

# commentary

from other pens...

## Powell not blamed for trip's thin results

WASHINGTON (AP) — Colin Powell set out on his Middle East peace mission not expecting much and came back with less than he expected, but all sides are taking pains not to say the secretary of state failed. It was a long shot anyway, veterans of diplomacy said. He tried his best with a weak hand, they added.

At the end of the secretary's 10-day mission, an embittered Yasser Arafat ended his last meeting with Powell by lashing out at the continuing Israeli siege of his compound but said of the American: "I have to thank him for what he has done and what he is going to do."

Dore Gold, a top adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said Powell left the Middle East with a promise from Sharon to withdraw from Palestinian cities. That Powell did not do more, Gold said, is because Arafat "has not offered a meaningful cease-fire."

"The mission could hardly be called a success, but whether that will be a black mark against Powell personally depends on not just what the administration chooses to do next, but also on how much the president accepts the logic for greater American intervention," said Gideon Rose, managing editor of Foreign Affairs magazine and a former foreign policy adviser to President Clinton.

"The secretary seems to have been in listening mode," Rose said. "The question is whether the administration will move into talking mode."

Powell must have hoped to come home with more tangible accomplishments. He was unable to wrest a cease-fire agreement, and left the region with Israeli tanks still occupying Palestinian areas nearly two weeks after Bush first called for a pullback "without delay."

Powell's trip ended with a brush-off from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who canceled a meeting with him in Cairo. Powell met with the Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers, who would not call his mission a failure but said Powell showed understanding of Arab positions.

Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland, said it is inevitable that pundits will say Powell failed, although Americans see him as "a cautious, sober, statesmanlike man who's trying his best."

William Quandt, a U.S. negotiator in the 1978 Camp David accords that led to peace between Egypt and Israel, said Powell went to the Middle East lacking sufficient support from Bush, whose aides sometimes spoke as if the trip were the secretary's own initiative.

"The president doesn't seem to be giving him a lot of support," he said. "He's leaving the secretary to do it on his own, and that's fatal."

Ed Abington, the Palestinians' top lobbyist in Washington and a former U.S. diplomat in the region, agreed that Powell's ability to achieve anything concrete suffered from a lack of leverage.

"He had no mandate to accomplish anything," Abington said.

Furthermore, Powell was not dealt a great hand in his negotiating partners, starting with the hard-line Israeli prime minister, Sharon.

"Our best friend in the region is somebody whose vision of an ultimate political settlement is very, very far from what we traditionally have felt would work," Quandt said. "Plus, his adversary's not exactly a poster boy of sweet reason," Quandt added, referring to Arafat.

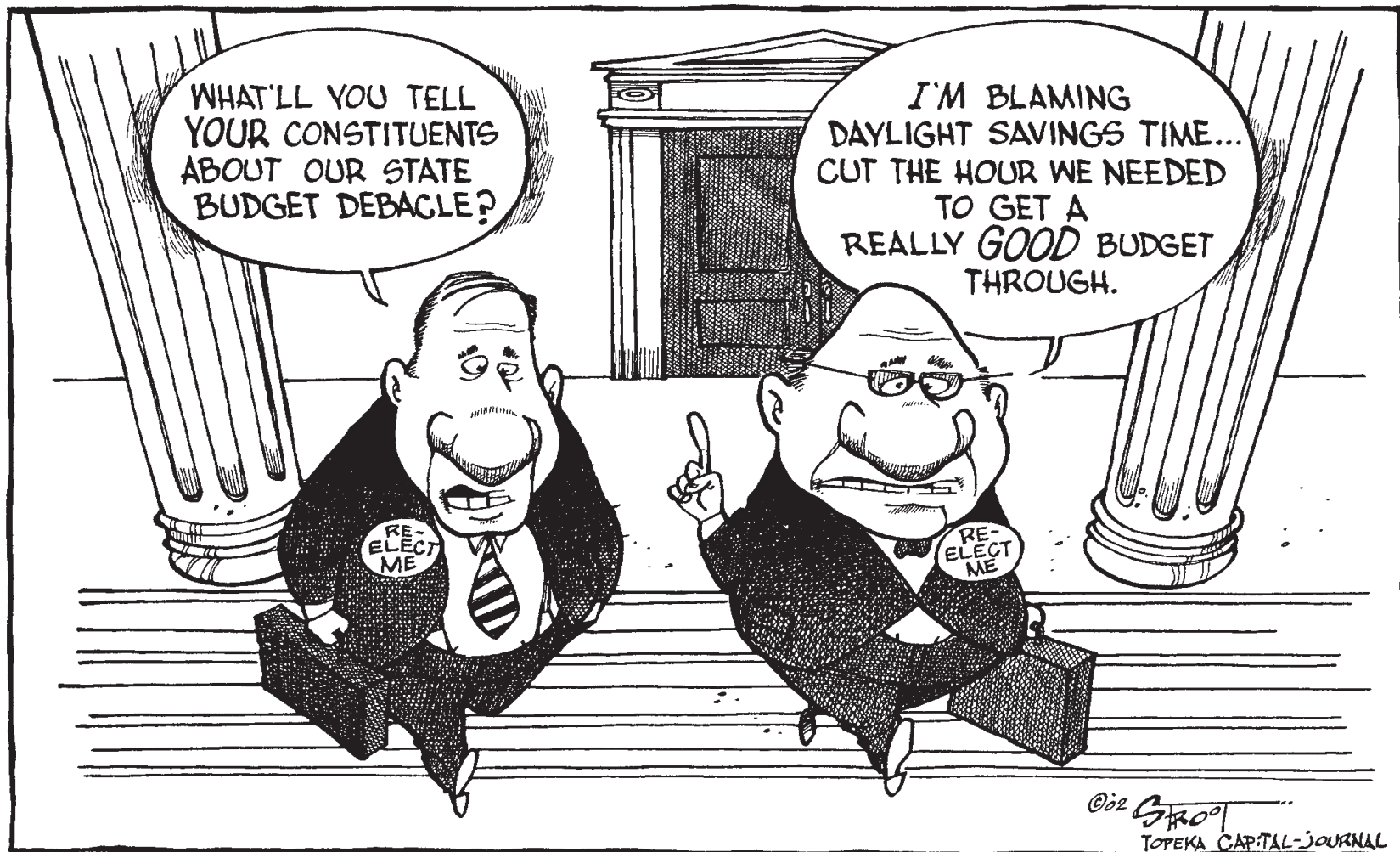
Before Powell's first meeting with Arafat, Sharon said such a meeting would be a "tragic mistake" by Powell. Asked about that Wednesday, Powell said: "He and I talked about it directly, and he said that to me directly. We have that kind of a relationship where we speak clearly to one another as soldiers as well as now politicians and diplomats."

On the Palestinian side, Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat pointedly hooked his finger of blame around Powell to get to Sharon.

"We have nothing against the secretary," Erekat said. "All we can say is Sharon did a good job to torpedo the secretary's mission here."

"Americans have a healthy respect for the complications of Mideast diplomacy," said James Phillips of the Heritage Foundation. "It would have been very surprising if he had succeeded under these circumstances."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Nancy Benac has covered government and national affairs from Washington for more than 15 years.



## It was a quiet week in ...

It was a quiet week in Lake Wobegone. . . .

Oops, wrong story. Well, it has been a quiet week. Steve has enjoyed several hours of quiet time in his hammock and I started the new book I got for Christmas.

The quiet sounds of hissing cats were heard whenever two of them were in the same room, but since Molly Monster spent most of her time outdoors, things were pretty quiet.

Alice is still pregnant, but learning to hold her own against the other family felines.

Got both daughters called on Sunday.

Oldest daughter said she now has a pair of parakeets. She says she really enjoys watching and listening to the birds, but not nearly as much as her cats do. Sabine, the queen cat, spends all her time sitting on the sofa just hoping one of those tasty morsels will fall out of its cage.

Chauncey, the monster dog, barks at the birds. Daughter thinks she is trying to talk to them and figures if one did fall out, the dog would probably protect it. That would be quite a sight, since Chauncey resembles a fuzzy brown bear at about 90 pounds.

Youngest daughter thinks her sister is crazy to get a pair of birds. Except for the cats, she keeps



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

all her animals in her biology lab at school. We pointed out to her that not all of us are biology teachers nor do most have to deal with a box turtle, three hermit crabs, a tree frog, a toad and four baby guinea pigs.

I asked her about the guinea pigs. They didn't fit with the other animals in the collection. She said one of the student's science projects turned out to be pregnant. Since I just adopted an expectant cat, I can sympathize.

Youngest daughter said that the rodents go to the first four students who bring in permission slips from their parents. I asked her if she was giving lessons on forging parents' signatures. but she said she was praying that wouldn't be necessary.

The rest of the crew are strictly catch and release, she said, even the box turtle, which she has had for a year now. Some day they have to go back to the wild.

## I was so glad to see 'spam' email messages

I never thought we'd be so happy to see spam in our e-mail, but when the second mortgage and virility drug offers started to roll in Saturday, we knew the **nwkansas.com** system had come back.

It had been a long four days.

When we decided to change Internet suppliers, we knew we were asking for trouble. But we had been unhappy since Carroll's Web of Salina had bought out our old supplier, CJNetworks of Topeka. A two-day outage last month only convinced us that we had made the right decision.

It's the kind of thing that you avoid, because it meant changing nearly all the network settings in every computer on the system, ours and all our customers. But after more than two months of preparation and a week's delay, we thought we were ready to move over to Southwestern Bell Internet. Little did we know.

A big move like this is made up of many little moves, from changing the numbers in our office machines, one office at a time, to hauling the e-mail server from Oberlin to Goodland to resetting all the routers which handle traffic between towns and with the Internet connection.

Our two stalwarts were Evan Barnum of Colby, our main geek, and Tom Betz of Goodland, our Internet service manager, the only one who understands Windows.

Evan had a plan for the changeover, and by Wednesday afternoon we were almost on schedule . . . before things turned to mud. Settings that should have worked didn't. There were a couple



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

of typos. Bird City was missing. Norcatur and McDonald were there, but couldn't see the Internet. And the big one, e-mail. E-mail could leave the system, but it couldn't get in. The world couldn't find us.

We tried everything. We tracked down the mistakes and got Bird City on line (a router that melted down, and a typo in one number in the new one). We worked into the night to find out why McDonald and Norcatur couldn't get out. (Router settings one number off, it turned out.) Evan and I were supposed to go to Colby and Oberlin to help field customers' calls, but with so much not working, we couldn't leave.

That was OK. In Colby, Lea Bandy and Patty Decker manned the phones and munched the pizza Evan was counting on. In Oberlin, a crew including Steve Smith, Cynthia Haynes and Karla Jones took calls. And ate my pizza. Karen Krien took calls in St. Francis. In Goodland Sheila Smith and Pat and Jimmy Schiefen handled the bulk of the calls and ordered pizza to be delivered.

I'm not sure when the rest of them got home, but it was 2:30 a.m. when I pulled into my driveway. Then Thursday, we got up and hit it again. We fig-

Steve talked to our only son. He's a little hard to find sometimes.

He lives in a big old house in Lawrence with a bunch of other guys and sometimes they forget to pay the phone bill.

Even when the phone works, if you call too early no one answers because no one is up. If you call too late, son is already off to class or work and leaving a message is like trying to explain physics to a 2 year old. It's a waste of time.

Now and then, however, you can slip in and actually get the kid. Steve is better at this than I am. I just don't have the patience. Give me a good answering machine any day.

"Hi, I'm here. Call me."

Do you remember the days of yore when you used to hate getting those awful answering machines? Now if the person you're calling doesn't have one, you feel cheated. At least you could tell them that you tried to get ahold of them. With luck, you can leave a message and never have to talk to a real person at all.

"Hi, the check is in the mail."

I may not have this much free time again for a long time, so I'm going to stop writing and go take over the hammock.

## The Goodland Daily News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association  
The Associated Press

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper 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, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

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## I feel we need a good lesson in 'civics'

"Why don't the schools teach civics anymore?" I was asked, to which I replied "Civics, what do you mean?" He said, "You know, the concept that if you live in a community, you need to support one another so the community can prosper."

I have really thought about that conversation a lot in the past months and particularly in the last weeks. I finally came to the realization we have a whole generation or maybe two who think nothing about going out of town to buy all the goods and services they need.

I don't think the schools have failed, but we as parents have not taught civics to our young people. Some believe what will save our small community is to bring in new and even larger businesses.

While this is very important, it will take a lot of effort and time. One thing that we can all do right now is to spend our money locally and support what retail we do have.

Certainly I have heard the argument that, "I just can't find what I need or want here!" Well, that probably came to be because when we could buy it here, we didn't.

This forced that merchant to no longer offer that good or service, so they discontinued that product



**from our readers**

• to the editor

or even worse, discontinued their business.

I wonder, if we do attract new businesses, will we actually support them so they can become profitable and supply jobs, goods, and services to our community, or will we continue to drive to wherever we have been going and spend our money there?

I think the quickest and the most important thing we can do to spur our economy is to spend our dollars with our friends and neighbors right here. There are not many merchants who live and operate in small towns who would not expand and renew their businesses if they could see that the community is supporting them. If you don't believe me, just ask them.

The people who operate these storefronts probably do a better job of shopping here than the rest of us. I challenge you to get out there and see what

our local merchants have to offer. You will probably find all kinds of things that are competitively priced and a level of service that will never be matched by a merchant 200 miles away.

Just something to think about: Where do you spend your money?

Don McKenzie  
Goodland

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