

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Columbia tragedy reminder of risks

Saturday morning as I turned on the news, the anchor said the network was going to broadcast the landing of the shuttle Columbia which was returning from space after a 16-day mission with the first Israeli astronaut as one of the seven-person crew.

It wasn't but a few minutes later that the Johnson Space Center in Houston announced they had lost contact with Columbia. Thinking this may be normal, it wasn't until five minutes later when I realized they were not coming back safely.

I watched as the news trickled in, and then the first videos which showed the normal contrail and then a little puff of white followed by more puffs of white and then the multiplication of pieces as the shuttle broke up high over Texas.

The feeling in the pit of my stomach was similar to the one I had experienced 17 years before when I was watching the shuttle Challenger launch, and it ended in disaster.

I called my daughter, who lives in a suburb of Houston, and she said she and my granddaughter, Tori, were watching the news and saw the same things I was seeing. The city in east Texas where the main pieces fell is about 150 miles northeast of where they live.

I talked to my granddaughter about the tragedy, and knew she has been a frequent visitor to the space center and is interested in space. We also talked about her science fair project, a study of black holes, and she got some of her information from the space center. I am sure at 11, this will be one of those moments she can remember in later life as a marker in time.

It will takes weeks and months probably to determine what caused the breakup, but the sense of sadness is immediate as we think of the men and women of the Columbia crew who didn't have a chance, and the families they leave behind.

This is only the second shuttle disaster in the 22 years of the program, but each one points out the risks an astronaut takes when they are strapped into those seats to take the trips into the wonders of space.

As with the Challenger disaster, the shuttles will be grounded until the source of the problem is found, and that may take some time. The experts are not sure yet what that means for the astronuts who are now on the space station and scheduled to return in March, but it is doubtful that a shuttle will be launched to pick them up.

The Columbia disaster also points out that we are using 22-year old equipment in our continuing exploration of space, and with two of the original five now gone, we need to assess what might be the better avenue to continue the manned flights.

No doubt there is a replacement vehicle on someone's drawing board right now that could take the place of the aging shuttles. However, that will take lots more money, and depending on the stage of research, it may take years for the manned program to again take to the heavens.

As we honor the seven who died in the sky over Texas, it is fitting that we dedicate our country to moving forward with a new manned space program. They are part of the legacy of space, and we must follow their lead and move ahead in our efforts to expand man's understanding of the universe and space.

It remains the final frontier. — *Tom Betz*

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)
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Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
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Published every Tuesday and Friday except 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 Star-News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.
TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.
SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$20; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:
The Goodland Daily News
1932-2003
The Sherman County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989
Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001



COLUMBIA - 2003

Heaven's constellation has been written on our hearts.

Star-News joins handful of Kansas papers

With the switch to twice-weekly publication and all-local news today, The Goodland Star-News joins a handful of other Kansas publications that made the plunge in the last couple of years.

The Hiawatha World, Beloit Call, Russell County News and The Norton Telegram all have dropped "daily" from their name in the last couple of years, all for about the same reason.

They weren't making any money.

There are still a handful of really small dailies in the state, those around 2,000 circulation. The Concordia Blade-Empire is the largest of the lot, reporting 2,357 circulation this fall. The next-largest paper is The Clay Center Dispatch, at 3,109, quite a jump.

It's hard to say how the surviving dailies are doing. Three of the nine are owned by the Liberty group, which maintains a ring of papers around Wichita, in Derby, Augusta and Pratt.

Independent small dailies include Concordia, the Tiller and Toiler in Larned (love that name), The Lyons Daily News, Council Grove Republican, Colby Free Press and The Columbus Daily Advocate, way down in



southeast Kansas.

It's hard to say what the future holds for these papers, even Colby, which is owned by our company (as is the Norton Telegram).

One Liberty paper, in Wellington, tried to publish four days a week, but eventually returned to five. At present, there are no four-day papers in Kansas, and only a couple of three-day publications.

Twice-weekly papers are also rare.

We changed because we had to, true enough, but also because of a firm conviction that what people really want from their newspaper is local news. And that's what we intend to provide.

This may not always be easy. In the old days (like last week), if the paper grew and we had extra space, there usually was no more local news to put in it. We'd stick some wire briefs

steve haynes

- along the sappa

Lots of misinformation at school board meeting

To the Editor:

Wake up Goodland!

I attended a school board meeting on Monday, Jan. 27, where the topic was the gun and drug policy.

Boy were there a lot of ignorant people there, that is, as far as the law goes!

You know, there wouldn't be so many ignorant people if our educators would do their job and educate.

It is very sad that the government has to tell our school how it should be run. If that is true, then we don't need a school board elected to make decisions.

The whole thing boils down to money. Do we need government money to make sure our schools are safe and drug free? I think not.

If we are so incapable of this task, we as a community have failed our children. I feel if the kids and general public are not to have any kind of gun or so-called weapon in their vehicle near the school, then all box cutters and sharp objects should be removed from the school and out of the hands of any teacher who may become angry with a child.

After all, I believe anger and aggression are normal human traits!

God forbid a kid gets into a fight and there are no weapons used because it is against the law.

They handcuff them and fingerprint them as if they have robbed a bank. These kids have no way of releasing anger, which is why we have situations like Columbine.

The school, law, and our so-called county attorney are treating these kids like criminals when they haven't done anything wrong, except be normal kids!

Keep backing them into a corner and you will see it become national news about the massacre in Goodland.

Is that what you want for publicity?

It seems you all did real well with this last



incident, *Hays Daily*, *Goodland Daily*, Sharon Springs news, Kansas City nightly news. You all reached a fair amount of people. I hope you are proud!

We spend thousands of dollars each year trying to get people to come live in this community and you treat our lifelong residents like they are going to rob you blind.

So when you wonder why people move or pull their children from this school system and go to Brewster, Sharon Springs, Weskan, Winona, and other small communities? It is very simple they are glad to have new people and they want to keep what they have!

So wake up, Goodland. You are your own worst enemy, not the kids. They don't do anything worse then you did when you were their age!

Peggy Klinge
Goodland

To the Editor:

I have read the newspaper's front-page article about the hospital's nursing staff being reorganized.

I do not know how they did their staffing before, nor how it will be done now, but I wonder how many realize that with this new staffing they have fired Tom Hellerud. He no longer fits in with their staffing issues!

They can not afford to pay Tom but can hire two new nurse practioners to replace him. Tom has worked for the Goodland hospital for several years and has provided what I believe to have been good medical treatment.

I know of several others that are upset they

in, call it a roundup, and shove the page.

We can't do that any more. We have to be sure that there are enough stories, columns and reports to fill all the pages. We hope to have nearly as many, minus the surplus comics and editorial pages, as we did before.

And here's where you come it. We work for you. We do the paper for you. And we need to know what you want in it.

Many times we've been asked, "why didn't you cover such and such last week." The answer usually is, no one told us about it. We can't be everywhere, know everything. So if you know of something going on, a tiny item or a page 1 feature, call the office. We need your news tips now more than ever.

We know this will work. We have great confidence in Goodland and Sherman County. We have a major investment here, our plant is here and we are one of the town's larger businesses.

With your continued support, hard work and lots of local news, things are going to be just fine. It's exciting for us, because we know we can give you a fine, all-local paper twice a week.

And that's what we intend to do.

from our readers

- to the editor

won't be able to go see Tom at the clinic when we are sick.

Besides all the nursing/doctoring Tom has done for so many in this area, he has also done a lot of the coroner calls. It seems Tom is being treated like the one doctor in Colby, with suddenly not being allowed to see his patients.

I hope the county commissioners or someone can check into this matter closer and get this turned around.

If Tom had wanted to quit working at the hospital, that would be a different matter. But the way this stands, I really hate losing the one I seek medical treatment with.

Anyone that agrees with wanting Tom back being our nurse practioner please let the hospital and clinic know this.

Bonnie King
Goodland

To the Editor:

I've wanted to write this letter since last summer, but somehow time has got away from me.

I took over as the K-18 Baseball commissioner last year. I want to thank all of the coaches, fans and players who made this season a wonderful experience.

The sub-regionals were held in Colby and Stockton. The regional was in Ellis and the state tournament was in Lucas. I complement these cities for the fine job they did hosting these tournaments.

My main reason for writing this letter is to thank coaches, fans and players for the best sportsmanship I have ever been around. I can honestly say, I am proud to be from a small town in Kansas, and proud to be associated with K-18 Baseball.

I am looking forward to being a part of your K-18 baseball program this summer.

John Walz
Oberlin
K-18 West Regional Commissioner

garfield

