

from our viewpoint...

Community pride shows real progress

A community shows pride in many ways. Events of the past week and the planned cleanup on Saturday indicate Goodland's future is bright.

Dirt work has begun at Steever Park for the first phase of a new skate park. The 20 young people who have worked hard over the past year to make that a reality deserve recognition for raising more than \$30,000 so far. Both the adults who have helped guide the efforts and students deserve congratulations for a job well done.

The two groups have learned from each other over the past year. The adults know more about skateboards and skate parks than they ever thought possible, and the young people have a new appreciation for the effort and commitment it takes to tackle a large project.

About a third of the money raised came from grants, with \$5,000 from the Finnup Foundation from Garden City and \$5,000 from the Tony Hawk Foundation, a national group supporting the development of skate parks.

The young people helped fill out the grant forms and produced a video presentation for the Hawk Foundation. Not all of the young people who helped are interested in skating, but they all want to see the project succeed and lead into other projects young people are interested in developing.

The community will have a new skate park, and those who did the work will have a sense of accomplishment that will carry forward through their lives. The bigger lesson of the last year is that young people here are willing to put their effort into a project they can have pride in for many years to come.

The job is not completed, pouring first-phase the concrete slab will be proof of the work done, and when the equipment is added, there will be more proof of the pride of accomplishment.

Pride in one's community includes more than what unique features there may be or the beautiful parks. It is in the attitude that makes your reach down and pick up that piece of trash lying on the sidewalk or in the middle of the street.

A clean and tidy town reflects the image of a good place to live, showing that the people who live there are proud of their town.

Some things are out of an individual's control, but helping clean up the community by volunteering Saturday morning demonstrates commitment to the vision of a cleaner Goodland.

At the Shine On Sherman County "community conversation" on Thursday, beautification was one of the topics. The Shine On group has been working in five areas for about two years, with beautification being one of the five along with the successful youth group, government, resources and regional health.

What people see when they come into Goodland is important to their impression of the city and the people who live here. Those of us who live here need to develop an attitude of pride and work together to clean up parts of the city that may have been neglected in the past.

Like the young people and their project, we need to be committed to promoting the cleanup of the city, knowing it will not happen overnight.

Have your trash and junk out on the curb Saturday morning to help clean up the town and, better yet, volunteer to help your neighbors collect trash and haul it to the county transfer station. There's plenty of room for more workers.

After all, people put the "good" in Goodland. — Tom Betz



Visiting deep in the heart of Dixie

After visits this month to Aberdeen, S.D.; Junction City; and Lincoln, Neb., we went exotic and toured Baton Rouge and Lafayette, La., deep in the heart of Dixie.

I had two wishes for my visit to Louisiana: I wanted to see a swamp, hopefully with alligators, and eat red beans and rice with sausage.

Steve wanted red snapper.

A swamp tour near Baton Rouge I found online was out of the question. We only had Wednesday evening and Thursday morning and early afternoon. We had to be in Lafayette for dinner.

We used the time we had on Wednesday to find a nice restaurant that sold red snapper. It's kinda hard to find in Louisiana, where redfish is the local choice.

We took a walk along the river dike and made plans for Thursday. It was great looking out over the Mississippi by lamplight.

After breakfast, we walked down to the USS Kidd, a World War II destroyer tied up on the levee. This wasn't on Steve's original list, but what boy can resist a big boat?

I took a quick tour and hit the gift shop.

After the Kidd, we visited Louisiana's old statehouse. It looks like a medieval castle with acres of stained glass — gorgeous, but more like a big courthouse than a capital, and way too small for modern government. It's where



cynthia haynes

• open season

colorful, controversial Huey Long presided as governor in the early 1930s before he built the new, 34-story statehouse north of downtown. He later ran for the U.S. Senate and was assassinated in 1935.

Our last stop on the way out of town was the Bluebonnet Swamp, created by road building in area almost 300 years ago by German settlers. The park features a series of nature trails over boggy land and water on a series of long wooden bridges.

The first wildlife we saw, though, was on the bridge at the entryway.

I spotted a turtle on a log about 100 feet away from us. Then we saw a half dozen heads swimming towards us. As they drew closer, we could tell they were turtles with their shells underwater. I got the feeling that if we stayed, we might be mugged. They were in formation and they looked like they meant business. We moved on to the visitors center.

We saw birds, including some baby owls just out of the nest hole, lots of bugs and a

large snake on the trails, but no more turtles or alligators until we returned to the nature center. There, giant snakes, poisonous spiders and baby alligators are on display. We even got to watch the handlers feed crickets to small turtles. The ones outside probably thought that we had crickets on us.

OK, so it was time to leave for Lafayette, about an hour away in the heart of the French-speaking Cajun country, and we had accomplished Steve's dream and half of mine.

At the Louisiana Press Convention, the reason for the trip, we got to try most of the local delicacies — crayfish, shrimp and rubber chicken (hey this is a convention, remember.)

The programs ended early Friday night, so we escaped with several other convention goers to downtown and the Festival International de Louisiane, an extravaganza a food, music and arts. We listened to bands on four stages — they had acts in French and English, from as far away as Paris and Quebec — and bought a few small souvenirs and I got my red beans and rice with sausage and chicken. Steve had fried shrimp, but was tempted by the fried alligator.

We left Louisiana on Saturday feeling like we had touched and tasted the state without ever going near New Orleans.

Obama's critique of small town reveals truths

Barack Obama said the people in the small towns of Pennsylvania "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them". He spoke aloud what many liberals think. His remarks in San Francisco, which have now come to be known as "Bittergate," are very telling about the man. These were not scripted and pre-thought words, but were a spontaneous, honest answer to a query. Obama's words are a looking glass into his deepest thoughts.

We believe Obama was projecting his own beliefs on working, mainstream Americans. Since making the comments, he has been in retreat. Now, he says that anger and hope go together. Evidently, Barack Obama's message of hope is actually a brew including anger, bitterness and resentment. Are these the emotions lingering in his heart when he speaks of change?

No one denies that in the past many wrongs were perpetrated against African-Americans. However, let us put it in perspective. Jews, Italians, the Irish and many other groups of people faced cruel and unfair treatment in our history, especially when they were new arrivals to America. While not slaves, many were indentured servants...only a small notch above slavery.

Secretary of State Condi Rice has a much healthier attitude on these issues when she says our nation had a "birth defect" when the nation was born, because of slavery of African-Americans. She holds out hope by talking about the healing process, which began with the Civil War, continued with the Civil Rights movement, and is ongoing today.

Obama has a way of turning around negative situations. He excels at making "the other person" out to be the bad guy. Instead of apologizing for his latest comments, as most people do after they offend someone else, he plays the victim and acts offended. This is the tactic a wife abuser uses when saying, "It's her fault that I hit her, she made me do it." Obama offends millions of Americans by his remarks about people in small towns, guns, religion and immigrants, and then dismisses it as "the silly political season."

This is not the first time that he has used the tactic. When America learned about his racist, anti-American, profane pastor, what



floyd, mary brown

• commentary

did Obama do? He turned the dialogue into a discussion about why it is America's fault that Rev. Wright said all of those hate-filled words.

Either Obama is an arrogant, intellectual elitist or he just does not "get it." It is probably a combination of the two. Obama is disconnected from, lacks empathy for, and has no understanding of the beliefs and values of these small town and suburban Americans. Here lies the great divide in world views.

The Harvard-educated, urban-dwelling, Hollywood-embracing, Pastor Wright-following Obama just has trouble understanding why we love America without conditions. He continues criticizing the "bad" in our past, while

we choose to embrace America, even with her flaws, because she is still, by far, the best and greatest nation the world has yet seen. Despite our sins, we still are the beacon of hope and opportunity for freedom loving people around the globe.

Barack Obama: your derogatory, demeaning, and stereotype-filled remarks may reveal more than you realize. Be careful, because your arrogance may lead to your downfall...we are beginning to hear the condemnation in your slick words.

Hope mixed with anger is not the solution. Former slave and the founder of Tuskegee University in Alabama, Booker T. Washington, wisely said it best concerning the effects of bitterness, "I would permit no man...to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."

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