

from our viewpoint...

## Post Office report allows closing offices

The Commission on the U.S. Postal Service met, wrote its report and disbanded. The tome has been filed away in some government archive, awaiting action by Congress, but it is not dead. The report contains a couple of recommendations that could affect rural America and everyone who uses the mail. The first is that the service be free to close more of its 35,000 post offices. Obvious targets are offices in smaller towns, some of which have fewer than half a dozen counter customers a day, but county seats could be on the target list. Some offices probably should be closed. They are little more than points of civic pride in an age where people think nothing of driving to the county seat — or the next county — for milk and groceries. The Postal Service has been closing tiny offices here and there, especially when a postmaster leaves or retires. Many of these are staffed by a part-time person and have limited window hours. It's not the Postal Service deserting the people. Rather, the people have left some towns. A combination of town boxes, rural carriers and other services can carry the load in some towns and allow the post office to maintain its standard of universal delivery. But the commission is not just talking about little towns, we fear. It'd like to do away with thousands of post offices. "In many communities, the post office owns valuable, centrally located rural estate that could be sold to raise income," the commission noted.

Whoever said that hasn't been out of the city lately. Anywhere the post office occupies priceless real estate is not a town that can do without a post office. Out here, even in a county seat, a vacant post office would likely be just one more vacant building.

What the postal service wants is to do away with mail sorting at local offices. Carriers will get mail in trays, sequenced by stop, with the sorting done in a very few automated centers. Things already are moving that direction, though our mail is still sorted mostly at home.

The commission talks about having a body like a military base closing commission to independently decide which mail-sorting facilities can be sold. The result of this is almost surely to be much worse mail service than what we have today.

Smaller regional centers that give good service, like those in Hays, Colby and Salina, would give way to massive mail-sorting plants like those we now have in big cities.

And those give lousy service already. With postal unions strong and wages high, the lure of automation is great. But anyone but a fool should be able to see that taking all the mail to a few big cities to sort — maybe in Topeka, Wichita and Kansas City for Kansas — will be grossly inefficient. It's a prescription for poor service and slow mail.

Carriers won't be able to give good service because they'll be barred from sorting their mail and won't have an office to do it in anyway. Transportation expenses will soar. And delivery will be even slower than it is today.

The Postal Service does need reform, but closing offices that work and expanding those that don't makes no sense — except to a bean counter. And that's mostly what this commission is, a bunch of business executives who know nothing about moving mail.

As the fight unfolds and Congress joins in, we'll have time to howl. It won't hurt to start now, though. A lot is at stake here.

The postal service expects to be profitable this year, but faces many problems and financial pressures. If we want our mail delivered, on time and at a decent price, we need to get involved in this battle. — *Steve Haynes*

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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



## I get depressed about missing children

I don't know about you, but I get distressed when I think about the number of lost and missing children in our affluent society.

Why, in the midst of a free society, are there so many despicable acts of violence against our children? Have there always been, or do we just have more media coverage today?

But then the media doesn't cover all the outrages. Occasionally there are stories that are highlighted and given worldwide exposure, but those are usually the ones involving families who are wealthy or famous. The ordinary family isn't news, even though their pain is as great.

You might think there aren't many of the "ordinary" ones. I invite you to visit your local law enforcement agencies and ask to see the flyers on missing children. You would be absolutely amazed at the "partial" stack they will show you.

I found this out when I went to pick up my foster child who had run away and been picked up with an older hitch-hiker by the police. How lucky he was that he was found and hadn't come to any harm.



lorna  
gt

• commentary

I remember when I was a child, and I was missing for a time. It was back years ago in the time of heating stoves fueled by wood. I had been warned never to put wood or anything in the stove. It was dangerous, and I wasn't to touch it. My folks said if I ever came home from school and they weren't there (which itself was a rarity. Mom was always there), I was to put a blanket in a chair, crawl into the chair and wrap the blanket all around me. "Never, never try to start a fire," I was warned. (My father had a sister who burned to death after throwing kerosene into a stove, trying to start it.)

My family came home one day and couldn't find me. My sister was quizzed, and she hadn't seen me either. A neighborhood search was

started; none of the neighbors knew anything. Grandmother's house was a possibility; not there either. A couple of hours went by; my folks were frantic. They were ready to go to the police (911 was undreamed-of then, and we didn't even have a phone anyway).

Then I walked, rubbing my eyes, into the kitchen where they were debating their next step. "Lorna, where have you been?" I remember the look in my mother's eyes. She grabbed me and hugged me. Daddy said later he wanted to hug me and spank me all at the same time, he was so relieved. I showed them where I'd been. "Isn't that what you said to do if I was cold and you weren't home?" I asked. They had not seen me there. Wrapped completely in the blanket and asleep, I was so completely curled up it looked like just a blanket thrown in the chair.

Wouldn't it be great if every missing child could be found? Wouldn't it be great if every story could have such a happy ending?

We all need to protect God's children - not just our own.

## Time to decide to end domestic violence

To the Editor:

Domestic violence, the hidden crime, is on the rise in America. Nearly one-third of American women report being physically or sexually abused by their intimate partners, and unfortunately not all abuse is reported.

The American Medical Association estimates that 60 percent of American homes experience at least one domestic violence incident. In 2002, Northwest Kansas Family Shelter received 1,768 telephone victim calls, an increase of nearly 15 percent over the previous year.

Abuse can take both physical and non-physical forms, including economic abuse, coercion, threats and intimidation.

Northwest Kansas Family Shelter is here to help those who are experiencing or have experienced this hidden crime. October has been selected as Domestic Violence Awareness month.

If you are in one of the 60 percent of American families experiencing this crime, call the shelter at 1-800-794-4624. All calls are confidential.

Break the silence; make the call to stop this silent crime!

Staff of Northwest Kansas Family Shelter  
Hays

To the Editor:

I am Mark Jenkins, the owner of the Goodland Car Wash.

I showed up at the car wash Saturday and saw those ugly barricades blocking the street around my car wash and very few customers showed up at my car wash.

I had trouble finding Justin Bentzinger. I told the Chamber of Commerce and chief of police that I needed to talk to him.

I told him that he was blocking the street around my car wash. Justin and the Chamber



from our  
readers

• to the editor

have never informed me that my street would be blocked off.

I complained and it was very inconvenient for me and my valuable customers, including out-of-towners.

Justin and the Chamber should have contacted me a week before Flatlander. Saturday is usually my busiest day. The Chamber of Commerce should owe me money because of loss of business.

What has the Chamber of Commerce done for the City of Goodland for the last five years? Think about it.

Justin and the Chamber will never again block the streets around my car wash. Thank goodness that I'm not a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mark Jenkins  
Goodland

To the Editor:

It is with great pleasure that we as officials get this opportunity to file this report. The game last Friday between Atwood and Goodland High School left our crew with a very good feeling about the state of Kansas high school athletics. Both schools deserve to be commended on the behavior of their teams, coaches and fans.

What a great atmosphere it was in Goodland. From the time we took the field until the time we left the field, there was never a play that left us with anything but the feeling that both teams

were there to play their best and give everything they had in a positive way. The coaches from each team were very respectful.

The players, some playing in perhaps the biggest game of their careers, never strayed from their mission. There was no arguing calls or displays of unacceptable behavior.

Too many times we hear of the negative actions of some players, coaches and fans. Atwood and Goodland high schools showed us and the rest of Kansas that, yes, "Big Games" can be won with dignity and lost with respect for your opponents and officials.

It was a game that both teams deserved to win, and both teams will learn from the win or the loss and only get better. Good Luck to both teams as you finish your lessons.

Mike Miller, Paul Ritter, Troy Faulkender and Terry Ostmyer

PS: For Goodland High School, by far the best-sounding band we have heard all year. Great Job.

## 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@nwkanssas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkanssas.com).

