

from our viewpoint...

## Facing tough times, but city will survive

Last Monday, the Goodland City Commission faced a room full of citizens who were upset about a spike in the fuel adjustment charge on their power bills.

The commissioners listened patiently and tried to find a way to help those who might find it difficult to pay an unexpected increase in their monthly bill.

During the hour-long public discussion, people asked why this had happened and the city officials tried to explain it was out of their control because of a contract with the city's electric supplier.

That is true. The city does not get a dime of the fuel adjustment money. It goes to pay the cost of the coal or natural gas used to generate the power. This is one of the costs utility companies — public or private — can pass through to their customers.

Without such pass-through charges the utility — in this case, the city — would have to change rates several times a year. With the pass-through, the extra cost is shared by all the customers. That allows the utility to maintain lower basic rates — and go back to them when costs go down.

There are outside forces which exert pressure on the system. The spike in fuel adjustment last month was a sample of these.

In this case, the Sunflower Co-operative Electric plant in Holcomb which produces the city's power went down for more than three weeks, two of those unplanned. The only replacement power available through Sunflower was quite expensive compared to what the plant produces.

The city is trying to find an alternative or backup source of cheaper power that might prevent such spikes in the future.

It was good to see the commissioners find a temporary means to help those who may find it difficult to pay high bills by spreading payments out over three months. Now they need a permanent solution.

One of the people in the audience asked why the city had not let people know before the bills went out that there was going to be a spike in the fuel adjustment. In defense of City Manager Ron Pickman, he did tell those at an earlier commission meeting they would see higher bills in May. The problem is, the city does not know what the actual bills will be until it is time to send them out.

Goodland is fortunate to have a municipally owned power system, but in today's market, it is getting tougher to deal with power costs and ensure a steady supply. The situation has not reached the level brown outs and shortages seen on the East and West Coasts, but this latest bump is a wake up call.

The city needs to find a reliable, cheap backup source, from the Nebraska Public Power Pool, the federally run Western Area Power Authority or another source. It needs to have a way to "wheel" that power into town past Sunflower.

The city faced the challenge this time and found a solution. With a tight budget, higher costs and state cuts, though, it may face more in the near future. — *Tom Betz*

### 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. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star-news@nwkansas.com>.

## The Goodland Star-News

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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



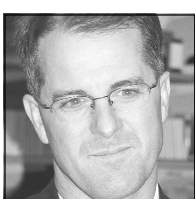
## How to handle those deceptive invoices

Dear Attorney General Kline:

I recently received an invoice for a trade magazine I did not order. I called the company only to discover that what looked like a bill was really just a solicitation! I wonder how many Kansans and Kansas Businesses just go ahead and pay such a "bill", not knowing they have no legal obligation to do so. Isn't this kind of solicitation illegal?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

Even the Attorney General's Office is not immune from receiving these kinds of solicitations. In fact, we just collected this month over \$3000 from a company who sent such a solicitation for a legal magazine to the head of the Consumer Protection Division! Deceptive solicitations are illegal on several fronts. Under Kansas Law, individuals are protected from such deceptive practices by the Consumer Protection Act. US Postal Service Regulations require solicitations that look like invoices, bills, or account statements to carry a notice, in capital letters, stating that the solicitation is an offer, not a bill, and that the customer is under no obligation to pay it. Should you receive a solicitation like this which you believe to be fraudulent, you may contact the Consumer Protection Division of my office at the number below or the United States Postal Service. Of course, not all solicitations look like in-



**phill  
kline**

• attorney general

voices or bills; some may look like (and actually be) checks. Should you receive an unexpected check in the mail, for a rebate or similar reason, be sure to read carefully both the check and the associated paperwork. Many rebate checks have a statement authorizing a company to charge you for a product or service, and if you sign the check, you are authorizing the transaction. Some are actually loans or loan applications, and while they may seem a bit sneaky, they are generally legal if they disclose exactly what they are. Before you get excited and rush that check to the bank, just remember that no company stays in business long by giving away money, so be sure to be aware of everything you sign your name to. You may actually be ordering something that you don't want and that will cost more in the long run.

While illegal invoices are generally easy to stop once a number of consumers report it, there is a similar scam which is more widespread and much harder to trace: the mailing

of fraudulent invoices where nothing was ordered. This scam, which is usually plagues businesses but often targets individuals as well, is based on the hope that someone will be too busy to check carefully what they are paying for. In the case of individuals, it may be an invoice that looks like a telephone service invoice or for a popular magazine, in the case of businesses it is usually for office supplies which the company orders as a matter of course. The hope of the scammers is that the person will write a check and mail it off to the PO Box on the invoice, which is often a mail drop to another PO Box, making the scheme very hard to trace. The best defense for cases like this is to always be aware of what you're signing, and don't send money just because an invoice looks "official". If there are questions, it's always best to clarify with the company before than to try to recover your money later.

*Attorney General Phill Kline offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Phill Kline, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th Ave., 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.*

## James, brother of Jesus?



**sharon  
corcoran**

• use it or lose it

It was announced last fall that an ancient ossuary, a casket for bones, was found with the inscription, "James son of Joseph brother of Jesus." The ossuary had been in a private collection for over 15 years before anyone realized the possible significance.

A couple of articles, "James in the Box" by Maxine Grossman and "O Brother, Who Art Thou?" by Michael McGough, in the Spring 2003 issue of *Religion in the News* talk about the ossuary and some controversy surrounding it.

The ossuary generated no small controversy as to its authenticity, some as to its ownership and yet more as to its religious significance. Some scholars considered the box to be from the first century and likely to have held the bones of James, the Bible writer, the brother of Jesus. Others considered the box to be a fraud. The Israel Antiquities Authority is conducting tests.

A month after the press conference announcing the "discovery," the ossuary was displayed at Toronto, Canada's, Royal Ontario Museum. Although the owner had only paid between \$200 and \$700 for the box, it was insured for between \$1 and \$2 million for the trip to Toronto, according to varying reports. The museum paid \$25,000 to display the ossuary and netted a \$175,000 profit from 95,000 viewers.

If the owner purchased it in the mid-1980s, as originally thought, rather than in the mid-70s, as he now says, it would be subject to a 1978 law permitting the antiquities authority to confiscate it and possibly charge him with a crime.

Representatives of the authority said the owner had not alerted them to the ossuary's possible significance at the time when he applied for an export license.

The ossuary also brought up a theological debate as to whether Jesus, the son of God, could have a brother. The official Roman Catholic belief, McGough's article said, is that James could not be a brother or even a half-brother (Joseph's son by a previous marriage) of Jesus because such a connection would undermine the church's teaching that Mary was "ever virgin."

Catholics claim the word "brother" can refer to any close relative, the article said; perhaps James is a cousin of Jesus, the son of Joseph's brother.

Many Protestants believe that James was the

son of Joseph and Mary, the article said; that Mary gave birth to Jesus as a virgin, and the couple then had children together. The Eastern Orthodox Church considers James to be Joseph's son by a previous marriage. What does the Bible say about James?

Matthew 13:55, 56 says of Jesus, "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Where, then, did this man get all these things?"

James is referred to as one of the sons of Joseph and Mary. This scripture quotes people in Galilee as questioning Jesus' skills, as he was viewed as an ordinary man, the son of a carpenter. People in Jesus' hometown viewed him and his brothers and sisters as that, children of Mary and Joseph.

Matthew 12:46-50 also shows this to be the view of people at that time: "While he was yet speaking to the crowds... someone said to him: 'Look! Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak to you.' As an answer he said to the one telling him: 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And extending his hand toward his disciples, he said: 'Look! My mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'"

By that statement, Jesus was emphasizing

the importance of spiritual ties over family ties. He encouraged his potential followers in Matthew Chapter 10 to put spiritual matters before family. Using his own family as an illustration in Chapter 12 wouldn't have carried much weight if they were not really his mother, brothers and sisters, but rather cousins.

In Matthew 10:35-37, Jesus says, "For I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law. Indeed, a man's enemies will be persons of his own household. He that has greater affection for father or mother than for me is not worthy of me."

Jesus was not saying he wanted families to fight, but was indicating that following him would lead to dispute in families and that those who want to be his followers would have to be willing to risk making waves.

Exodus 21:10 is a provision in the Mosaic law to protect wives in the case of polygamy but contains the principle for marriage dues: "If he should take another wife for himself, her sustenance, her clothing and her marriage due are not to be diminished."

If Mary remained "ever virgin," Joseph never in their entire marriage got his due. But that would mean Mary and Joseph went against God's view of marriage, that husbands and wives owed each other proper sexual attention. It is more reasonable and in line with the Bible's teachings to view James as Jesus' half-brother, the son of Mary and Joseph, than to view him as a cousin or Joseph's son by a previous marriage.

And it's reasonable to see that Mary remained a virgin until after Jesus' birth largely to protect the certainty of his paternity, that he was not biologically Joseph's son.

### where to write

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