

commentary

from other pens...

Japan has trouble acknowledging past

By George Gedda

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — “No people can escape their history,” said Willy Brandt, then West Germany’s chancellor, during a 1970 visit to a memorial for Jews in Warsaw.

It was Brandt’s way of trying to atone for the massacre of Jews by Nazis. To many, the willingness of Brandt and his successors to acknowledge Germany’s past contrasts with the situation in Japan, which has been slow to atone for atrocities committed during World War II.

Japan’s differing view was underscored Monday by the visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to a shrine that honors Japan’s war dead, including wartime Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and other executed members of Japan’s vaunted war machine.

Koizumi tried to dispel criticism the visit was intended to glorify Japanese militarism, saying Japan “should never again walk the path to war.” His visit was linked to Wednesday’s 56th anniversary of Japan’s World War II surrender.

There were strong reactions to the shrine visit from China and South Korea, two countries that suffered most from the excesses of Japan’s imperial army before and during World War II.

The United States, which has sought closer relations with Japan under President Bush, adopted a “no comment” posture on the visit.

Bush’s national security team includes a number of officials who believe Japan’s prohibition on taking part in collective self-defense is a constraint on security cooperation with Tokyo and should be phased out.

But Balbina Hwang, an Asia expert, believes the shrine visit as well as other Japanese actions frustrate these ambitions. “The international community has to be skeptical about Japan’s intentions when they are so stubbornly unwilling to embrace their history,” Hwang says.

These actions, she says, impede Japan’s ability to be “a political and diplomatic leader commensurate with the country’s economic strength.”

David Steinberg, director of Asian studies at Georgetown University, says he was struck during a visit to the former East Germany by the number of plaques and memorials he saw that highlight the atrocities of Germany’s past.

“Why don’t the Japanese do it?” he asked. “There has been talk about it, but politically it’s too difficult.”

Hiroshi Tanaka, a professor at Japan’s Ryukoku University, is worried Koizumi’s actions could have lasting negative fallout.

Aggravating Japan’s ties with its neighbors is a controversy over a government-approved textbook that critics say glosses over the country’s crimes during the last century.

In South Korea on Monday, 20 men draped in national flags chopped off their little fingers to protest the textbook.

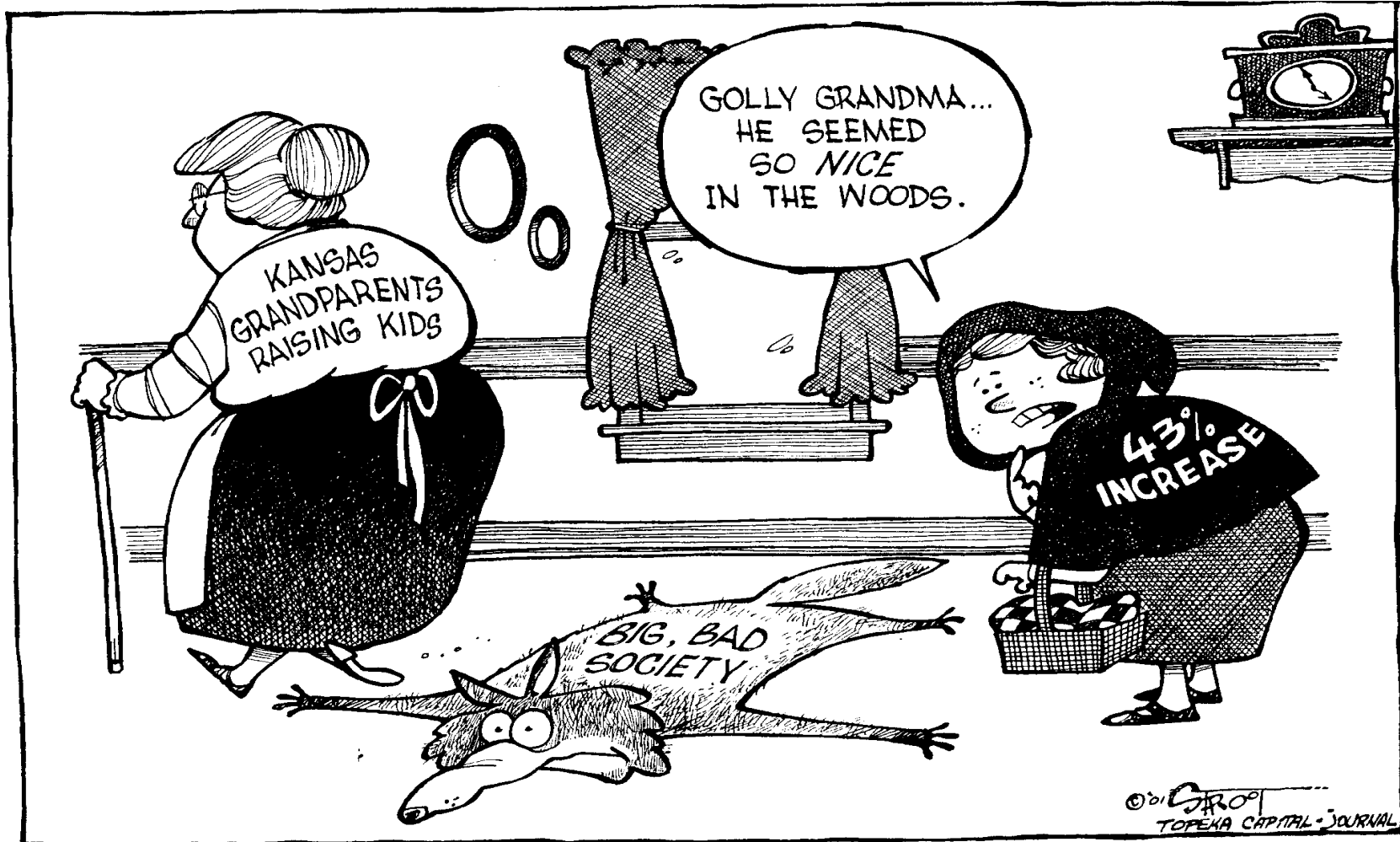
The book does not mention allegations of germ warfare by Japan in China and ignores the estimated 200,000 foreign women forced by the Japanese to work as prostitutes.

“Every German grows up knowing that Naziism cannot be repeated,” Hwang says. In contrast, she says, “the average Japanese citizen is completely ignorant about the country’s past.”

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, an analyst at Brookings Institution, says former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl worked hard to knit his country into European institutions, believing these links would be a deterrent to a revival of German militarism.

Sonnenfeldt recalled a key difference between the way Germany and Japan evolved after the war. In Germany, there was a clean break with the country’s Nazi past, he said, noting that in Japan, American occupation forces wanted to keep wartime Emperor Hirohito on the throne “as way of moving Japan along into a new era and making them more cooperative.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.



After 30 years, our tastes seem to be similar

I had this great idea for a Christmas gift for Steve.

Last year, while we were on vacation in Colorado, we saw a nice little print by a friend that we both liked.

At the time, we didn’t have any money, so we shrugged our shoulders and put it in the list with all the other things we’ve wanted over the years and didn’t get.

This year, when we were on vacation, I stopped by the shop and asked if there were any copies of the picture left.

“Yes,” the owner’s daughter said, there was one left.

“I’ll take it,” I told her, “but I can’t pay for it until after Labor Day. Would you hold it for me?”

Of course, she said. She’d put it upstairs with the sold art.

A couple of weeks after we got home, our youngest daughter, Lindsay, announced that she was going to Colorado for a few days.

By then I had gathered the money to pay for the print and decided to send it out with her. I explained



cynthia haynes

• open season

the situation to her and handed over the cash.

“Get the picture,” I said, “and hide it in my closet.”

Two days later Lindsay called her Daddy with a problem.

It seems that while we were on vacation, Steve had a great idea for a Christmas gift for me.

There was this little print we had liked last year on vacation. . .

He went into the shop and talked to the artist, who had a little trouble locating the picture because someone had put it upstairs with the sold art.

Steve put 50 percent down, promising to pay the rest when we came out over the Labor Day week-

end.

“What am I supposed to do, Daddy,” Lindsay asked. “Mom wants the same picture for you that you want for her.”

Well, get the picture, was the reply. We just won’t tell Mom and I’ll figure something out.

Of course, he couldn’t keep this one to himself. Within 24 hours, he had told me that we were trying to each buy the other the same present.

Well, that’s not so surprising, I told him, we’ve been married 30 years and our tastes have grown to be pretty similar. Besides, this will make our Christmas gifts cost half price.

Lindsay called to tell me that she had bought the picture and hidden it in my closet. Daddy will be so surprised, she said.

Lindsay’s back in Lawrence getting ready to start school and the picture just needs to be retrieved from Colorado and wrapped for Christmas.

Steve paid for half of it and I paid for — hey what happened to the other half of my money?

Linnnnnndddsayyy!

A model for all Americans



joan ryan

• commentary

As we’re endlessly reminded during the Clinton-Lewinsky embarrassment, the president is not just a policymaker. He is expected to serve as an embodiment of American values, a role model whose actions set a tone of who we ought to be as a people.

In that spirit, I would like to go on the record as a new fan of George Bush. Bush often has been criticized for not being his own man, but on one issue he has revealed the bold visionary within. Bucking the status quo, immune to criticism, he is pushing us to rethink that overblown American value called the work ethic. He is redefining what it means to be a worker.

I don’t think it is hyperbole to imagine him as the Moses of the American workplace, the man who leads us from the land of overtime, double-shifts and piddling two-week vacations. I sometimes picture him emerging from behind a burning tumbleweed and delivering new guidelines: Thou shalt knock off by 5.

Thou shalt nap if thou feels like it.

Thou shalt take many vacations to “stay balanced.” (Thou is encouraged to inherit family money to facilitate this.)

Who could be a better role model for the post-dot-com economy than this guy? He is teaching us that life is too short to spend it working so hard.

Take a load off. Watch SportsCenter. Play 18 holes. He is pointing out the insanity of requiring workers to put in a full year at a job before qualifying for a vacation. Bush has been president for six months, and he is taking a month off, escaping to his Texas ranch for the seventh time since his January 20 inauguration.

In a recent poll, 55 percent of Americans said Bush’s vacation is too long. Apparently, they think the vacation suggests a lack of dedication to the job. But it is precisely because he is dedicated that he has spent 42 percent of his time as president relaxing at Camp David, at the family retreat in Kennebunkport, Maine, and at his own ranch in Crawford, Texas.

“Washington, D.C., is a fine place ... But I’m the kind of person that needs to get outdoors ... It keeps my mind whole, keeps my spirits up,” Bush told reporters.

He further explained that visiting Texas was a

way of returning “to the heartland to listen to the American people.” I imagine he got an earful from the two surgeons and Republican congressman who made up his golf foursome the other day at a Texas country club.

The president’s commitment to relaxation ought to cheer overworked women such as Elizabeth Jones, who was profiled in the New Yorker recently. She is an example of the single mothers who Bush cited so often in his campaign speeches. She is a welfare-reform success story in that she now makes \$39,000 a year to support her three children.

But she never sees the children. To make \$39,000, Jones works two jobs and sleeps about two hours a night. She almost never gets out on the fairways or takes “sacred personal time” around midday, as the president does. But thanks to Bush, she might now understand that if she doesn’t start relaxing, she risks not keeping her mind whole and her spirits up.

The world might little note nor long remember much of anything about the George W. Bush presidency, but on the issue of leisure he will stand tall, a true revolutionary who through his frequent escapes from the White House puts the lie to the adage, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.”

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her in care of her e-mail at joanryan@sfgate.com.

Can we get together and change negative tune?

To the Editor:

I have a question in regards to the onslaught of negative letters which have appeared in the paper during the last several weeks. Your policy states that you have the right to refuse to print letters to the editor which are, “deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive.”

Publishing negative letters about Goodland does nothing more than fuel the fire of the doomsayers. Is the incessant publishing of negative articles which are attempting to dismantle our already crippled morale considered to be of public interest, or is it just good for creating a stir and increasing circulation?

The people that are working to make a positive difference experience setbacks every time a negative article gets out. Is greater circulation worth the risk of making those people frustrated and disillusioned? The paper can be a very powerful tool for either assisting with the positive growth and development of our community, or for being the catalyst for uncontrolled spawning of negativity. I think that posting negative letters to the editor is part of the problem in Goodland because it perpetuates rumors, negative feelings, and most importantly, gives a loud voice to those that want only to complain instead of even attempting to make a difference.

I am not attacking you or any other employees of the paper, so please do not take it that way. I was just thinking that the paper could perhaps start helping to rid our town of the negative energy by quelling the cries of the camp of individuals that see nothing but problems. I am sure that your sub-



from our readers

• to the editor

scription rate and number of advertisers would increase if people didn’t have to worry about going into a state of depression after reading the paper every day.

It is easy for me to say, though, that we need to stop feeling negative, and for the paper to stop printing negative letters. This is a truly monumental task, in addition to violating our right to a free press. So what is the solution? Let’s not cut the head off a perfectly good chicken just because it is clucking too much — instead, let’s build a pen in which we can keep it.

Why don’t we have a public gathering where we invite everybody in our community? The purpose of this meeting would facilitate three things: 1.) first is one giant ballyhoo in which people would be allowed to voice their complaints and concerns about Goodland, and also would be able to hear the complete and true story about things in town (such as the Van-Gogh painting, street closings, economic development, etc.) instead of relying on rumors as a primary source of news. 2.) second, as a unit, we would set goals for Goodland. 3.) third, we would establish an action plan, which would allow us to realize these goals. Our school superintendent, Marvin Selby, has agreed to open the Max Jones Fieldhouse for this meeting. Perhaps

this meeting of the minds will allow us to all navigate our boat to the same point on the horizon, instead of attempting to sail every direction at once.

As Susan Power says, “let’s stop the insanity.” In order for things to change in Goodland, it is going to take everybody in town working in concert towards our goals, not just a few. It is going to take more than people calling our public officials names. It is going to take more than people just complaining about what we either have or don’t have. It is going to take more than people just wanting change. It is going to take everybody taking a stand against lethargy and apathy. It is going to take action.

Help us load the wagon. Help us help Goodland. Schyler D. Goodwin Goodland

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The Goodland Daily News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten if possible, and should include a telephone number and, most importantly, a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with phone numbers, by e-mail to: <daily@nwkansas.com>.

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