

# commentary

from other pens...

## Powerful scene sitting at the feet of Lincoln

WASHINGTON (AP) — Anchored on the National Mall, the monuments that stand as the nation's tributes to its greatest leaders can seem as unchanging as the stones they are built of.

But the meaning of monuments, the messages they deliver to the future, is capable of change even if the stones are not.

The Lincoln Memorial is a case in point. Outwardly, it has remained exactly the same for the last 80 years, a pillared marble temple with Daniel Chester French's massive statue of a benign and pensive Lincoln sitting where the ancient Greeks might have placed Athena or Zeus.

The way people perceive Lincoln's memorial has been transformed in eight decades. Symbolically, it is a different place than it was when it was dedicated on Memorial Day 1922. It is one of history's ironies that the audience for the dedication of a memorial to the author of the Emancipation Proclamation was segregated by race.

"Monuments have a way of changing, and even reversing, the meanings initially given to them," says scholar Jeffrey F. Meyer. "Years pass, events occur at them, and one day when the fog lifts over the Potomac we see a different memorial."

The Lincoln Memorial's planners played down issues that were still divisive. They shaped the monument's symbolism not on the freeing of slaves but on Lincoln's struggle to save the Union and on the reconciliation between North and South that followed the Civil War.

At the monument's dedication, with blacks seated in the "colored only" area, there was little expectation that the monument would one day be considered a pre-eminent symbol of racial justice.

"The Lincoln Memorial as finally approved achieved consensus by ignoring the controversies surrounding the Civil War," says Meyer, a professor of religion at the University of North Carolina. His book, "Myths in Stone," was published last year by the University of California Press.

The theme of union and reconciliation was embedded in the monument's stones. The 13 steps to architect Henry Bacon's main platform represented the original states. The 36 pillars marked the number of states in Lincoln's time. The 48 carved festoons, or moldings, near the roofline stood for the number of states when the memorial was built.

This started changing in the spring of 1939, when world-renowned opera singer Marian Anderson was barred by the Daughters of the American Revolution from singing in the group's Constitution Hall because she was black. There was a newspaper storm about that, and the idea bubbled up to President Franklin Roosevelt that she be invited to sing "at the feet of Lincoln" on Easter afternoon.

At 5:30 p.m. on April 9, 1939, Anderson sang for about 75,000 people on the monument grounds and a radio audience of millions. Calm and dignified she opened with "America the Beautiful," and moved on through a series of spirituals, including "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."

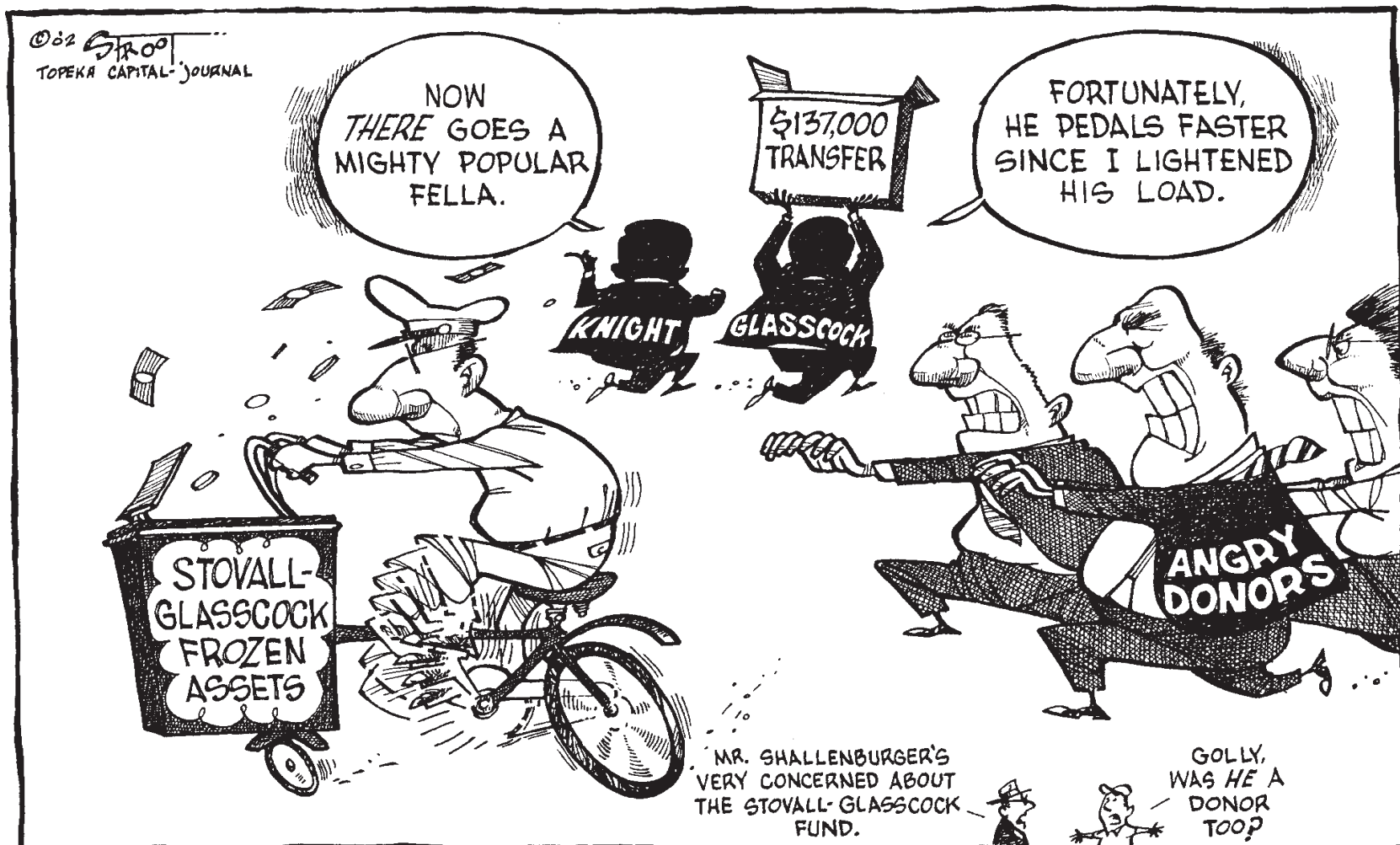
"The issue everyone had tried to avoid at the memorial's dedication some 15 years earlier now came forward front and center," Meyer writes. Anderson allowed her music and the setting to speak for themselves. "I particularly did not want to say anything about the DAR (because) I did not feel I was designed for mortal combat," she said.

On Aug. 28, 1963, an even larger crowd gathered at the same place before the same statue and demanded change. Martin Luther King Jr. looked out over an audience estimated at 200,000, took note of his surroundings and transformed the Lincoln Memorial permanently.

"Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation," he began. "This momentous decree came as a great beacon of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been scarred in the flame of withering injustice."

Even though not a stone of the memorial had changed, King had recast the message the Lincoln Memorial's builders had wanted to project.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 34 years for *The Associated Press*.



## Keep up the recycling, it is saving money!

With four months of collections the recycling program in Sherman County has been showing a continued growth, but in the last two weeks the amount collected seems to have leveled off.

Talking to Alan Birt, who drives the truck that picks up the recycled material the containers were unusually light last week. He said this was the first time the paper containers were not totally full, and the cans were down as well.

There may be several explanations for the drop including the summer heat, the fact many people are on vacation or that suddenly people have gotten out of the recycling habit.

We hope the heat and vacations are the reason because the program has been saving money for both the county and the city which means it has been saving all of the taxpayers money.

When we recycle paper, cans and glass we reduce the tons of trash that have to be picked up and buried in the landfill. This reduces the cost to the city because there are no as many tons, and the tipping fee is lowered. It saves money for the county because it makes the landfill last longer, and there are less tons to have to be compacted and buried.

Some people heard the suggestion of the representatives from U.S. Waste Industries that if they get the trash collection system they would allow more types of trash to be placed in the dumpsters.



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They told the city commission they would take "anything you could put in the dumpster," but at this time there is no agreement they will be handling the city trash. This means the existing system has not changed, and the need to reduce the waste by recycling is important to keeping the costs down.

There is evidence that the U.S. Waste Industries people were not talking about eliminating the recycling program that it in place. They said there would not be a need for them to operate a recycling program because there was one in place. This company may take more types of trash — if they are awarded the contract by the city — but they are also interested in recycling. They operate recycling centers in Colorado Springs, Denver, Canon City, Pueblo and Trinidad, Colo.

The Sherman County commissioners have indicated they are not interested in selling the landfill at this time. This does not mean they enjoy being in the landfill business, but at this time they believe

the proposal from U.S. Waste Industries is not acceptable. The proposal was for less money than the taxpayers of Sherman County have expended to open the new landfill site, and wanted the county to cut the solid waste fee entirely which could be a problem if the contamination at the old city/county dump becomes more expensive.

The county has operated the landfill for about nine months, and they are beginning to get the bugs out of the system both with the transfer station and the landfill.

Since the landfill has been completed and is permitted by the state the value of the property has grown. In a similar situation, where a private trash company was talking to a city about handling their trash collection and landfill, the company representative told the city officials it would be better if the city would buy the land, open the landfill and get the required state permits.

"It is a lot easier and cheaper for the local government to open a new landfill and get through the state permit process than for us to do it," he said.

Possibly the day will come when Sherman County commissioners decide they want to get out of the trash business, and when that happens we expect them to seek proposals from more than one company or simply fall in bed with the first city slicker to come along.

## How much will Kansans feel bite of tax package?

BETO JUNCTION — Kirk Williams had braced himself for a hectic Monday. His business faced a triple whammy of bad news.

His company operates the Beto Junction Travel Plaza at the junction of Interstate 35 and U.S. 75 in Coffey County, a place where truckers and travelers stop for meals, snacks, supplies, gasoline and diesel fuel.

Increases in the state's taxes on sales, cigarettes and gasoline were taking effect Monday.

Williams already faced a 30 percent increase in health insurance costs for his 100 employees.

"It's just that all the little things begin to add up," he said.

The state's 2003 fiscal year started Monday, and as is typical for each July 1, a flurry of new laws took effect. Some were the changes wrought by a \$252 million package of tax increases that legislators approved in May, others by a plan for financing highway projects.

The questions for those legislators and other state officials are how much Kansans will feel the bite from the tax increases and how they'll respond in the Aug. 6 primary and Nov. 5 general elections.

But they're more than political questions. With the state's budget problems likely to linger into next year, the next governor and Legislature will be getting a sense of what the acceptable options are for their constituents.

"I think there's a general understanding that there was some kind of budget problem in Topeka," said House Taxation Committee Chairman John Edmonds, R-Great Bend. "They'll hear about that from all perspectives."

On Monday, the sales tax increased to 5.3 percent from 4.9 percent, and the cigarette tax jumped by 46 cents a pack, to 70 cents from 24 cents.

Motor fuels taxes increased 2 cents a gallon, to 23 cents for gasoline and 25 cents for diesel.

The sales and cigarette tax increases were part of a package designed to shore up general government programs.

That package also included a doubling of fees corporations pay for the right to do business in Kansas, to a maximum of \$5,000; reimposition of a tax on the property inherited by nephews, nieces and non-relatives; and elimination of a sales tax exemption for custom computer software purchases.

The gasoline tax increase was designed to raise money for highway projects. That plan also increased vehicle registration fees by \$5 for most cars, light trucks and sport utility vehicles.

Conservative Republicans who voted against tax increases warned that many Kansans, already feeling the pinch of a slow economy, would not be happy.

"I've had neighbors who are just watching every penny," said conservative Sen. Robert Tyson, R-Parker. "I've had people call me and say, 'What



john hanna

ap news analysis

is government thinking?"

At Beto Junction, Williams worried about how the tax increases will affect his bottom line. He is concerned that truckers, who can go 500 miles between fueling stops, will have incentive to avoid stopping in Kansas.

"If you skip Kansas, you don't buy that candy bar or that meal here," he said. "All of these things begin to eat at your profits."

Other Kansans were feeling overtaxed, even before the increases took effect.

In Yates Center, 40 miles south of Beto Junction, grocery store clerk Linda Lauber said: "We're already taxed to death."

And smoker Helen Hyman, of Piqua, was annoyed by the cigarette tax increase.

"They tax your wages, and then they tax everything you buy," she said.

But if Kansans are angry about the tax increases — and many undoubtedly are — there's still a question of whether that anger will be felt in politics.

Twenty-eight of the 108 incumbent House members seeking re-election face opponents in the primary. But 48 face no opposition whatsoever.

In the Republican governor's race, both Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson, and Wichita Mayor Bob Knight have said they will protect schools and other essential services. A victory by either one would go against the conventional wisdom that any candidate supporting a tax increase is doomed.

Edmonds, who moved from his long-standing opposition to tax increases to helping push the final package through, has a more conservative primary opponent but said, "My opponent aside, I'm hearing very little."

Edmonds said the tax increases are "not anywhere near the whole story," because Kansans

have to consider why the money was raised — to prevent damage to schools and the services they expect.

Therein lies the persistent difficulty in governing, balancing people's desire for strong public schools and services against their resentment of taxes. Kansans are supposed to use the ballot box to tell legislators whether they struck the correct balance.

And Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer said the tax increases are small compared to other forces at work in the economy.

"Looking at the Kansas economy, this stuff would pale in comparison to the drought in southwest Kansas," Sherrer said.

He added: "We are still recruiting businesses very successfully. When a business comes in, they're as interested in your school system as in your tax rates."

But in Beto Junction, Williams worried that higher taxes will hurt the Travel Plaza's business and force him to consider cutting his staff. He also questioned whether legislators looked hard enough for ways to save money.

"We'd rather be creating jobs," he said. "It's frustrating when all these things hit at once."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Correspondent John Hanna has covered Kansas government and politics for *The Associated Press* since 1987.

### berry's world



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