

commentary

from other pens...

Hospital board faces difficult times, decisions

Editor's note: Sometimes we take the health facilities in our community for granted. Over the years the hospital has weathered many crisis, and changes but it continues to provide excellent service to our community. We thought this editorial about a nearby hospital was worth repeating.

Your prayers for the Decatur County Hospital Board. The members have a difficult year ahead, and their decisions will affect our lives for years to come.

The hospital is being dumped by its management firm, Banner Health, which says it wants to focus on growth markets.

The firm, under the name Lutheran Hospitals, gave Decatur County more than 50 years of mostly stellar service. Now, under new management, it wants out. In fact, having merged with Phoenix-based Good Samaritan to form Banner, the firm basically is abandoning the bulk of the old Lutheran hospital system east of Colorado and its accompanying mission of providing health care in the rural Midwest.

The firm says it can't afford to keep up with all its hospitals, but it obviously isn't sticking to the old mission. It's going where the money is, growth states in the West.

Maybe that's a sign of the times.

As far as Decatur County goes, all we can do is thank those at Lutheran who so faithfully kept our hospital going from its founding in 1949, including the present staff and management.

This is not the end for the Decatur County Hospital, and it could be the beginning of something fine and new. Most counties around us have hospitals run by local boards of one kind or another.

These hospitals all have had their share of problems, ranging from medical staff to finances, just as Decatur County Hospital has. All have survived thus far, and our hospital will survive also.

The hospital board already has done much of the work required to decide on either taking over the hospital directly or finding a new operator, when it studied the pros and cons of a new contract with Banner in 1999.

It's ironic the decision was to keep the operator, who now wants out of the deal, but the experience will serve the board well. It's good so much work was done, because the board has little time to get something going. Banner wants out by March 24.

The board has several courses: It can take over operation of the hospital, which is done in several nearby counties, it can create a corporation to run it, it can hire a new management firm or it can find another lessor. Banner is offering its hospital contracts through Merrill Lynch, though there is no guarantee it can find a buyer for what it does not want — or that the buyer would be acceptable to the county.

Whatever happens, we're confident the board will make a good decision and that its members will work hard to make the hospital a success, as they always have.

We think the hospital has been well run and will continue to succeed. Lutheran accomplished a great deal when it overhauled the operation's labor and finances over the last few years, making tough decisions that were needed to give the facility a future.

And if the county gets the hospital back, it'll be getting a stronger, more vital institution with strong management, one that can and will succeed. For our town's sake, it has to. — *Steve Haynes*

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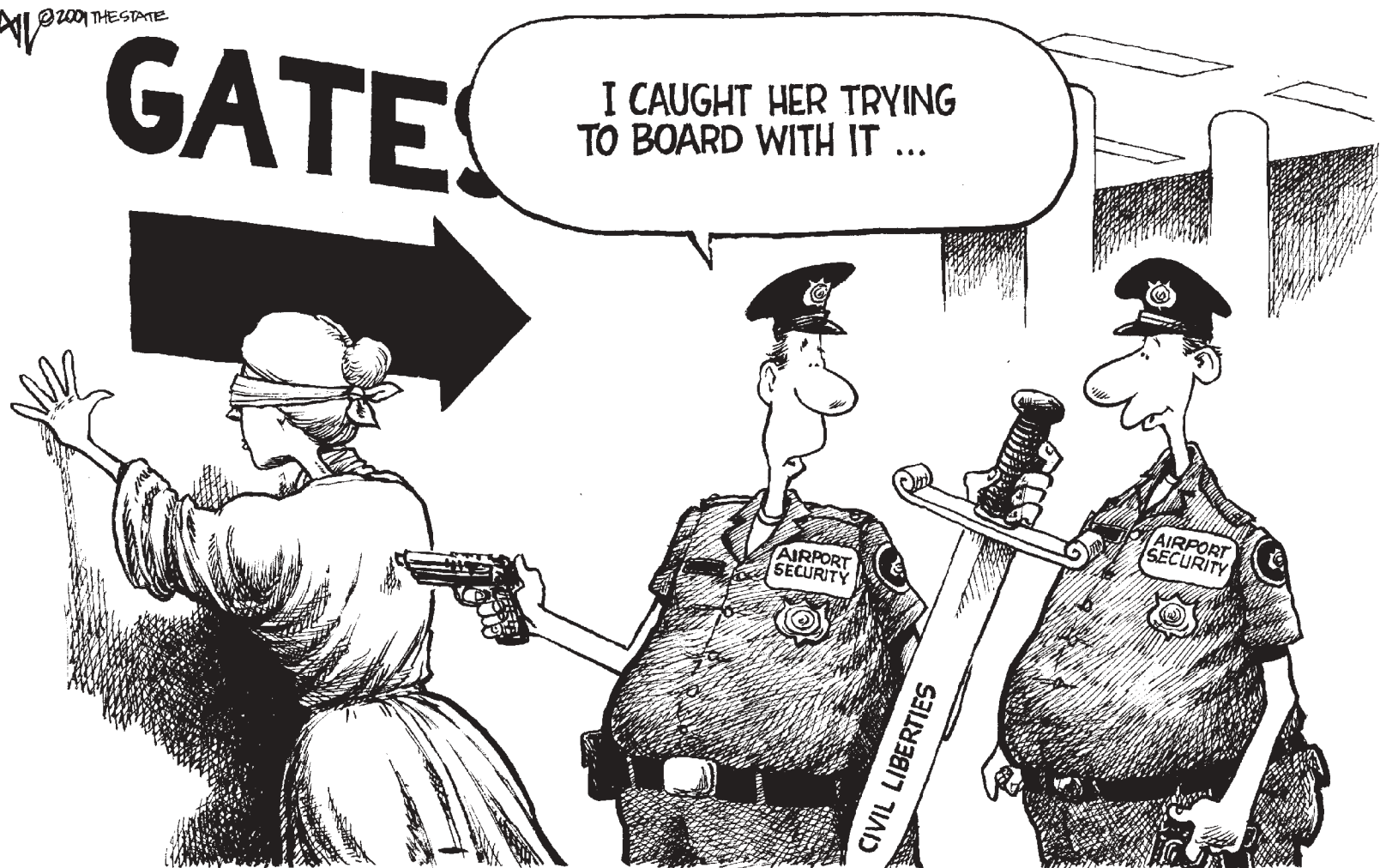
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We are all different, but 'God' is the same

I don't know about you, but I believe on September 11th, we lost much of the freedom of our way of life.

Things will never again be quite the same.

But as Christians, we believe that ALL THINGS come together for good for those that love the Lord.

Do we love the Lord more than we hate those who did this?

I remind you that these men were fanatics. Not all Muslim believers are fanatics. There are good and bad in every group of peoples.

Maybe the good that will come of this tragedy is we will never again not see the pain and hurt of groups who are attacked and persecuted.

Maybe the good that will come of this tragedy is that we will re-evaluate how we've been living and get our priorities back where they should be.

Maybe the good that will come of this tragedy is that we will demonstrate more love to each other and stop judging and criticizing and refusing to see another's point of view.

Maybe the good that will come of this tragedy is that we will come together to heal our grief. Maybe we will more closely examine the coffee-shop conversations that fuel the anger.

Maybe the good will be that patriotism and prayer will no longer have to be separate issues. We have somehow confused and reversed sepa-



**lorna
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• commentary

ration of church and state. It was set up to protect religion from government interference, not government from religious influence.

Maybe the good that will come of this tragedy is that we will say the words of love and forgiveness which we consciously have been holding back, believing our point of view to be the right one.

Maybe we will hold our children a little tighter, and protect them by keeping their world as normal as we can make it. By teaching them things don't bring happiness, that giving is more important than taking. Try to maintain a moderate, normal lifestyle for them. Don't let them see the pictures of madness. Don't let them hear you express fear and hate about what's happened. Don't let them be afraid of what might come tomorrow.

Maybe the good to come is something beyond our imaginations at this point. We have a good God who allows us freedom of choice.

Today I urge you to choose love. The only thing stronger than hate is love. I don't know what to say

to comfort you.

You are all in different places in your grief. But I do want to assure that we have a great, loving God who is looking for — and seeking to find — each lost person — even those who are not Americans. God is no respecter of nationality. God seeks and loves each person. And God asks us to help find the lost one — whether it is American, Sudanese, Bosnian, Russian, from Afghanistan or wherever.

At the national service of remembrance and prayer, our President quoted someone else who said, "Adversity introduces us to ourselves." When this whole thing is over, I hope we will like the people within ourselves that adversity forced us to meet.

I don't know if our tragedy is over; I suspect it is not. The main idea of terrorists is to spread fear and panic and hate. We cannot give in to those crippling emotions. If we stand by helplessly moaning our losses, if we live in fear, distrusting each other and our way of life their goal is realized. We have freedom of choice.

Today I witness to you in someone else's words: "I don't know what the future holds. But I know who holds the future."

Stand tall and proud. Be ready to make sacrifices to fight evil. But also go down on your knees to help and to love and to pray. If you don't, then the terrorists have won.

Oh what a tangled web we weave



**mitch
hixson**

• soundgarden

Saudi Arabia national budget. For years the Saudi princes, there are thousands of them, have been taking billions of dollars from the nation's coffers to use for their own vices. Prince Bandar said in a PBS "Frontline" interview on October 9th, that his family had spent nearly four hundred billion dollars to develop the kingdom, so taking fifty billion back for the family's private use was appropriate. In some intercepts they talk openly about scamming the state, and even argue over what is an acceptable percentage to take. The intercepts make clear that Abdullah has been attempting to curb the rampant corruption that is a rallying cry for fundamentalist factions. He has urged princes to get their "off-budget" expenses under control; blocked real-estate deals by some of the princes; and issued a decree prohibiting his own sons from forging partnerships with foreign companies working in the kingdom. He also wouldn't mind penalizing the United States, and our oil and gas companies, for supporting Israel. He to this point has been unsuccessful. So according to the inter-

cepts the only reason Fahd's being kept alive is so Abdullah can't become king. Many of the royals do not want to have Abdullah close the national budget spicket or jeopardize the kingdom's special ties to the U.S.

Tired of the corruption and without a voice to change the royal government to an elected government, thousands of disaffected Saudis have joined Islamic fundamentalist groups throughout the Middle East. If the royals will not give them a voice, some groups have been preparing to take it by force. This brings us to the chase for bin Laden and al Qaeda. The C.I.A. and the F.B.I. have been trying to get the Saudi's to run traces on the backgrounds of the nineteen men who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. More than half of these men are believed to be from the kingdom. But instead of receiving help from our Middle East ally, we get dropped into a sand trap. The royals support terror groups for their own self-survival. The writing is on the wall in Riyadh. The days of the royals are numbered, unless the terror groups have another target. The only thing the royals care about is keeping themselves in power. They turn a blind eye to terror groups spouting hatred and violence towards us, so they can save their own heads. Their corrupt lives tie their hands to that of bin Laden. Because of our dependence on Saudi black gold, America's hands are also tied.

berry's world

