finance issue, but rather said she would work with the two houses of the Legislature to find a workable solution.

Following the governor's speech, the Republican leadership presented a pre-recorded message from the new Senate President Steve Morris (R-Hugoton) in which he agreed that the school finance issue will be tough. Morris said no one person has the answer. He said all ideas should be examined as the Legislature looks for ways to handle the court decision.

Reaction to the State of the State was along party lines, with most Republicans complaining that Sebelius did not give enough details of her budget plans, never discussing her ideas to handle the school issue.

Democrats, naturally, said she gave a good speech and had a good vision of the state's future.

In the past, the speech has been used to lay out specific budget proposals and to list the goals of the governor for the session, but Sebelius sidestepped the specifics as she presented her case for a healthy Kansas.

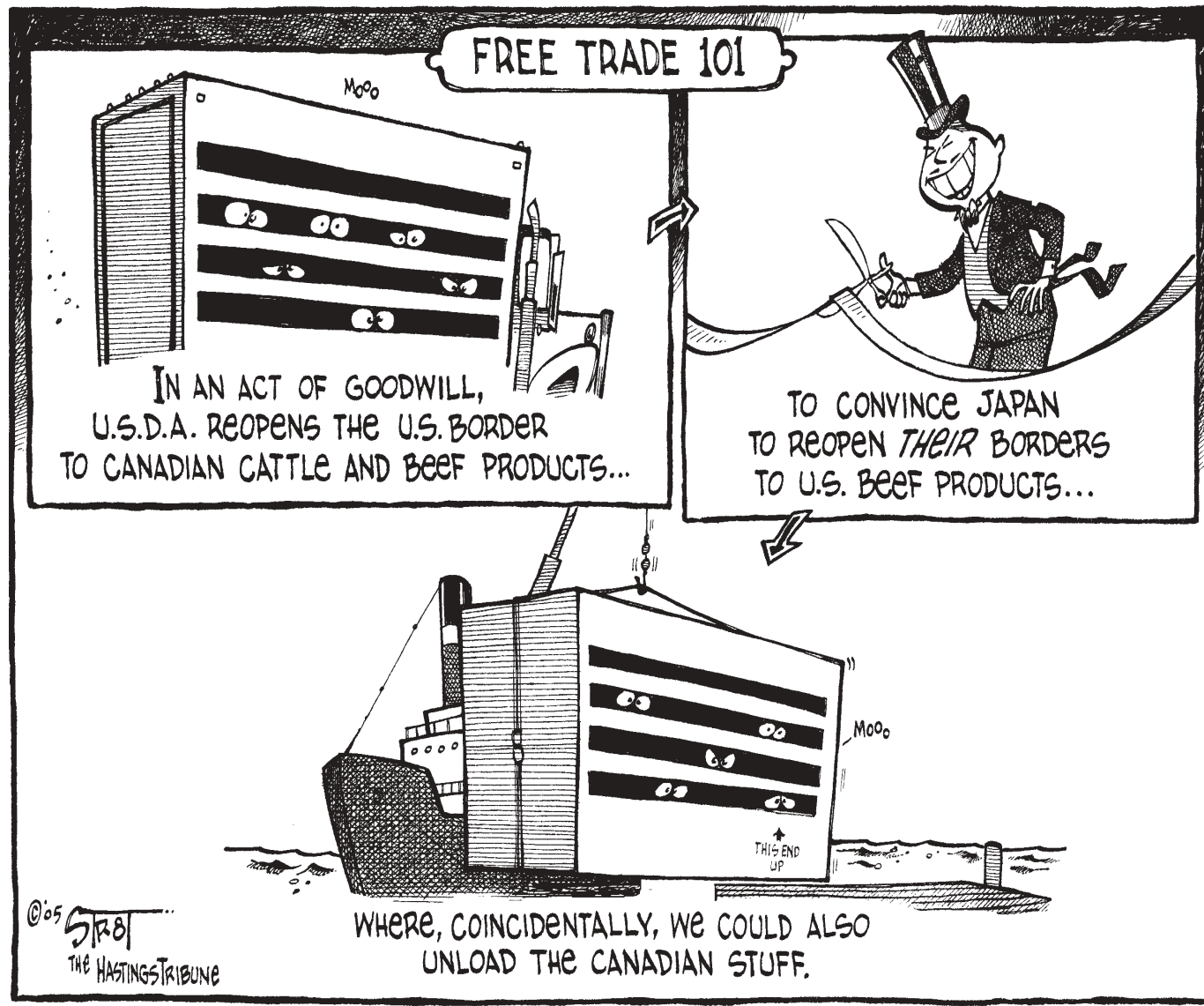
With her speech out of the way, the Legislature took little time in grabbing more headlines with the introduction and quick passage by the Senate of a same-sex marriage amendment on the fourth day. The House is expected to be as quick this week, and there is little doubt about the bill's passage.

The quick action by the Legislature would mean the largely local ballot on April 5 would become a statewide ballot with the proposed constitution amendment added.

Whether such an amendment is needed will be debated over the next two months, but it is another example of probably bad laws being pushed through without taking time to stop and think about the impact. The state already has a law on the books prohibiting same-sex marriages, but for a minority of Kansans, that is not enough.

While the Legislature tries to grapple with more important issues like school funding and health care costs, they will try to keep the citizens focused on the question of same-sex marriages. Here is a bet it will probably work.

— Tom Betz



## Some decisions are tough to make

You know there are some things that have no right answer. I'm a person who likes cut and dried answers, the kind where you know immediately what you should do.

I miss my mother as I wrestle with finding answers because even though I know what she might say, still there was always a bit of surprise and mystery, so I was never totally sure.

When I ask Jack he says, "do whatever you want".

What if I want both? And besides, I want him to just tell me what to do. But alas, he is too much of a gentleman and a man to do that.

He truly means it when he says, "I'll support you no matter what you decide." I always try to listen to that "still small voice".

However sometimes, I wish God would write on my wall (the kids always got my attention when they did that). I'd probably listen to Him if He did.

And so it was last week that I wrestled with career decisions.

For years I engaged in my career of

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



choice with love and commitment — stay at home mom.

I believed what I was doing was the most important job there was and I wasn't willing to turn it over to someone else. But now with children raised, college completed, I have choices.

I love my job as Big Brothers Big Sisters part-time executive director, but I was offered a full time position with an agency also near and dear to my heart, Head Start.

And so I weighed my options. And then decided.

Both agencies work with children, probably the one true place where we can change our future. Both are made up of caring, dedicated personnel. Both

struggle to find new ways to reach children, help parents and benefit society. Both depend on the commitment of many to serve a few.

So there isn't any way to balance the scales this way.

One is salaried and one is hourly. Neither will give me large amounts of money, but each will enrich my life. Both have some benefits, but each lacks some.

And so I guess, it does truly come down to what am I "supposed" to do. Because in my heart I believe God cares about the big events and little events and His plan for me includes both.

I announced my resignation and accepted the new position last week.

I am excited and scared. But I do believe a full-time position in an agency that I feel passionate about, coming at this time, reveals the plan of a mind greater than mine.

I guess we never know if the decisions we make are right until we see the whole picture at the end of our lives. The nice thing is I have my parent's legacy of, once you have made the decision you never look back.

## Memories of Monsignor

### Parishoners of St. Francis Catholic Church remember former Norton priest

To the Editor:

When Msgr. Armand Girard passed away Jan. 5, Esther and I lost a good friend of over 30 years.

He was a wonderful pastor. He was so sincere, compassionate and loved all people.

Esther and I attended the 50th anniversary of his priesthood. The respect shown by hundreds of people was overwhelming.

Shortly after he moved to Goodland, we played Goodland there in football. Before the game, he came to our side and greeted all the Blue Jay fans.

Shortly before the kick off he said, "I

will have to go to the other side. I have to support my 'Goodland Cowboys' now."

One of his favorite expressions was, "He was a good man".

Last week I received in the mail a clipping of his passing away from *The Salina Journal*. My friend penned a note in the letter.

His note said... "He was a good man".

I would like to tee it up again and play 9, 12 or 18 holes sometime with Msgr. Girard. It just won't happen, but that is OK. I will still remember our fellowship fondly.

Sincerely,

Esther and Jack Ward, Norton

To the Editor:

Our family had lived in Norton only two years when Msgr. Girard arrived to be pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in 1975.

Our sons, Daniel and Dominic, were altar boys and enjoyed serving Mass. Our daughter Andrea was president of the Catholic Youth Organization for one year.

They all have pleasant memories of their closeness with Msgr. He was always kind and encouraging.

In 1977 after the stillbirth of our son Christopher, he stressed over and over not to blame ourselves.

Msgr. said, "You will think on many

things and it is not your fault."

When it was announced that the state hospital would be closing, Msgr. Girard wrote many letters and made phone calls encouraging the location of the prison here at Norton.

He was very community-minded and cared about all the people. Msgr. married both Andrea and Daniel in beautiful wedding ceremonies. I had the privilege of serving as president of the parish council during his time here.

Our family shed many tears when he was transferred and he has always remained in our hearts.

Charlene Weskamp, Norton



Msgr. Armand Girard

## Cousin adds family perspective to memory book

From the Editor:

My parents missed Father Armand Girard's ordination by two hours.

The train bringing them to Concordia from Kansas City was late, and my grandparents had to leave for the ceremony in Salina without them.

They were there, however, when the new priest celebrated his first Mass.

There's a picture somewhere with all the family spread out on the steps of the church. My grandmother and grandfather are there with my father and his sisters.

My mother watched the picture being taken. She wasn't a member of the family — not yet.

Father Girard, later Monsignor Girard, was our family priest. Every large Catholic family had one. His mother and my grandfather were brother and sister, and since he and my father were first cousins and about the same age, they got into a few scrapes together.

When Steve and I were married in 1971, Monsignor Girard was there to help cel-

brate the Mass, bless the marriage and party with the family afterwards.

He was there for the funerals of both my grandparents, saying the prayers and blessing their caskets at the cemetery.

And he was there for my father, standing out in the cold, November drizzle to sprinkle earth and say the ritual words of blessing and comfort.

I remember after the funeral and the meal in the parish hall, the family returned to my parent's home.

My father had been a very social person. He loved everyone and always wanted them to feel at home. When he went to Mexico, he brought back every form of alcohol known. While he himself only took a shot of whiskey now and then, and my mother is allergic to alcohol, he always wanted to make sure his guests had any kind refreshment they wanted.

With Daddy gone Mother was stuck with a liquor cabinet overflowing with things for which she had no use.

She gave booze to my cousins and to my

sister and me and to Monsignor Girard. He didn't drink any more than my Dad, but I remember him leaving the house with two bottles.

Afterward, I would joke that my mother paid the minister at my father's funeral in whiskey. This was partially true because he wouldn't accept any regular form of payment, although he had to travel from Goodland for the funeral.

After Msgr. Girard's funeral in Salina, I went to Concordia to see Mom, who is now in a nursing home. I took her the funeral pamphlet and order of service book. I also had some family pictures and a history of the Aurora church, which had been available for family and friends to take.

"Well, Mom," I said, "You're not going to get monsignor to say your funeral Mass. On the other hand, there's going to be one more friendly face to greet you when you get to heaven."

She just smiled and nodded yes.

Cynthia Desilet Haynes

editor and publisher

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