

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Voters say Mountain, time issues remain

When the votes were tabulated last week, the result was a resounding signal to the county to stay in the Mountain Time Zone. We want to thank everyone who participated in the time zone straw poll. We at *The Goodland Star-News* were pleased with the wonderful turnout of 1,450 people.

The overwhelming majority want to remain on Mountain Time, but there were two main issues that seemed to surface during the weeks before the actual vote. For those who work with Topeka and areas to the east, which seemed to be mostly the government and office people, the question was one of convenience and frustration. The other side seemed to be retailers who depend on people coming into their stores, and a feeling that being on Mountain Time was an advantage for them.

Looking at the two issues, it was clear that no matter which way the vote came out, one side was not going to be satisfied, and we began looking at what options there are for handling the issues which remain after the vote.

What could Sherman County and Goodland do to be more in line with the timing of the political and business offices to the east?

One suggestion would be to change the operating times of the city and county offices to match the time in Topeka. This would mean opening the courthouse and city administration buildings at 7 a.m. This could be done by a resolution from the commissioners, similar to what was done in 1965. The time zone would not change, but rather the working times.

Some officials see this as an advantage in that not only would they be able to better coordinate efforts with the eastern part of the state, but they see it as a way to improve customer service by being open when more people can get to the offices.

By opening earlier, the schedule could match the eastern part of the state, and for the courthouse, this would mean that the offices which now close from 12 to 1 would close from 11 to 12 and then be open for those citizens who can or must do business in the courthouse on their lunch hour. Currently, the only office that appears to remain open during the lunch hour is the county treasurer, and to handle this, she has her people on a flexible working schedule so there is always someone available.

Following such a change in schedule would accommodate the timing issues for the city and county offices, and could be adopted by other offices which must deal with the time issue to the east.

If the vote had gone to the Central Time side, there would have been a problem for retail businesses, and it would seem a similar suggestion could have been made to change the store hours so they were open later in the evening and possibly not as early in the morning. With these businesses, the main reason they wanted to remain on Mountain time was the customers coming to Goodland who like to have time to shop before the stores close for the day.

No matter how the vote came out, there would always be an issue because Sherman County will always be on the edge of a time zone. Moving the time problem to the county line on the west would not have solved either of these problems, but there may be ways to make it easier to deal with the time we have. — *Tom Betz*

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Managing Editor

Pat Schiefen, Copy Editor

Reporter

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Bill Wagoner, Phyllis Hadley, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl

Ron VanLoenen

Judy McKnight

Betty Morris

Mary Jo Tapparo

Lana Westfahl

Teneile Lovelace



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., 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 Ave., 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

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR

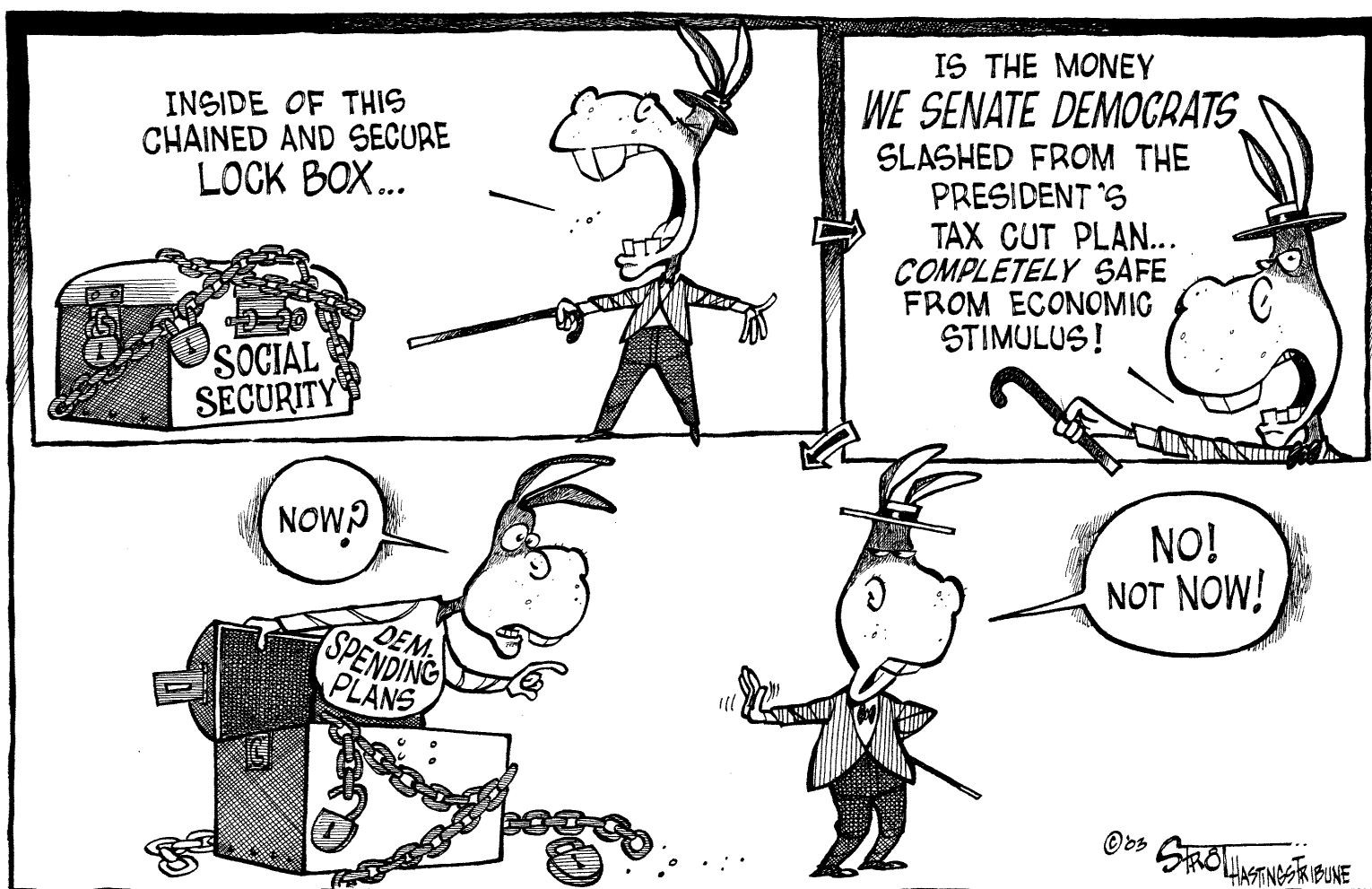
Founded by Eric and

Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



A visit to the land of sand, Saudi Arabia

Each year I'm trying to visit a different country. This year it was Saudi Arabia.

No, I didn't grab a jet and fly to the land of sand. I signed up for an embassy tour during the National Newspaper Association's meeting in Washington.

Last year, I visited Chili and was enchanted by that long, skinny country which stretches nearly the length of South America and has everything from tropical to arctic conditions.

This year, I had my choice of three embassies — Saudi Arabia, Taiwan or Switzerland. (Actually Taiwan doesn't have an embassy, because our official diplomatic relations are with mainland China. But it has a "place" in Washington that looks and acts like one.)

I chose Saudi Arabia because it seemed the most topical. Back in December when I made my decision, there was a lot of saber rattling going on. I really didn't expect that there would be a war on when I got to Washington.

One thing that I've learned over the course of the last couple of years in dealing with diplomatic things — when people invite you to their place, they want to sell you something.

When I say sell, I mean ideologically. The Chileans wanted most-favored-nation trade status. The Taiwanese wanted respect and diplomatic relations. The folks in Hong Kong wanted to show how free they were from the mainland government, and the Red Chinese wanted our money to build their infrastructure.

The Saudis walk a thin line. They want to assure us that they are our friends, but still not make the guy next door so mad at them that he starts taking potshots at them, also.

We started our meeting with a short film about Saudi Arabia, the land of sand.

The country is a monarchy ruled by King Fahd



**cynthia
haynes**

• open season

bin Abdulaziz. Islam is the state religion.

Islam is to Saudi Arabia what Catholicism is to the Vatican. The country is founded on the religion and the ruler takes his power from the religion.

In the bimonthly newsletter of the embassy, the king is referred to as "the custodian of the two holy mosques." It doesn't specifically say where these mosques are but I'll bet at least one of them is in Makkah (which I've always seen written as Mecca)

Makkah is the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed and the most sacred place in the world to Muslims. This is where every year, millions of them go on pilgrimage. Saudi Arabia takes seriously the duties and responsibilities that go with having such a place within its borders. Every effort is made to help pilgrims. No non-Muslim is allowed in the city or in Madinah, another holy city.

Saudi Arabia is an oil-rich nation with agriculture and tourism. It also contains one of the world's largest and driest sand desert — the Rub Al Khali.

The nation says it is slowly working its way towards democracy, but it still has a ways to go. Universal health care and education are offered, but according to the newsletter, the country's budget will have a deficit again this year, although because of higher-than-expected oil prices, last year's deficit was only 8.25 billion

riyals (\$2.2 billion). Much of the budget goes to education and to modernize the country.

The Saudi government extends an invitation to visitors to come see its camel races, mosques and marketplaces. I would love to take them up on it. I couldn't go to Makkah or Madinah and I couldn't drive myself — women aren't allowed to drive there, or to vote — but it would be a great trip.

Well, maybe next year or the year after.

Understanding the Muslim faith

No discussion of Saudi Arabia would be complete without the tenants of the Muslim faith:

1. Testimony — There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet.

2. Prayer — Muslims are expected to pray facing Makkah five times a day, first standing and then kneeling at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and night.

3. Fasting — During the month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, all Muslims must fast, abstaining from food, water and sex from sunup to sundown each day.

4. Almsgiving — In Saudi Arabia, the government has an agency as part of the finance ministry to collect the alms, which equal about 2.5 percent of each person's income.

5. Pilgrimage — Each able-bodied Muslim who can afford it is expected to make the Hajj, the holy journey to Makkah, during his or her lifetime. This is made during the last month of the Islamic year and the city hosts between one and two million pilgrims a year.

They can show common sense in Topeka

Some days, they show a little common sense in Topeka.

It happened last week when a Johnson County senator refused to push a provision which would have changed Kansas law to make it illegal for parents to let their children have a beer.

The plan was part of a package of tough measures being pushed by the anti-drinking lobby, tightening laws on teen-age drinking, drivers licenses and partying.

One section would have repealed the law allowing parents to give their own children (but not other people's) grocery store, or 3.2, beer.

The sponsor, Sen. Kay O'Connor of Olathe, said she had not heard any complaints or seen any evidence that there was a problem with the law.

And, she said, "I think we live in a society where parents should be trusted to make that decision."

Imagine that, trusting parents to raise their own children. What is this state coming to?

The drinking nazis were incensed, though the bill still contains sections with tougher penalties for teen-age drunk drivers and making it a crime to let teens drink at your house.

The law only allows parents to give beer to their kids under their direct supervision. They can't give a kid a six pack and send him out on the town.

And that seems fair to me.



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

If parents want to let their kids drink a brew at home, where they're safe and supervised, why not? Not everyone would do it. Not everyone would think it was OK. But isn't that just the kind of decision families ought to be able to make?

Though frankly, I suspect most of the kids would rather sneak off and drink the beer with their friends that with the folks. As with adults, it's a social thing.

But where would it be better for kids to learn about drinking, at home, under control, or at some wild party in the woods?

I know, it's not good for them. They could get hurt. They're not old enough.

But a lot of them are going to do it anyway. Let parents have a role in this.

Anyway, the section is gone and the law stays as it is. It's a rare victory for common sense and individual liberty.

On another front, a "compromise" would allow school districts to get out of publishing their administrators' salaries for the public to read.

Instead of paying to have the salaries in the

local newspaper, they would be required to just send the list to the paper, which could publish it or not.

That may sound like a compromise, since the state's school boards had wanted to do away with the list.

The law requiring school districts to publish the information has been on the books for years, but apparently all of the state's school districts have ignored it. Now, instead of getting slapped for breaking the law, it looks like they will get out of it.

The information is a public record anyway, and any citizen can go look it up. But having the districts publish the list makes sense to me. Why shouldn't they have to tell people what they are paying the superintendent?

And while the school boards argue that the cost is a burden, the fact is, it's only be a few dollars per district. They can afford it.

They just don't want us to know.

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste.

