

from our viewpoint...

## Site team impressed by hospital, people

The betting is better than 50-50 Goodland will win the competition for a Department of Veterans Affairs community outreach clinic.

A final decision is perhaps weeks away, but the site team that toured the hospital and spent the night in Goodland last week seemed impressed with what they saw and heard.

Listening to the comments, team member talked about how impressed they were with the enthusiasm and "can-do" spirit of the hospital staff and the citizens on the tour.

It would probably have been a bit of overkill, but we half expected to see some Goodland veterans led by Ken Baum marching with signs saying "Goodland is the place" in front of the hospital when the four-member team arrived last Monday afternoon.

Baum and a small group of veterans were on hand to listen to the team and ask questions. Some accompanied the team as it toured the spaced being offered for the clinic. Baum has been the leader of a phone campaign to the Denver Regional office to register support for Goodland.

Hospital Administrator Jay Jolly was able to answer most of the team's questions, and had his clinic manager and other staff on the spot to answer those he could not.

Financial officer Jim Precht was able to show team members other areas of the hospital that might help solve the veterans clinic's needs.

Having experts from S&T Communications at the hospital to talk about the clinic's telemedicine needs and options was a great idea. Veterans Affairs team member Eloy Salazar, the communications expert, said he was impressed with their being available. He said they had been able to answer all his questions, saving him a lot of follow up after the visit.

We felt Goodland really put its best foot forward. It was a great day for the hospital people to show off their facilities and services.

It has been about four years since the idea of having a veteran's outreach clinic in Goodland first came up. Jolly and Carolyn Applegate, then the economic development director, put together a map and information showing the lack of veterans services within 150 miles of Goodland.

With the help of Congressman Jerry Moran, the Denver regional office of Veterans Affairs was asked to consider Goodland when about 400 veterans, families and citizens attended a public forum at the Goodland Veterans of Foreign Wars hall in August 2004.

Over the years, people like Jolly and Moran kept in contact with the VA to see if the clinic idea was moving higher on the priority list.

In December, the idea moved into the realm of reality with the announcement that Goodland, Burlington and Yuma, Colo., were being considered for a new clinic.

Things are moving quickly, and Jolly said he felt good that Goodland was the first of the three sites the team visited last week.

It is not too late to register your support for the Goodland site by calling (866) 301-9626 and telling them you feel ours is the best location for the clinic.

For those of us who served, even those who do not presently need VA medical services, it's important to have a clinic in our area. We need to remember there is a new wave of veterans who will need the services coming from Afghanistan and Iraq. We would prefer it be Goodland.

— Tom Betz (USN JO2 1969-1973)



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## News: Iraq leaders trying to stop violence

Just as the Democrats try to set a timetable for cutting and running from Iraq comes news that Sunnis leaders have begun to band together to help Americans and their government end the violence.

About time someone came to their senses. Even John McCain says he sees the difference.

Meantime, back home in the U.S. of A., the new Democrat majority seems bent on pulling out of Iraq, no matter what is happening. A timetable can only be a scheduled defeat, though.

And unlike in Vietnam, America is not losing this war. We can only give it away.

We do need to get out of Iraq. Even President Bush admits that.

But after a quick and decisive victory on the battlefield, the administration seems to have lost its way. Commanders have changed. Strategy switched. That era is over.

With the president's "surge" of troops, violence is down, cooperation is up and better days might just be in sight. Can we believe that?

A prominent Sunni sheik told reporters this



steve haynes

• along the sappa

week he's building an alliance with the Americans and the government to end the violence in his province of Anbar, a hotbed of sectarian battles.

If his movement gathers steam, it just might work. Surely the people of Iraq are tired of bombings, beheadings and rape.

War is reprehensible, something to be avoided. As a nation we should avoid them, limit them, end them.

But what happens if we just pull out of Iraq on a timetable?

Who wins then?

Not America.

Not the Shiite majority. Not the Sunni minority.

If what we have seen is a civil war, will it end

before every last Iraqi is dead or wounded, once American troops are gone?

Will al Qaida wind up running the Middle East? Or will peace prevail?

I don't have a crystal ball. I know that unlike the "big media" reporters, soldiers I talk to who've been there tell a far different story of what's happening in Iraq and what will happen.

They don't think we're losing the war. They don't think things are that bad. Other editors, I've talked to, say the same thing about veterans they've interviewed.

Television only shows bombings, victims and violence, some of it by terrorists, some by American troops. The truth may lie somewhere in between. In the meantime, American losses are, in military terms, low, the picture is far from clear, but improving, and on American soil, there's been no terrorist action for more than five years.

Withdraw? Yes. But only as Iraqi's take charge and the situation returns to normal. It's hard to set a timetable for that.

## Why spring taxes me

I hate spring. I hate the sunny weather and chirping birds and neighbors smiling and humming while they spread mulch in their planters.

I hate the buds on the trees and the sweet smell in the air. I hate the way the sun falls gently over the hills at dusk.

I hate everything about spring, because I'm self-employed.

Every year this time I'm a nervous wreck about my taxes. I worry that I'll owe more than I think I will, and I will. I worry that I'll not get everything organized and tallied up for my accountant in time, and it's always close.

This is because our income tax system is complex. It is complex because drunk people (members of Congress) designed it so that a bureaucracy (the IRS) will convert the incomprehensible into the unfathomable (the tax code) in order to punish productive Americans (the self-employed) all in the name of good fun.

To comply with our onerous tax rules, I have developed a highly effective accounting technique: the Big Box Methodology. From the beginning of January through the end of December, I toss every bill, receipt, expense, etc. into a big cardboard box.

Every year, I am forced to organize and tally every one of these items, so that I can document my business expenses. I must document my business expenses to accomplish what every self-employed person hopes to accomplish: to have earned as little income as possible the year before.

I was in a mighty struggle with Big Box during the winter. He kept calling out to me, pleading with me to get things in order. But I ignored Big Box. I ignored his unreasonable demands week after week, and the more I ignored him, the more worried I got.

As spring neared, I began taking Big Box with me. When I went away for the weekends,



tom purcell

• commentary

I put him in my trunk. I had high hopes of using my weekend breaks to organize every slip of paper into a brilliant rendition of how much I earned and spent in 2006, but I did not.

No, I did the same thing this year I do every year. I waited until the last few weeks before taxes are due. Despite the recent cold snap, I know what every self-employed person knows: the weather will break big this week.

As the sun shines and the world comes to life, I'll get calls from beautiful women who want to spend time with me. I'll be offered box-seat tickets to baseball games, invitations to cook-outs, requests to partake in fun and frivolity of every kind.

But I will turn them all down.

I will turn them down because of Congress. When members of Congress passed the 16th Amendment into law in 1913, they made the income tax deadline March 1. But in 1955 Congress pushed the deadline to April 15.

They did this so helpless American taxpayers would have more time to organize and file their taxes? Ha, ha. No, they did it to give the IRS more time. But I think there was an additional reason.

Dissatisfied that the cost and complexity of the income tax was not painful enough — according to the Tax Foundation, Americans wasted 6 billion hours and \$260 billion completing returns last year — Congress saw an opportunity to ruin spring, too.

That's why I've been shut off from the world. That's why I've been hunkered down with an intensity and focus that would make the Unabomber wince.

I have been doing battle with Big Box, you see, trying to make sense of all the receipts, bills, etc. he contains. I've been in English-major hell — adding, subtracting, documenting, palpating.

The worst is yet to come. When I finally get everything organized, I'll forward the details to my accountant. He'll use them to make complex tax-code calculations. Then he'll tell me I owe way more than I thought I did.

Now you know why I hate spring.

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## The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

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@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, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

### The Goodland Daily News

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Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

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Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

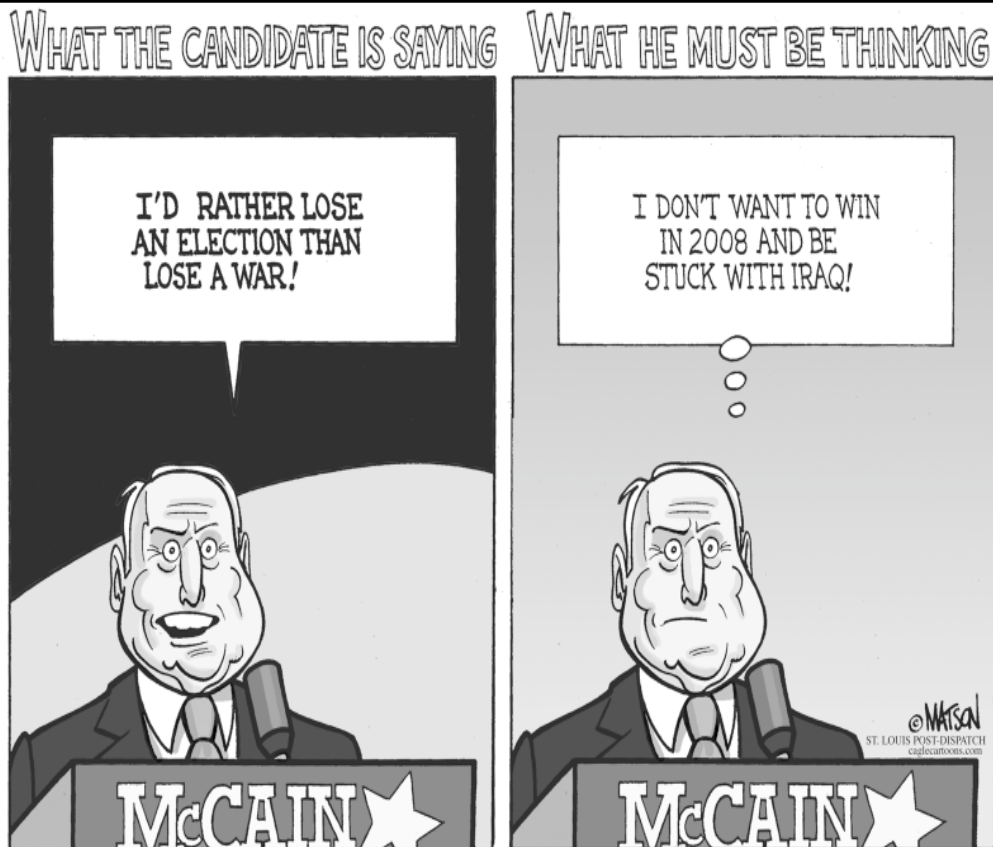
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### Nor'West Newspapers

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