

from our viewpoint...

City's future brings many opportunities

What dose the future hold for Goodland? That is a constant question, but you get different answers from different people. There are those who complain and say, "This town is going to dry up and blow away." That is a statement I have heard for over 40 years in about every city and town I have lived in. I heard it in the dirty 50s, and again in the dry 70s in Lamar and Holly, Colo. I heard the same sort of statement while serving in the Navy in Newport, R.I., when the Defense Department announced the closing of the destroyer base and the transfer of 17,000 sailors to Newport News, Va. I heard it in a similar fashion in the likes of Hugo, Cheyenne Wells and Eads, where my family owned newspapers. Thing is, none of those communities has "blown away." It is always easier to look at things pessimistically and much easier to be "against" something rather than in favor of what-ever is about to change.

Many people blame the press for reporting all the bad things that happen, as if those of us in the news business were responsible for creating the events. We report on life, and that goes for the bad and the good. On a given day, there are more good things in the news than there are bad, but people focus on the negative items and forget the positive.

There are positive changes happening in Goodland every day, and despite the naysayers there is progress in many places. Some of the steps are not big and bold, but they are movement in the right direction.

Examples of progress include the way the school district is handling its money crunch and how it will be able to re-roof the high school in one project because the price came in \$80,000 under the estimates.

Speaking of roofs, work is underway on the Carnegie Art Center roof to spruce it up and restore the ceramic tile.

We attended the Business After Hours at Golden West on Friday afternoon and enjoyed seeing the changes the management has made in that facility.

It was sort of a sad time, as we were saying good-bye to Jo Simmons as the Chamber manager, but there was a good crowd of business people to let her know we will miss her.

The effort on the "control city" project, which aims to get Goodland listed on I-70 distance signs, will have a long-term effect, but doing the work will pay off. It may take a year or more for the process to grind through. This is one of the small things that many times get lost in the shuffle of progress, and it takes a lot of time and effort to follow through with the details.

We are happy to see plans underway for the Freedom Fest on July 4. This continues to be one of the best events of the summer anywhere on the High Plains. Joe Diaz says he is planning another great fireworks show, and there are plans for stock car races on Saturday, July 5.

There are always positive things going on, but sometimes we need to spend a few moments thinking about what has changed before we repeat the, "This town will dry up and blow away." — 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 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@nwkanssas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkanssas.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

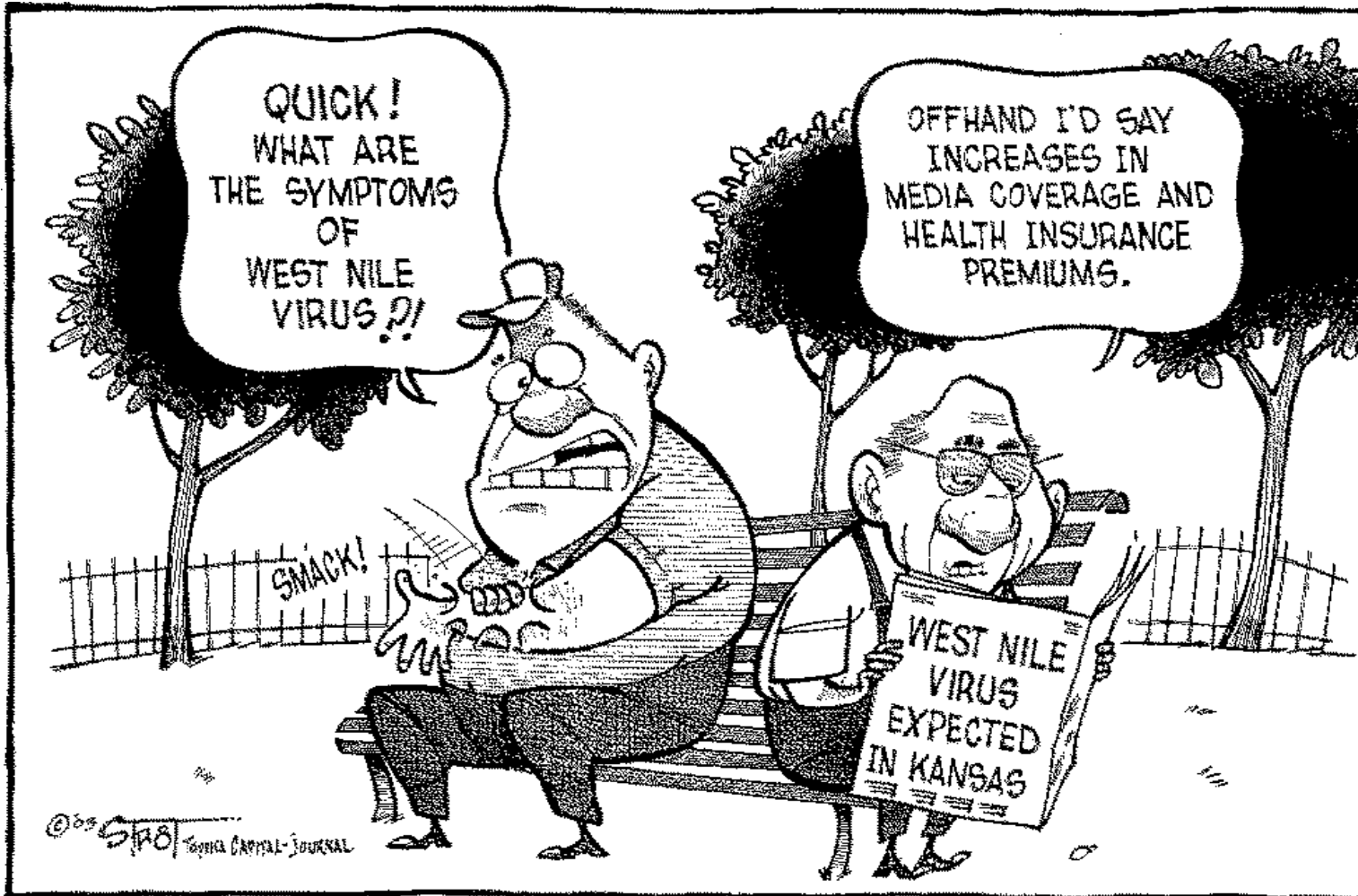
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10 steps to guarding against identity theft

Identity theft. A crime that barely existed a decade ago has now become one of the most devastating and expensive offenses in modern society.

This month's column will be the first in a series that will spotlight the growing problem of identity theft and provide solutions so you can protect yourself. In a future column, I will tell you what steps you can take if you become a victim of this growing crime.

The Federal Trade Commission in 2001 received over 86,000 reports of identity theft, and as we become more dependent on electronic transactions, these figures are likely to continue rising. However, there are some simple things that you can do to reduce your risk.

Identity thieves use a host of tactics to acquire your personal information. These include stealing your wallet or purse, stealing your mail or calling victims to solicit information (this is popular among our senior population). Thieves have also been known to rummage through your trash to obtain key information such as name, address, date of birth, Social / security number and mother's maiden name. Here are some things you can do so this does not happen to you:

- Make sure you're using a secure browser when shopping online. Look for a "lock" on your browser's status bar.
- Find out how personal information will be used before revealing it online or by phone. Read, or ask, about the company's privacy policy. Companies are now required by law to provide you with an opt-out clause so that your information is not shared or sold to other companies.
- Check the privacy policies that are posted on websites your children visit. Tell your kids never to give out personal information over the



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Internet or telephone.

- Avoid using passwords based on easily available information, such as your mother's maiden name, your birth date, Social Security number or your phone number.

- Carry only the identification and credit cards you need. It is a good idea to place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine and make copies of both sides of all cards. That way you will have account and telephone numbers readily available in the event they are stolen or misplaced.

- Shred receipts, credit applications, insurance forms, physician statements, checks, bank statements, credit offers and mailing labels from magazines to thwart identity thieves. Destroy expired charge cards.

- Place your outgoing mail in post office collection boxes or at your local post office. Thieves often target unsecured mailboxes in the front of your home. Once you put the red flag up to signal your postman of outgoing mail, you have also inadvertently red flagged your mailbox for a would-be thief. Once you leave, they have access to whatever items you have placed in the mailbox. If you are like me, these are often bills that contain account numbers and vital information.

- Make sure your credit report is accurate. For about \$9 you can order a copy of your report each year from one of the three major credit-reporting agencies:

Equifax, www.equifax.com or (800) 685-1111;

Experian, www.experian.com or (888) 397-3742; or

TransUnion, www.transunion.com or (800) 888-4213.

- In the State of Kansas, residents have the option of either using their Social Security numbers or having the Department of Motor Vehicles issue drivers a separate driver's license number. It is a good idea to get one of these random numbers the next time you renew your license. Remember, a Kansas driver's license contains all of your vital information, including a copy of your signature.

10. Do not carry your Social Security card with you. Instead, leave it in a secure place. Give your Social Security Number only when absolutely necessary. Ask the following questions before revealing your number: Why do you need my number?; How will my number be used?; What law requires me to give you my number?; and What will happen if I don't give you my number?.

If you choose to not reveal your number, the business may choose to not provide you with the service or benefit you're seeking but at least you will have the option. Remember, it is your Social Security number and it is up to you to keep it safe.

Identity theft is something we must all contend with, but by following these simple steps, you can ensure you will not be the next victim. Unfortunately, if a thief is determined to obtain your personal information, then there is only so much you can do to stop them. However, if you make it difficult to obtain your information then thieves are likely to pass you by and move on to the next unsuspecting victim.

Rural Kansas good place to get exercise

Driving across Kansas on a beautiful, if partly cloudy and mostly hazy day, the back, the behind and the legs get stiff and sore.

After a niece's graduation in Emporia, we had to beat a hasty retreat. There was a paper to do Monday, and three-quarters of a state to cross.

But we knew we'd never make it home in time to get any exercise. My doctor says I need more exercise, and the dietitian says I need it every day. I can't argue with them. At least, I can't win.

Before sunset, we pulled off at an exit where Ellsworth County meets Lincoln County, between Salina and Russell up in the heart of the Smoky Hills.

There's a good gravel road there that you can walk without much traffic. It's at least two miles to the nearest house.

On a sunny evening, the hills were bright green, softened by the yellow glow of the fading light. The air, though humid, was cool and pleasant. There was a hay mow to the right, wheat to the left, in rich dark topsoil that seemed to run from bluff to bluff.

We started hiking up the hill, wondering at the fact that most of the homesteads were long abandoned. That's no different than any other



steve
haynes

- along the sappa

spot in rural Kansas, though.

Up on top of the hill, where the glen graded gently north toward the Saline River drainage, was a stone farm house that had been handed down from the first generation on the hills. New roof, good paint, the house was in sharp repair. It was matched by a stone garage, two stone equipment sheds and a small but neat stone barn. Combines and big tractors were in a pole shed; in the days when they cut and built with local stone, they did not build big enough for today's equipment.

We kept walking past the first place and around the corner, where there were two more houses. Barn cats scattered when they saw our dog, wild and crazy as she is.

A couple came down the road on horseback. We stopped to let them by, but the big bay the man was riding was spooky as heck. Finally, he got off and led her by.

garfield

