

# commentary

from other pens...

## Cutting exemptions may be a good idea

**The Hays Daily News on sales tax exemptions:**

Time has a way of bringing back old ideas. What might have been considered bad ideas can become good ideas years later.

It is not exactly a stampede, but more than once in the last month, someone has returned to an idea the late Gov. Joan Finney had when she first ran for governor in 1990. The idea was to eliminate some of the many exemptions to the state sales tax. That idea was mostly dismissed as trivial at the time, and it never went far even when Finney was elected.

Last week, Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, said it is an idea that should be tried. ...

Gov. Bill Graves told some Kansas editors the same earlier in the month. He, too, credited Finney for the idea to eliminate some exemptions in the state sales tax. Graves agreed with Finney that many services, presently exempt, should be taxed on sales. He also said that Internet commerce should be taxed. ...

Eliminating exemptions seems a measure that ought to be taken before raising the sales tax. It is, then, worth some consideration.

And Graves and Hensley are right that it should be done in the context of a complete examination of the state's tax structure. The state is due for it.

We probably have a number of unfair and unnecessary quirks in our tax code. Moreover, state lawmakers need to have an honest, non-political discussion about all taxes, including income taxes.

The income tax remains the fairest tax, because it taxes on the basis of ability to pay. Yet, lawmakers in Topeka seem not to want to get near it. But, when they look to property or sales taxes, they pinch local governments, which also have to rely on those.

Joan Finney's idea was not a bad one 12 years ago, and the same arguments for it apply now. Revisiting sales tax exemptions would be worthwhile, and even better in the context of a review of the whole state tax structure.

**The Topeka Capital-Journal on oral health problems:**

You would think that at the outset of the 21st century, oral health problems would have been relegated to Third World developing nations. Not so.

A new report measuring 22 oral health indicators gives the nation, as well as the state of Kansas, a grade of "C." In the greatest nation on Earth, that should be considered a failing grade.

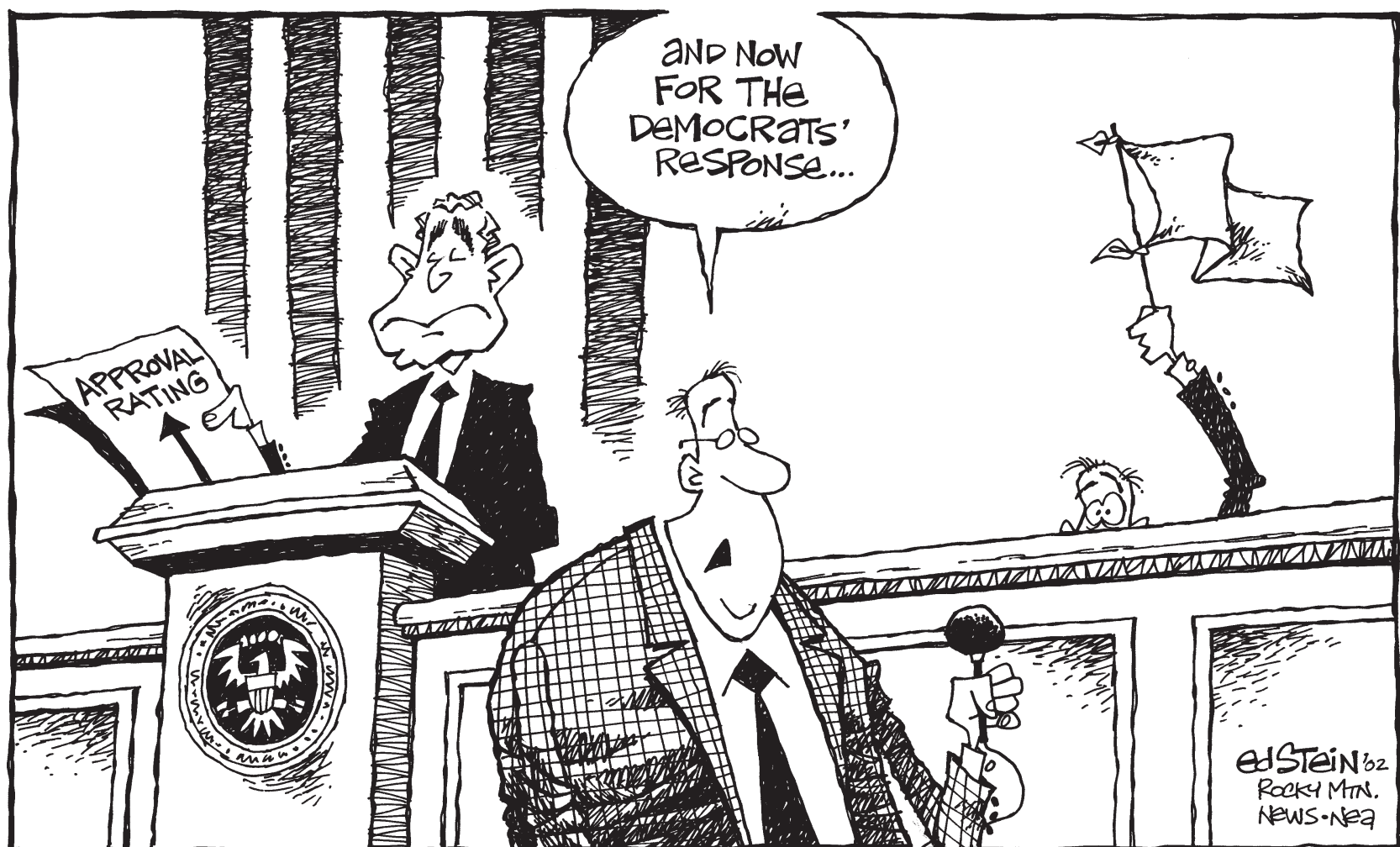
The problem? Not enough fluoridated drinking water — in 10 states, less than half the population has access to it (just over half in Kansas); not enough people seeing dentists (a third or more fail to do it once a year); sugary, fatty diets and undeveloped brushing and flossing habits, giving half of America's first-graders a cavity; and not enough public discussion and education on it...

We should be alarmed that tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood ailment — especially when it is so easily prevented with proper nutrition and hygiene.

Education is critical. So is access to dental care; approximately 108 million Americans live each day without dental insurance. That's more than double the 40 million who have no medical insurance.

We challenge Kansas to do better — and in reality, we already are: The state's C grade is up from an F the year before, the worst grade in the nation...

Even with tough economic times, we should be able to smile brightly.



## Covering all my Valentine bases

I don't know about you, but I have lots of Valentines to send this year.

I may not get them all in the mail, but they will certainly be sent out on the wings of a prayer.

There are many people whom I love, and I tell them much too infrequently. I just hope they all know how much they mean to me. Maybe I should make a list.

1. My God, who loves me unconditionally and makes living worthwhile.
2. All my terrific grandchildren, and of course all their parents. We are seldom able to be together for any holiday, but it doesn't stop my loving them more than life itself.
3. My husband, mom and daddy who are still very much alive in my memory.
4. My siblings (one of whom hates the word "sibling"). Whatever I call them, they are loved and valued more every passing day.
5. My extended family of nieces and nephews. I try to send birthday cards and a note at Christ-



**lorna g. t.**

• commentary

mas, but otherwise neglect to tell them how much they mean to me.

6. My grandparents going back as far as they go. Most of them I didn't know personally, but I love them for contributing whatever they did to making me who I am — both good and bad.

7. All the dedicated teachers who encouraged and taught me in school and in Sunday School. Believe it or not, a couple of them are still living, and I hope they read this.

8. Friends who have loved me in spite of knowing my faults, and even old boyfriends who didn't. Each one taught me something about myself.

9. All the people who are presently on, or ever

have been on, my Christmas card list. Through the years, they have meant a lot to me; I'd give a lot to have news of every one of them. Some were friends, others — business associates.

10. Every stranger who ever gave me a smile. He or she helped me feel at home in whatever strange situation I found myself.

11. All the readers of my column, especially those who take the time to tell me they enjoy it.

12. My current beloved church family, as well as every other one I ever had. Many of my happiest memories revolve around experiences with God, places of worship and the people who frequented them.

My Valentine list is far from complete and probably shouldn't be numbered as that implies an order of importance. Not necessarily true.

I hope as I've lived my life these people have had at least an occasional assurance of how much they've meant to me — and still do.

Happy Valentine's Day to all of them!

## Internet brings friends, acquaintances together

I fuss about the spam emails and HAHAAHA virus messages that seem to fill my in box, but then there are times when the messages provide a smile and connections I would never have imagined.

Recently as I was checking the incoming messages there was one: "N.T. Betz have been looking for guy with Khaki's and a Red Sweater. Thought the Internet might be a good place to look. Any Ideas."

I had to look twice, but there it was — a person I hadn't heard from or thought about for around 13 years. He had found me through the Internet.

I answered: "Gee, That was a very long time ago — although I do remember the fun of Hill AFB in Utah. Nice to hear from you."

He replied "That incident has provided me with a lifetime of chuckles. Just thought it would be a good time to catch up a little it's been 13 yrs. since I moved to Michigan. love it here. How are things going for you and the family. I've had no news on the Betz's for 6 or 8 years. Paul."

I had to smile, the incident he was referring to was when I was in the Civil Air Patrol as a young man, and he was our state cadet commandant. That summer the Air Force arranged for the Colorado cadets to switch with the cadets from Utah and Idaho and fly to Hill Air Force Base for summer camp. The trip was great, and it was interesting to learn about the Minuteman missile program, which was hot at that time.

While at Hill we would march in formation ev-



**tom betz**

• t, t & o

erywhere, and as one of the shorter cadets I was assigned to be a road guard as we approached intersections. One day the uniform requirement was to take a sweater tied around your waist in case it got cold. The only sweater I had was a bright red one. I guess the sole red sweater in the companies of cadets seemed to startle everyone. That evening Paul, who was also our camp cadet commandant, called me to his office and suggested I not wear the red sweater any more while at summer camp.

I had thought of that incident many times, and suddenly there it was again because of the Internet.

It was nice to hear from him, and I told my parents during an Internet chat session about the contact. They were glad to hear he was doing OK in Michigan.

About the same time, my wife told me about a new web site for Lamar (Colorado) High School alumni, and I went to check it out. It was wild to find many of the former classmates who had registered on-line, and a photo from our 30th reunion in 1997. I added my name to the class of 1967 list

and signed the guest book.

Two days later, I received another email from out of the blue: "Tom, I don't know if you remember me, I was in the class of 1965. I had started collecting Lamar Memorabilia and had purchased a post card on EBAY several days ago. It is a picture post card of the Lamar Chamber of Commerce Building with the Madonna of the Trail statue in front. When I turned the card over, I discovered it was a QSL card that was sent by your father to confirm contact with another ham operator. It is postmarked April 5, 1956. Rick."

He had found me through the Lamar alumni site, and reminded me about some of the other people in his class who I knew. He now lives in Tampa, Fla.

I gave him my address and a few days later I got an envelope with the card in it enclosed in a protective sleeve. I will mail it onto my father in Arizona. The card will make a complete circle.

During our chat, I mentioned the card to Dad and we had some fun remembering the days of his being on the air. His call was KØDWZ, and at the time of the card I was all of 7 years old. I remember helping put up the antenna with his ham buddies, one of which was Paul's father — the guy who is now in Michigan.

Dad, who has been learning about the Internet for about a year said, "I am enjoying this computer stuff as it helps keep us closer."

With the recent contacts out of the blue, I agree: the Internet does bring us closer. What fun!

## True forgiveness is deeper and takes more effort

To the Editor:

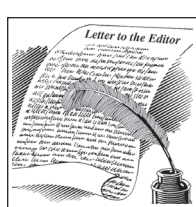
I applaud Sharon Corcoran for daring to address the subject of forgiveness. What an appropriate concept for this time and culture.

My thoughts sought to differentiate between what is pseudo forgiveness and what is true forgiveness.

Pseudo forgiveness is a lot like the idea of tolerance. I tolerate what you did because I can't do anything about it now since it is done. I accept the fact, but don't do it again. I forgive you.

True forgiveness has to go much further. True forgiveness has to examine what exactly was done to see the picture clearly. Then it must sift through the whys of the cause. In that sifting of whys there needs to be a recognition of common frailties. "I, too, have limited strength."

There is also a need to assess the cost of the offense: the displeasure, the discomfort, the damage,



**from our readers**

• to the editor

the disappointment it brought.

Then comes the critical part. True forgiveness says, "I have recognized clearly what you have done and what it has cost me. But I see you as more valuable than all of that, and I will somehow absorb that cost because I want to love you freely, and I don't want this to be an obstacle."

Jesus exemplified this on the cross when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In some foreign culture that I don't recall, the essence of the meaning for their word for forgive-

ness is, "to love again." If I can borrow from the Biblical equation, "God is love," I would suggest that to forgive is to return to being like God.

One who has been forgiven much,  
Allan Langness  
Goodland

## berry's world



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(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)  
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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@nwkans.com](mailto:daily@nwkans.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkans.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkans.com)  
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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$28; 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  
1935-1989

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SHERMAN COUNTY  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
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