

from our viewpoint...

Shuttle should have gone to Houston

While the sight of a space shuttle sailing past the Statue of Liberty might make a great picture, but surely Houston, the home of Mission Control for more than half a century, was a more deserving resting place for one of the four remaining shuttles.

A little history: The last shuttle flight was on July 21 last year. It marked the end of the 30 year program that brought us the first reusable space vehicle. Even though the shift away from Apollo-style capsules meant we couldn't go to the moon, the space shuttle was still a giant leap forward. It was the most advanced piece of machinery in its day.

But 30 years is a long lifespan for technology, and the shuttles were starting to show their age. The shuttles were often grounded for safety reviews or mechanical problems. And so eventually the program came to an end. Once Atlantis had made her final flight last year, the discussion turned to the big question: where do we put the spacecraft? Twenty museums around the country submitted proposals, but there were only so many shuttles to go around.

Atlantis is staying at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Certainly the site of every space shuttle launch deserved to have one of the orbiters. Discovery went to a Smithsonian Institute center in Virginia, not far from the nation's capital. That makes sense as well. Endeavour went to the California Science Center in Los Angeles, so at least they're not all on the east coast.

That takes care of the three operational shuttles. But what to do with the Enterprise?

Enterprise was the prototype, the very first space shuttle built, with construction beginning in 1974. President Gerald Ford specifically requested the name Enterprise as a reference to *Star Trek*, a decision which may or may not have been in response to a letter-writing campaign from fans of the television show.

However, it never flew in space. It was designed as a proof of concept vehicle used in flight tests. It had been on display in Virginia. But recently, it was swapped out for Discovery and taken up the coast to New York, where it will be put on display at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum.

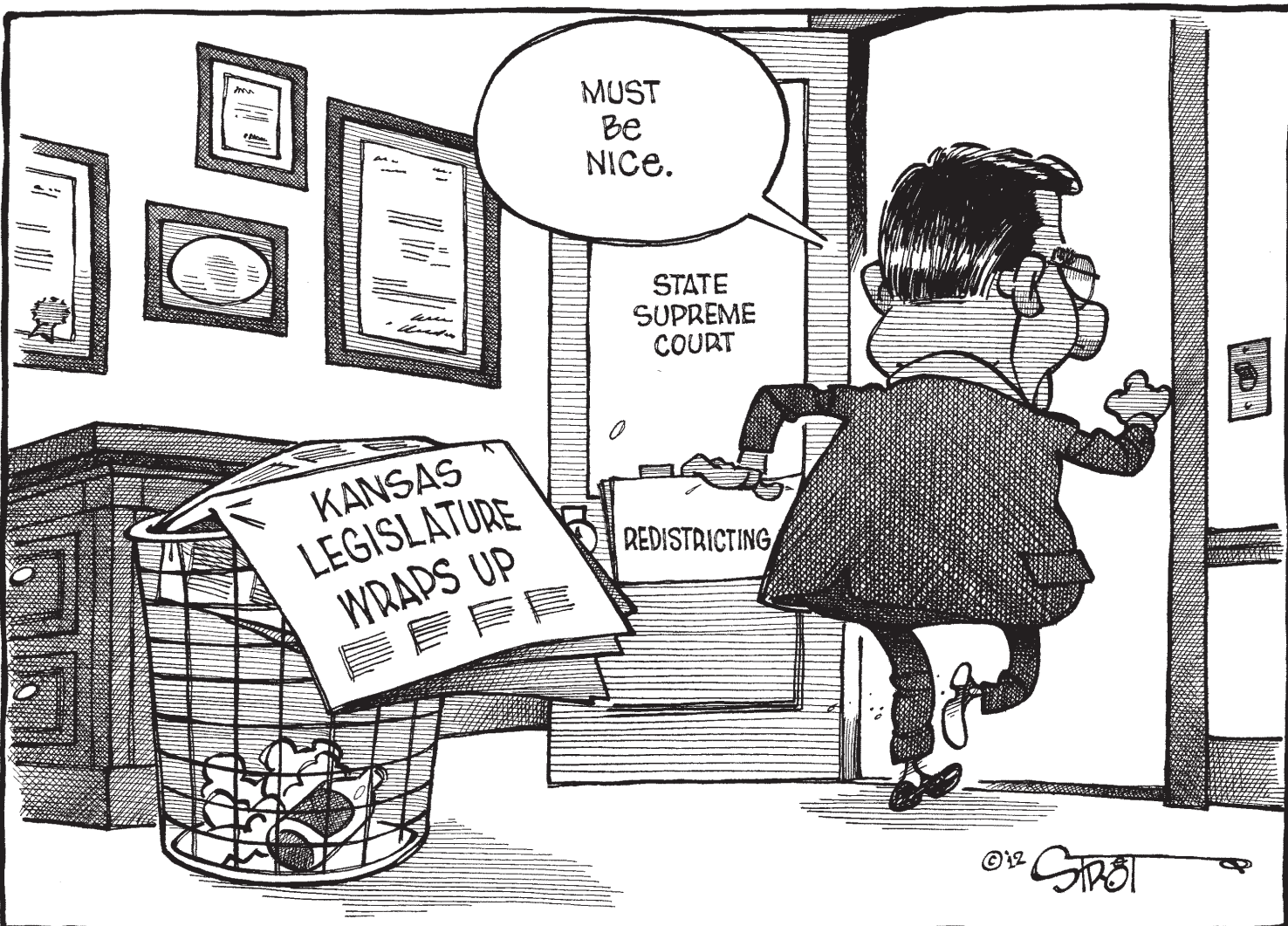
And what does Johnson Space Center in Houston get? It gets the Explorer, a life-size wooden replica. Although it is impressive, many areas such as the interior, are not particularly accurate.

This seems like a slap in the face to a city that was so integral in the shuttle program. New York has made its contributions to the space program, no doubt about it. But Houston was home to astronaut training, space research and to the hard-working men and women of Mission Control, who spent decades guiding each mission from Mercury in 1959 to the present day. When Apollo 13 ran into trouble mid-mission, Astronaut Jim Lovell didn't say "New York, we've had a problem."

NASA said the decision was based on allowing the most people to see them. Granted New York gets far more tourist traffic than Houston, but a shuttle would draw its own crowd, which would increase Houston tourism. New York already has plenty of tourist attractions, one more might get lost.

We also have a selfish reason why Houston would be better. It's far closer to Kansas than any of the other locations, and we want to be able to see the shuttles as well. The problem with people who live on the coasts is they often don't realize how far away they are from the interior. The western and southern states deserve a shuttle as much or more than the coasts. And for *Star Trek* fans, the Enterprise bears a special significance.

The decision isn't likely to be reversed, but we hope that NASA may at least consider moving the shuttles over the years to other parts of the country, to allow those who can't make the trip to the coast to experience these remarkable pieces of the nation's history. —Kevin Bottrell



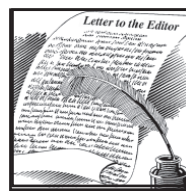
Denied chance to compete

To the Editor:

My name is Sarah Barela and in the school year of 2011-2012, I attended Northwest Kansas Technical College in the Medical Assistant course, getting high grades in most of my classes.

During my time at the school, I joined SkillsUSA to become more hands-on in the medical field. I was also historian for the year. All of this was a great honor to serve my fellow students and be part of a group that did not disqualify me due to the injuries to my feet. In fact, I had a lot of support and with that I was encouraged to compete on the state level for public speaking. I won a gold medal and a chance to compete for Goodland and Kansas on a national level.

I thought I was going through Vocational Rehab to help with schooling costs. I was accepted into Vocational Rehab in October, 2011, and my plan was signed May, 2012. This means I owe a balance to the school of \$2,300



from our readers

• to the editor

and if Vocational Rehab does not pay, I plan to without thinking twice about it because it is the right thing to do. Also, I was to walk in a graduation ceremony last month, but chose not to because I did not earn my associate degree due to failing my math class.

I had planned to take a summer course for that, but the school refused to allow me due to the balance. I am currently working on my internship at Goodland Regional Medical Center. I received an e-mail from the college saying I could no longer go to the SkillsUSA National competition at the end of June due to my poor standing at Northwest Tech.

The chance to win this competition would possibly provide scholarship money to further my ambition to become a registered nurse and a registered dietician. I am 35 years old and unable to walk without pain unless I take pain medication and wear braces. I will be having corrective surgery at the end of July and will have many months of painful recovery, but I will overcome this as I always have.

I want the readers to know I am not writing this letter in sour grapes to get my chance to compete and win the challenge, but the school has denied me my future and the chance to sink or swim in public speaking. I have provided the newspaper with all the e-mails to provide proof of the school's actions, and I hope with enough public support, I can get the chance to compete and win for Kansas, Goodland and most of all myself.

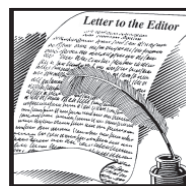
Sarah Barela
Goodland

Remembering community leader

To the Editor,

Most of you know of the passing of longtime Goodland resident Pete Whalen. Pete died May 31 in Friendswood, Texas, near Houston, where he had been receiving medical attention for some time.

Pete was a friend of mine. Actually, he was a friend to many. He was summoned to Goodland to join the law firm of Jones & Soward (Max Jones and Selby Soward) in 1960 arriving in Goodland just a couple of months before I. He never let me forget that he was here before I was. He was almost a year older than I. I never let him forget that. He was of Irish descent, as am I. He played golf left-handed, as did I. We played many rounds of golf together, and I nearly always won. (That is not true). He had the absolutely best sense of humor of any person I ever knew.



from our readers

• to the editor

Although born a Nebraskan, he received his college degree at the University of Kansas, and was a lifelong avid Jayhawk, while continuing to support the Nebraska Cornhuskers. Pete Whalen did so many positive things for Goodland. He served on the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce, the Hospital, the school system, the Golf Club, and others. He was largely responsible for the creation of the Goodland Activities Center and the softball-baseball complex in southwest Goodland. He worked hard to help make the Goodland

Public Library a reality. He worked tirelessly in his support of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church. He supported all important bond issues, particularly the one for the new hospital. And that is a listing of just a few of his accomplishments in this town. His efforts on behalf of those individuals and groups needing assistance are well known. He loved Goodland, from the beginning until the end, and e-mailed me just a few months ago about how much he and Marietta missed Goodland.

Your contributions in Pete's memory to his beloved church, or the Goodland Regional Medical Center Foundation would be greatly appreciated. And remember, as Pete always liked to say: "Pray for the Irish!"

Kay Melia
Goodland

Trip to Colorado a pleasant one

The trip out of the mountains and through southern Colorado to home last week was fun and blessedly uneventful.

We had been to Creede, a little mountain town we lived in for several years back in the 1980s, for a few days to visit friends and attend the opening of the repertory theater.

The visit had been great and the opening play, a comedy with lots of singing and dancing, maybe not the best show of the season, but energetic and fun.

In the mountains, we enjoyed a second taste of spring. The lilacs in front of the courthouse were in full, gloriously scented bloom. Here and there, in people's yards, irises in a rainbow of colors made bright splashes of color. The temperatures tumbled to freezing at night and got up in the 70s during the day.

Too soon, it was time to head home as storm clouds gathered and fat raindrops started to fall.

It didn't rain much, but there were clouds with lightning and thunder on the horizon as we set out from Creede into the San Luis Valley,



cynthia haynes

• open season

the largest of the mountain parks in the state.

We grabbed lunch at one of our favorite Mexican restaurants and a big bag of popcorn, and we were ready to leave the Valley, go over La Veta Pass and onto the plains of southern Colorado.

Anyone who thinks Kansas is wide open and treeless should visit the area down between Walsenburg and La Junta, Colo. You can see 50 to 60 miles, and there is nothing to block your view but sagebrush, cactus and yucca plants. You can get lost just looking out over the landscape, and I would hate to try to cover it in a horse-drawn wagon. The land seems to stretch on forever.

But we like that sort of country. We love seeing the yucca and cactus in bloom and watching for antelope. We saw several of the speedy pronghorns. Mostly, they were standing by themselves, but in one case, we saw four together.

I called it a herd. Steve said that was a group; a herd had to have more animals. (Well, that's the silliest thing I ever heard, or heard.)

We continued to chase the rain across the plains and we could see where it had been. It doesn't take much water to turn that desert area green and blooming. But where it hadn't come down, the grass was yellow and the ground dusty.

We never really caught up with the storms. I thought we had at one time when we were almost to Oakley and it was dark. It turned out to be a few drops of rain mixed with lots of bugs.

Welcome home to summer in Kansas.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address — <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?EmailPat>

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address — <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office

Building, Washington D.C., 20575-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address — <https://huelskamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov.

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Kevin Bottrell, Editor

Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Advertising Department

Jessica Corbin, Jeff Dreiling and Kayla Bentley

Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Jim Bowker, James Jackson,

Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,

Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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