

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Celebrating adoption of our Bill of Rights

Two hundred and ten years ago, the states took a good Constitution adopted four years before and made it nearly perfect.

Dec. 15, 1791, marked the ratification of the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, which would become known as the Bill of Rights. Nothing could be more precious.

The Constitution itself set the framework of the first great democratic government of our time, a Republic that has lasted more than two centuries.

It's doubtful, though, that we would have made it thus far without the Bill of Rights, a concept that caused the Founding Fathers some consternation.

There was enough opposition to the bill that it was not included in the original document, but supporters of the idea pushed it through Congress in the next few years.

The First Amendment is the best known and arguably the most important, outlining the basic rights of a free society. It granted Americans a level of freedom no other people had known, and it remains today the cornerstone of our democracy.

It is simple in form, complex and subtle in application: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances."

There you have it: freedom to worship, to think and talk, to publish and exchange information, meet and complain. Freedom to think. That's democracy.

The other amendments have their place, but there is a reason the First is first.

The Second: the right to bear arms.

Third: prohibits quartering troops in homes.

Fourth: prohibits unreasonable search and seizure, forcing police to get a warrant before barging into someone's home.

Fifth: prohibits forcing a defendant to testify against himself and requires grand jury proceedings.

Sixth: grants rights to those accused of crimes, especially the right to a speedy trial, which keeps the government from detaining political prisoners.

Seventh: the right to a trial by jury.

Eighth: the right to bail.

Ninth and Tenth: reserve unnamed rights to the people and the states. Some articles may seem outdated, especially the third, but who knows when a war might be fought on American soil again.

Others, especially the 10th, have been slowly eroded over time by an increasingly more powerful federal government.

But the Bill established the idea that its freedoms were basic to our Democracy, that the government framework could not exist without a free populace.

It remains today the outstanding document on human rights, if only because (unlike those in so many countries) its words have been honored over time by the government they constrain.

We can only hope that the Bill retains its strength and resilience for another 200 years. — *Steve Haynes*

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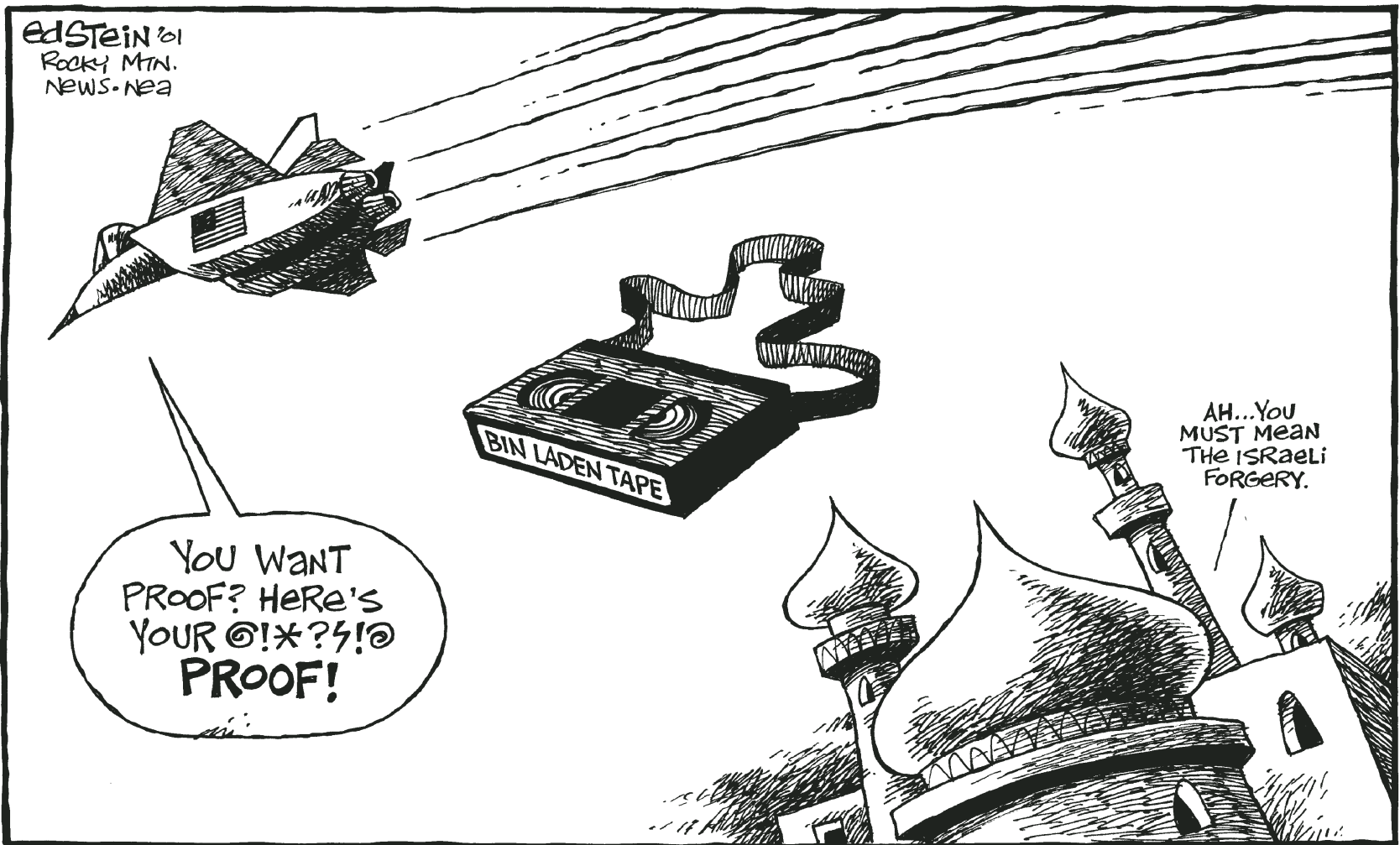
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I miss those family Christmases

I don't know about you, but I miss my family Christmases.

Things have never been the same since my father died, and for my children, I think things haven't been the same since their father died.

For some reason, the men seemed to be the glue that held everything together. They were the ones who glowed with Christmas spirit; they were the ones who gloried in the surprises; they were the ones who got on the floor to play with the children; they were the ones who had the time to enjoy the moment.

I don't remember that it made much difference what the weather was. Oh maybe it made getting together a little harder if blizzards threatened. But we always seemed to manage to make it - no matter how far we had to travel.

As I think about it, it seems a little strange that the "daddies" dying would make so much difference.

It was the "moms" who did the work.

We sent out the Christmas cards; we called



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● commentary

around to coordinate the dates and times; we planned the menus; we did the gift shopping and wrapped all the presents; we cooked the meals; we did the dishes. Maybe that's why there wasn't enough time left over to just enjoy.

It's kind of like that story in the Bible of Mary and Martha.

Martha was so busy preparing the overly-grand feast that she complained, "Mary should be helping me." But Mary was taking time to enjoy the moment. Mary knew what was important - the here and now.

It wasn't necessary to do everything or to have a feast. It was important to enjoy the time together, watching each facial expression, giggling with

childish glee, storing up memories.

You families who have young children with which to share Christmas are truly blessed. All the trappings of Christmas aren't nearly as important as just being together, playing games together, rolling with laughter, watching a child's eyes as they light up with the joy of expectancy and the thrill of getting what was desired.

Be there with them. Get enough rest to enjoy it with them. The time will come, much too soon, when they will be gone — due to age or distance or circumstance. Hopefully, not by choice.

Christmas is too special to miss.

I long for all the by-gone Christmases when life was full and carefree.

My father and my husband are gone, and Christmas will never again be quite the same. I'm thankful that I still have my heavenly Parent who never fails to make the season special for me.

But I'm like the little kid: "I know that my heavenly Father is with me. But sometimes I'd like to have one with skin."

A special thanks to all our heroes

To the Editor:

I want to express my deepest sympathy to those who lost loved ones on Sept. 11. I watched in horror as the hijacked planes slammed into the twin towers and other targets.

Having personally seen the enormous presence of the twin towers, I knew there was no way all those who survived the initial impact could have possibly escaped before the horrific collapse of the towers. Knowing full well that rescue efforts were underway before the collapse, I was even more horrified as 220 stories of steel, stone and glass tumbled onto those in and around the colossal towers.

As the rubble and dust settled, my worst fears came true. Not only were there many citizens killed from the well-orchestrated attack, but also hundreds of police, firefighters, and even ordinary everyday heroes were killed in an instant. As the haunting scenes of the burned and buried ambulances and fire trucks were displayed on television, I felt my pulse increase, as did the pain in my heart, the nausea in my stomach, and the lump in my throat.

Having been in emergency medical services for numerous years, there is a statement I have heard repeatedly: "I could never do what you guys do." I really never thought about that statement until I heard one quote in the aftermath of Sept. 11th's tragedy — "As we were running out, they (the above mentioned rescue personnel) were running in."

It does take a certain type of person to do that — run into buildings while others are running out. I guarantee you their only thought for running into the building was they knew there were people inside who needed help.

What makes these people do that? Crazy? Maybe, but there is more to it than that. There is something innate with these people. It is a drive, a desire and a determination from within to do good — to help people when they need it most. It comes from their heart.

New York lost many of their finest police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel. Like others, amid the flood of copious emotions was the feeling of helplessness. How can we help? What could we do so many miles away? What will happen next?

Then a friend reminded me of our very own



**from our
readers**

● to the editor

heroes here in Goodland.

That's right. We have our very own heroes right here. Our fire, police, and emergency medical services are made up of heroes. These are people who drop what they are doing at a moments notice to help those in need. They get up at night, regardless of the time or weather. They leave the comforts of home to respond to the unknown. They do this out of the goodness of their heart.

Furthermore, having been in Goodland for more than a year and having the opportunity to work with Goodland's finest, there is not a one of them who would not have ran into that building to rescue you or anyone else who may have been in the building. I only hope they never have to prove it.

So, you want to help? You can give monetarily. You can even join the service of your choice — we could all use the help.

But, one thing you can do that would have immeasurable meaning is to thank one of these heroes when you see them. They deserve it.

Jeff Krall

Goodland

To the Editor:

On behalf of the City of Goodland and the museum staff, I'd like to express our appreciation to several folks who have volunteered their time and services to the High Plains Museum over the past year.

Marilyn Wenger and Jamie Goodwin, thank you for generously sharing your time on Sunday afternoons during the summer months to greet and help museum visitors. We're grateful for your assistance in making the museum available seven days a week during the tourist season.

Marty Melia, thank you for donating your time to update the diorama tapes and for working on oral history tape conversions which, we know, were not always an easy task.

Thank you for your willingness to undertake these services. You're a benefit to our community.

Linda Holton
High Plains Museum
Goodland

To the Editor:

The events of Sept. 11, united Americans in a common cause — the fight for life!

Life-giving blood must be on hospital shelves when it is needed. Blood must be available every day of the year.

Few people realize blood is perishable and cannot be stored indefinitely. Blood centers function more as pipelines than banks, and there is a steady need for donors. The Central Plains Region must collect 450 pints of blood each weekday in order to supply the more than 100 hospitals throughout Kansas and northern Oklahoma.

I encourage everyone to "Unite for Life" at the American Red Cross blood drive from noon to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 10, at the United Methodist Church at 12th and Sherman.

Appointments are encouraged and can be made by calling Martha Gunderson at 785-899-5933. For more information call 1-800-GIVE LIFE.

Please help make sure an adequate supply of blood is on hand when needed. Together we can save a life!

Please bring personal identification with your photo.

Luella Richardson
Goodland Red Cross

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