

## Road closure in Abilene hurts small businesses

The Kansas Department of Transportation made a terrible mess out of a project down in Abilene this fall, causing possibly irreparable harm to businesses near the town's main exit while it was closed for more than two months.

Imagine any town cut off from its major highway for two months. Think what that could do to business, and did to businesses in Abilene.

Apparently to save time and money, the department decided to just close the eastbound exit from Interstate 70 to K-15, which serves as Abilene's Main Street and the main access to tourist attractions including the Seeley Mansion and the Eisenhower President Museum.

The only detour took drivers several miles east to another exit, where signs directed them to turn back and use the westbound exit. Most, apparently, just kept going.

And Abilene, with its museums, attractions, restaurants and antique stores, is a tourist town. Business feeds off that exit from I-70.

Business people said they heard little about plans to close the exit before it happened. Department spokesmen said they met with city officials and told them about the plans, but merchants say the only warning they got was from a press release issued by the state a couple of days before the ramps closed.

The city manager estimates the closing had cost businesses between \$9 million and \$12 million earlier this month, and the interchange did not open for another week. Remember, these are mostly small businesses that operate on a thin margin. Every dollar counts, and these businesses have lost too many.

There are tradeoffs between closing a road and keeping traffic going to businesses. If the department takes time to listen to business people, it usually finds a way to keep them going. But the department doesn't always do that.

Some projects include advance scoping sessions, where officials listen to citizen comments. Hearing and public meetings are held, comments recorded. That apparently did not happen with the \$12 million project in Abilene. It should have.

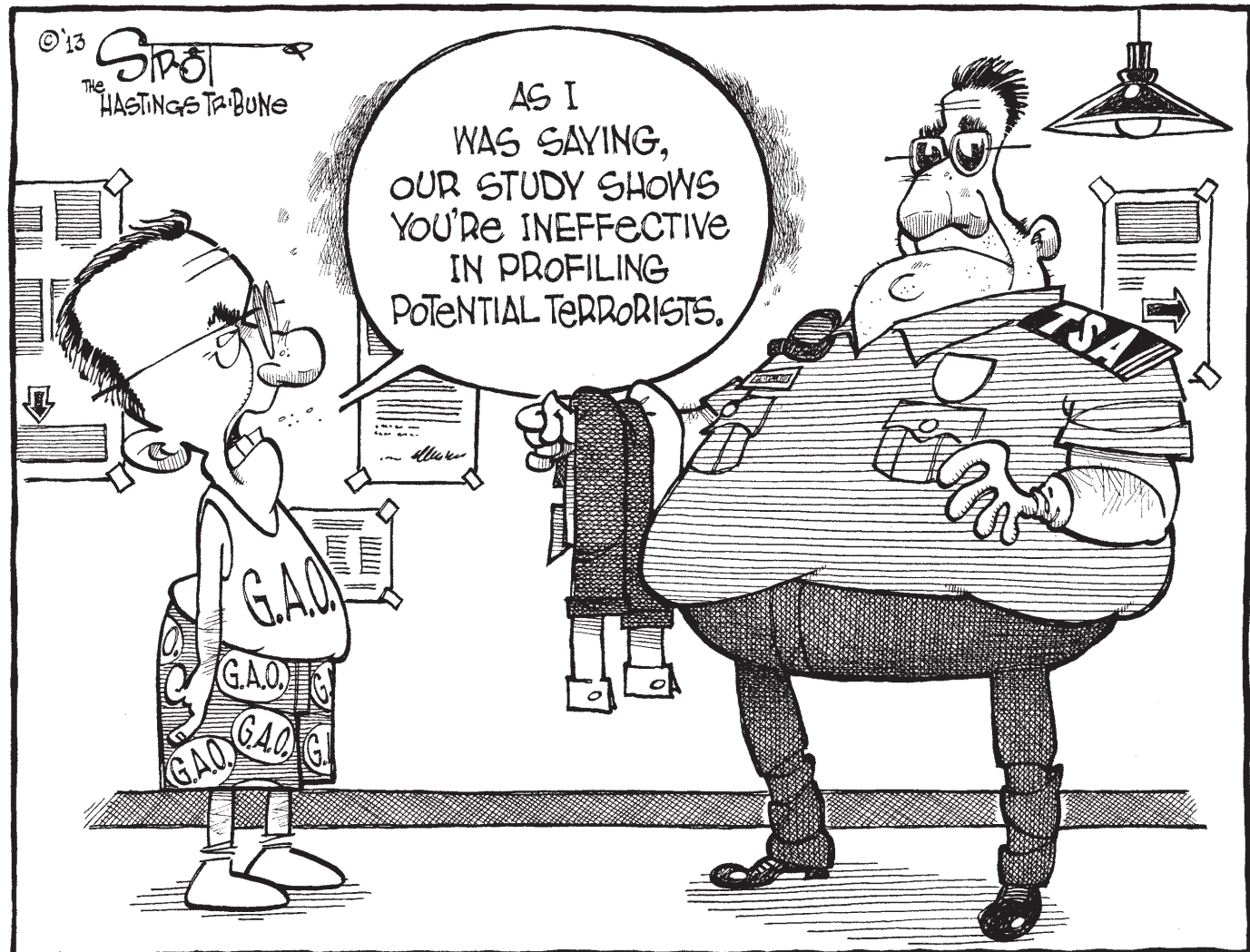
Sometimes, it seems like consultants hired to plan a project do a better job than the state itself, but whoever is running a project, citizens' needs ought to be considered. Small businesses cannot take the kind of blow suffered here and long survive.

Taking the Abilene project as an example, if the repaving costs the state \$12 million and merchants lost that much business because of it, maybe the department should have spent another million to build temporary ramps or carry traffic through the construction to K-15.

Saving money for the state — while damaging tax-paying businesses and maybe putting a couple out of business — does not seem like much of a bargain. No project like this should begin without complete and proper public input, and the department ought to realize that by now.

It seems to us, what happened in Abilene should never happen again in Kansas.

— Steve Haynes



## Not enough hours in the day

Some weeks in my life are pretty mundane. Nothing out of the ordinary. Then, there are weeks like the one that just was. This was the week I needed a secretary to keep all my appointments in order. Except I couldn't have afforded her. She would have demanded time and a half for overtime. Every day was booked — and most of the evenings, too. If it wasn't a meeting or work, I was cooking for something.

Monday, it was work, which spilled over into the evening hours.

Tuesday afternoon I cared for a friend's sick child so she could stay at work. He wasn't very sick, but had a temperature, so couldn't remain at school. Tuesday night was Small Group Bible Study.

Wednesday was a cooking day for my ladies club's Thanksgiving dinner that evening.

Thursday I spent half the day cleaning the storage units that Jim was putting the finishing touches on. The other half of the day was spent at the office and shopping for groceries for Saturday's open house. The only appointment I missed last week was that night when I didn't get home in time for the

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



Library board meeting.

Friday was more cleaning at the storage units in preparation for Saturday. We quit in time to get ready for Friday night Bible study at the prison, but first more shopping for everything I forgot Thursday. After we got home, I started cooking and didn't quit until 3 a.m.

Up again Saturday at 8 a.m., and more cooking. In fact, I was cooking right up until 3 p.m. When the open house began. Had a great time seeing people enjoy some of the different dishes I made. Packed up the leftovers at 5 p.m., hauled it home, dropped it in the kitchen and headed back out the door for the high school's annual musical production (which was fabulous).

Sunday was church, then Chapel services at the prison. By the way, 21 men inside the fence made the decision to

be immersed that day. Who can be tired with all that excitement. When we got home, I tried to take a 10 minute power nap because I wanted to see a special showing of a movie called, "Unstoppable." Jim didn't feel up to going (he's still feeling the residual effects of his bout with the shingles) and opted to stay home. A certain pro football game being broadcast at the same time may have impacted his decision. The movie was certainly thought-provoking and I got home in time to watch the second half of the football game. Yeah! Our team won.

I know lots of other people are as busy as I am because I saw many of them at the same functions I attended. Don't tell me there's nothing to do in a small town.

Monday, it started all over again. Looking ahead, I see that this is the week before we go to Texas for Thanksgiving with all our kids there. Getting ready for a trip is another whole kind of busy.

Oddly enough I'm looking forward to the 10-hour drive. It's going to be my first chance to get some rest.

## Genetically modified food for our future

The challenge for farmers and ranchers will be to double food production by 2050 to help feed an estimated 9 billion people.

GMOs — or genetically modified organisms — have the potential to dramatically increase the world's output in coming decades without causing significant environmental hazards. This new technology is affording us ways to improve plant characteristics to lower production costs and increase yields on existing farmland.

Today a wide variety of plants are products of genetically modified science. Some are being developed with the ability to withstand certain herbicides while yielding higher productivity with lower costs and less environmental impact.

Contrary to what you may have read or heard, the use of GMOs can be a win-win situation for everyone. Farmers can realize higher yields producing a more economical crop and consumers wind up with a safer, better tasting and healthier food.

In spite of these advances, some environmental groups in this country and

### Insight

John Schlageck



some members of the European Union have resisted the use of GMOs because they fear genetic manipulation is unnatural. They believe the food it produces is dangerous and this technology is bad for the environment.

GMOs have already been tested, and field trials are being conducted. All indications are that GMOs present no danger, but this will need to continue to be proven in tests with sound science.

The future of agriculture will remain bright as long as technology is allowed to progress without being hampered by unfounded fears. GMOs are an important production tool for the American farmer and rancher. We must continue to talk openly with the public about this safe scientific procedure to promote

complete understanding of the issue.

It would be a major blow to production agriculture if GMO research were slowed or stopped. Scientific information must be readily available to all consumers so they too can understand this vital issue.

Biotechnology has the ability to revolutionize medicine as well as agriculture. Already there have been significant medical breakthroughs.

Examples include gene therapy to build blood vessels that bypass clogged arteries; destruction of cancerous tumors by cutting off their blood supply; vaccines for AIDS, malaria and ear infections; an anticancer booster shot that could stimulate immune systems; tissue engineering that helps the body regenerate itself; lab-grown bone, cartilage and skin or even organs such as the heart are in the works.

Our future can be enhanced with GMOs and biotechnology if these advances are allowed to progress. It's important we learn and inform others as much as possible about these upcoming advances.



Thumbs up to the Norton Telegram staff for the wonderful coverage of the Veteran's Day parade and for the special pull out that included the letters from children to veterans. You do a great job. Called in.

Thumbs up to Carol Erlenbusch for the past ten years she dedicated to the Norton County Arts Council and for all the hard work she put into organizing the annual craft fair during those ten years. Called in.

Thumbs up to the Norton Community High School Drama Club for their production of "The Love of Three Oranges" If you didn't see it you missed a great show! The high school kids are SO talented. Congratulations to Mr. Gay, all the cast and the managers. Thank you all. Called in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community.

Call Dana for your next ad.  
785-877-3361!

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

ISSN 1063-701X  
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

OFFICE HOURS:  
8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.  
8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732

#### STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager  
Advertising Director/Managing Editor  
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com  
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports  
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com  
Michael Stephens..... Reporter  
Society Editor/Area Sports  
mstephens@nwkansas.com  
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production  
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association



### CITY OF NORTON ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor: David Corns  
785-202-1305  
dcorns@ruraltel.net

WARD I  
Jerry Jones  
785-877-2170  
Harriett Gill  
785-877-3051

WARD II  
Roberta Ryan  
785-877-2182  
Donna Foley  
785-877-3585  
rooknom\_43@hotmail.com

WARD III  
Ron Briery  
785-877-3807  
Jeff Urban  
785-877-5535



We are now on Facebook!  
Search "The Norton Telegram" and like our page for photos, news and more.