

# commentary

from other pens...

## Preserving history without federal dollars

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — When the nation's leading preserver of historic places stepped away from the federal subsidies it had enjoyed for three decades, the wisdom of its decision was open to debate.

"We had jumped off the cliff," says Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Two years after receiving its last federal tax dollar, Moe reports the group — chartered by Congress in 1949 — is on solid financial footing, enjoying its independence and expanding its horizons.

"I don't know of another federally financed organization that has done this, and remade itself as a more effective publicly financed organization," Moe asserts.

With stately homes and historic places its primary mission, the National Trust also seeks the revival of urban and small-town Main Streets. It campaigns for rehabilitation of historic neighborhood schools. And it tackles both as part of a broader objective to help revitalize communities and curb suburban sprawl.

Moe, a Minnesota-born lawyer who was chief of staff to Vice President Walter Mondale, says it is a mission that builds its own support because "there is no one that does not love an old restored building or an old restored downtown."

But by 1995, he says, the annual fight to preserve the federal subsidy the trust had for nearly three decades had become "totally consuming."

After nearly a half-century in the historic business, the trust had become a spearhead in the fight to stop demolition of the American past.

In Washington alone, the trust's houses included Woodrow Wilson's home in retirement, virtually a time capsule of his presidency; and Decatur House, built on Lafayette Square by naval hero Stephen Decatur and called home by a long line of distinguished Americans.

Across the country, the trust has owned or managed nearly a score of properties, including President James Madison's pillared plantation house at Montpelier, Va.; "Chesterwood," Daniel Chester French's sculpture studio in Stockbridge, Mass.; and Frank Lloyd Wright's studio and home in Oak Park, Ill.

It sounded the alarm for preservation in its annual list of 11 most endangered historic places. Last year's list drew attention to Abraham Lincoln's summer cottage at Washington's Soldiers' Home.

Slipping coffee in the trust's Massachusetts Avenue headquarters Moe runs through the numbers and the costs of preserving history.

By 1995, the trust had a budget of about \$35 million, of which 21 percent came from federal appropriations. Because much of the trust's private income is earmarked to preserve and maintain specific properties, 57 percent of its unrestricted budget came from the government.

Moe says the trust beat back efforts to eliminate its federal money in 1994 and 1995, but saw its appropriation cut in half to \$3.5 million.

"We stepped back and asked ourselves if we wanted to continue to go down that road," Moe recalls. "The threat always existed we could lose that funding overnight and we would have been ill-prepared for it. "We wanted to have financial certainty and we wanted to be independent."

After a three-year cushion the transition, the trust got its wish. It eliminated 35 jobs and programs and began a drive which has raised about \$84 million toward a \$125 million goal. "Almost all our historic sites have become self-sufficient, before only half were," Moe says.

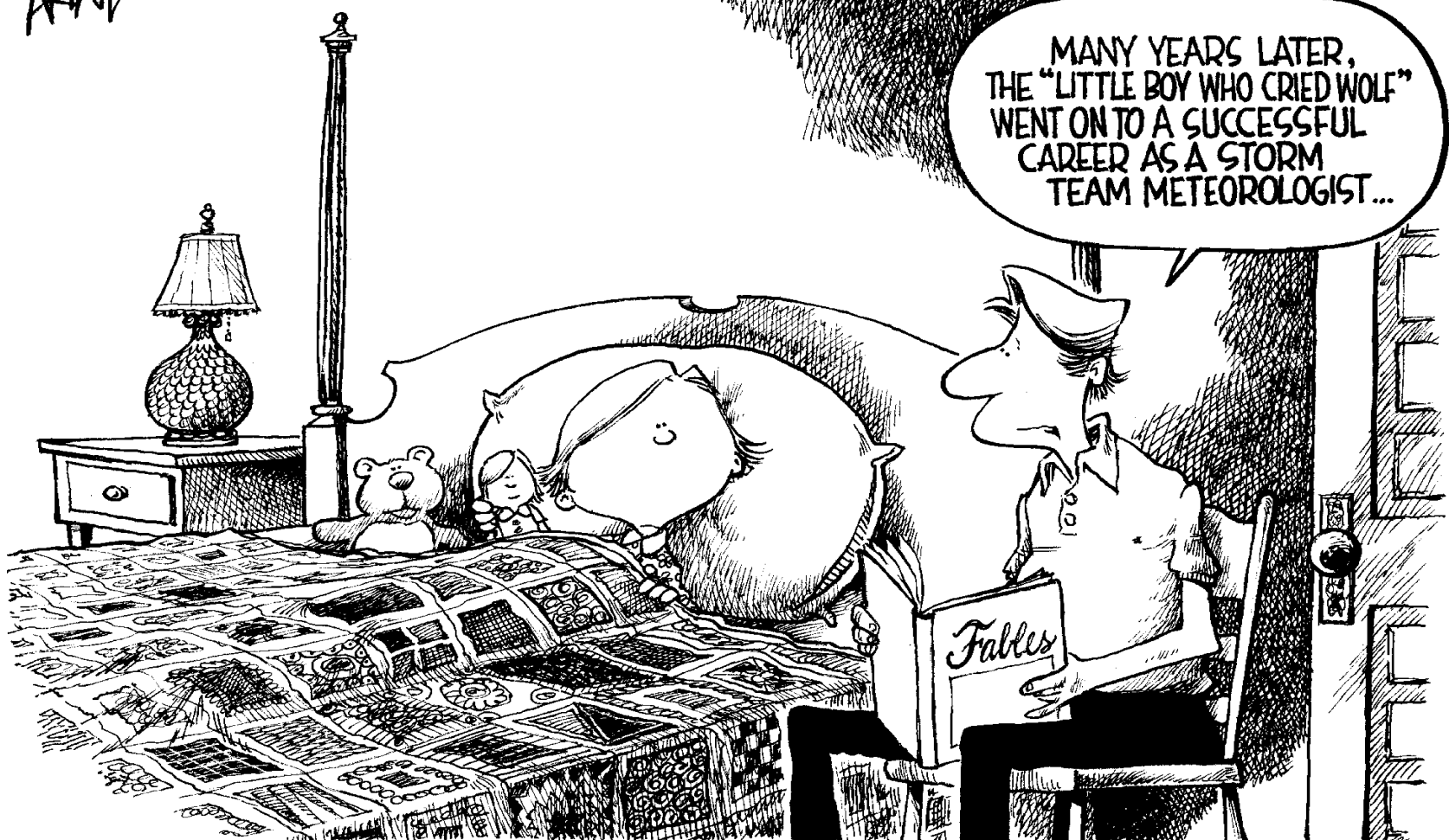
With the early experience so encouraging, he says, "I would not go back to federal financing if I had the option."

The trust will continue to preserve great houses, but Moe says its mission is expanding to represent more of "the American experience."

"I think we may be on the verge of a Golden Age of preservation; we may be on the verge of becoming mainstream."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington's history for more than 30 years.

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## Traffic patterns help rural area be convenient

One good thing I can say about Goodland is that it doesn't take long to get from one place to another.

Before I moved to northwest Kansas, I worked for a web site company in the Denver Tech Center. I lived in Aurora and, if there was no traffic, it would probably take me 10 minutes to get to work each morning.

Of course, there is always traffic in Denver, so on a good day it took me 45 minutes. When it was cold and snowy the trip could take up to two hours and the drive home wasn't any better.

Once I left work around 2 p.m. hoping to avoid traffic, but a gas line had broken somewhere between my office and home and there was a detour. In Goodland it wouldn't have been too big of a deal, but traffic was backed up to forever in Denver.

I got home about 6 p.m. and I think I cried because the experience had been so frustrating.

During the two months I worked at the tech center my mornings got earlier and earlier and I tried to get out of work earlier and earlier to avoid traffic. Soon, I was taking showers at night and waking up at 4:30 a.m. to miss the rush hour.

In Denver, though, it's always rush hour after 7



### rachel miscall

- unraveling

a.m. In Goodland, you can tell whether it's Monday afternoon or Sunday morning by looking at the amount of traffic on the streets. There's always someone on Denver streets.

I thank God every morning I leave for work that I live in Goodland.

Another good thing about Goodland is that you can always find a parking spot and you don't have to pay for it.

When I worked in the mayor's office in Denver — as an unpaid intern — I would pay \$10 a day to park five blocks from city hall. At the time, I also worked at a bar downtown, so on the weekends I would spend half an hour trying to find a free parking spot.

I usually started work at the bar at 5 p.m. on weekdays, right before the price would drop for most of

the paid parking spots. Of course, since I had to be to work by 5, I usually had to pay the full price anyway.

If I tried to get around paying the full price, I would come out of work to find a ticket on my windshield.

That reminds me, once I came out of work to find a back window of my car had been smashed in and my steering column torn apart. It was 3 a.m. and the police officer handed me a report and told me to fill it out and mail it in.

Drivers are always in a rush in Denver, but they never get anywhere too fast.

When I was freelance writing for the *Denver Business Journal*, an editor called to say she had accidentally lost one of my stories and ask if I could bring it downtown on a disk.

I said I'd be there in 30 minutes, but that was only wishful thinking. I couldn't find a parking spot and an hour later finally settled for a parking meter about six blocks from the office.

Denver may have more restaurants, clubs, movie theaters and other places to go or work than Goodland, but it's no fun getting there.

## Whose money is it? A taxing discussion

We are dedicated to the preservation and strengthening of small business and our tax policy is designed to destroy small business. — Peter Drucker

Taxation in America may be described as a process of plucking feathers from a parrot with the desired result being to get the maximum amount of feathers with the minimum amount of squawking. Our Congress is adept at the plucking. We parrots (taxpayers) are so used to the plucking that most of us don't even squawk.

Recently, we've had a lot of media coverage of the highly partisan debate over tax cuts. I have been interested to observe the level of ignorance shown by many Americans during these discussions. From the man-on-the-street to high-ranking officials, ignorance of the taxing process abounds.

I am a great believer in education. So the rest of this column will be devoted to sharing facts that will raise the level of awareness for anyone who chooses to read on and learn a little more about taxation with representation.

I should point out that I write not as a Democrat or a Republican, but a taxpayer who has taken the time to research some facts. Let's begin with some basic definitions.

**Taxes:** Money paid to the government by individuals and organizations having income or property or engaging in profit generating activities.

**Budget deficit:** The condition arising from the government spending more than the amount of



### don taylor

- minding your own business

taxes it collects.

**Budget surplus:** The condition arising from more taxes being collected than are spent.

**Revenue:** The subtly inoffensive name given to taxes collected by the government. (See the difference in this headline: "Feds announce revenues increase by \$60 billion" versus "Feds announce taxes collected increase by \$60 billion." Or, "Internal Revenue Service" versus "Internal Tax Collection Service.")

**Tax Facts**

The Feathers belong to the Parrot. In the American system we taxpayers earn income. We agree to provide a portion of our income to the government in exchange for services ranging from welfare to national defense.

In the event we send in more than was actually needed, it's still our money. Yet some members of congress are claiming the excess as "their" revenue to spend. Let me give a business analogy here. Assume you go to your local hardware store and ask for a widget. The clerk helps you find it, but there is no price tag on it. He says he thinks it's

about \$10. You give him a \$10 bill. When he looks up the price it's only \$7. Who gets the change? Does the clerk get to keep the whole \$10 bill? I don't think so. It's your money.

Tax cuts increase revenues. Tax cuts were defined by some wise person as the portion of the tax that each member of congress wants as his or her cut. In reality, a tax cut is nothing more than a reduction in the tax rate percentage. The actual amount of taxes collected will not decrease.

Interestingly, history teaches us that when federal tax rates are lowered, revenue actually increases. It happened when John F. Kennedy (Democrat) cut rates in the 60s and when Ronald Reagan (Republican) cut rates in the 80s.

Why does this opposite effect occur? It's about incentives. When smaller amounts of your earnings are taken as taxes, both business owners and workers have greater motivation to earn more, and worry less about tax shelters and deductions. The result: a growing economy.

Next week we'll discuss the effect of high tax rates and prove that there's something even better than a tax cut. Don't miss "Whose money is it?" part two.

*Don Taylor is the co-author of Up Against the Wal-Mart's. You may write to him in care of Mind-Your Own Business, PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.*

## Bush to New York (and California): Drop dead!

Washington — One Republican refused to help New York City with its financial troubles. "Ford to New York: Drop Dead" ran the headline. Another, Barry Goldwater, was more extreme. The Arizona senator spoke openly of sawing the entire Northeast off from the United States and letting it drift out to sea.

George W. Bush may be outdoing both guys. He won the presidency without help from the Northeast or Pacific Coast states. He seems to be governing without them. Seven weeks into his presidency, Bush has not stepped foot in either New York or California. He's been to Mexico, but not to this country's two largest states.

This is a big statement for a politician. Given the speed and readiness of Air Force One, a president's travel schedule can tell you a lot about his governing strategy. In a few short hours, Bush can go anywhere in the continental United States. The fact that he has limited his travel mainly to the South and the western Plains, regions that he won last November, says something about where he is politically comfortable and where he is not.

This is a rude departure from the way Ronald Reagan governed the country for eight years.

Reagan also sought a big tax cut; liked spending his weekends outside of 24-7 Washington; liked to keep his workday regular; and liked to keep his agenda clear, simple and successful.



### chris matthews

- commentary

But Reagan also knew from the day he won national office that his job involved leading the entire nation.

He felt as much at home visiting Broadway as shuttling back to Hollywood. He was as comfortable with the ethnic groups of the North as the Christian conservatives of the South. He was hugely popular with Irish, Italian, Polish and other Roman Catholics. He received an unusual level of support, for a Republican, from the Jewish community.

Part of this came naturally. Part of it was a product of good politics. Reagan never let people forget that he'd played the football hero of Notre Dame in the movies.

Just as he was forever "the Gipper," Reagan made a conscious effort to identify himself with fellow Irish-Americans as the son of immigrants. A Californian, he chose to open his general election campaign on a bit of flatland in New Jersey

with the Statue of Liberty as his backdrop.

This week, George W. Bush took his first small step to imitate the Reagan manner. He stopped in Chicago for a cordial visit with Mayor Richard Daley, son of the iconic and culturally conservative Irish-American big-city political leader. The visit betokened a shared commitment to family, country and traditional values.

It was the kind of visit Ronald Reagan would have made, and the kind that George W. Bush needs to continue to make if he is to achieve Reagan's success. To be a great national leader, you must rally all the troops.

*Chris Matthews, chief of the San Francisco Examiner's Washington Bureau, is host of "Hardball" on CNBC and MSNBC cable channels. The 1999 edition of "Hardball" was published by Touchstone Books.*

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(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkansas.com)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$ 28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

Incorporating:

**The Sherman County Herald**

Founded by Thomas McCants

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Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

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