

from our viewpoint...

## Photos a question of public focus

The big story this past week was the release of photos of flag-draped caskets bringing American dead back from Iraq, and the Pentagon's outrage at having the photos published on the Internet and in the *Seattle Times*.

Pentagon officials said the photos should not have been released, and pressured a defense contractor to fire the woman who shot the photo in Kuwait.

Publishing of dozens of photos of American war dead arriving at military mortuary at Dover Air Force base on a web site prompted the Pentagon to order that no more photos be released.

Making a fuss about the photos has blown a small incident up into a big story, but the real question is whether these photos are legitimate news or are being used to further some political purpose.

The Pentagon would have the American people believe keeping the photos under wraps is a way to protect the families of the men and women who have died in Iraq.

People keep saying there is no similarity between Iraq and Vietnam, but those of us who lived through the Vietnam War remember watching the long lines of flag-draped cases which arrived at Travis Air Force Base. This went on for about 10 years as over 50,000 men came home on those planes.

The Pentagon rule forbidding this type of photo was implemented during the Gulf War, but even then there were some flag-draped photos published. Of course, we did not have many dead in that short war, so there was not enough time for the policy to be questioned.

We find ourselves in the second year of violence in Iraq, and everyone has agreed we will be there well beyond the end of June, when the new Iraqi government is supposed to assume power.

To us there is nothing unwarranted or undignified about these photos, and they are a part of the business of war.

"We need to stop hiding the deaths of our young; we need to be open about their deaths," said Jane Bright of West Hills, Calif., whose son Evan Ashcraft, 24, was killed in Iraq.

The woman who took the photo in Kuwait said she agreed to allow it to be published to show family members how carefully and respectfully the caskets are handled as they are brought home.

War brings casualties, and as Americans we should be able to face the reality without having military officials hide photos under the guise of protecting the families of those who have died.

Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) said, "This is not about privacy. This is about trying to keep the country from facing the reality of war."

This would not be as big a story if the Pentagon had wisely allowed it to bubble to the surface without any comment or pressure to get someone fired. It would have slid back into the morass of war coverage showing our troops being shot at and blown up by suicide bombers, which results in more planes with flag-draped caskets.

The United Methodist Church was nearly full Saturday as people gathered to remember Merlyn Stasser and recall the many wonderful things he did to make us smile.

Everyone who spoke Saturday mentioned his smile, and his obvious enjoyment of life and the people he worked with. We know anytime we were around him, whether at the bank at a board meeting or at a Goodland Ambassador's function, he always had a smile and an enjoyable outlook.

We will miss him, and know as we go through the next year we will keep turning around to see where he is. We believe he is looking down and watching to be sure things keep going in the right direction. We hope his arrival had some influence on the wonderful rains we received last week. — *Tom Betz*

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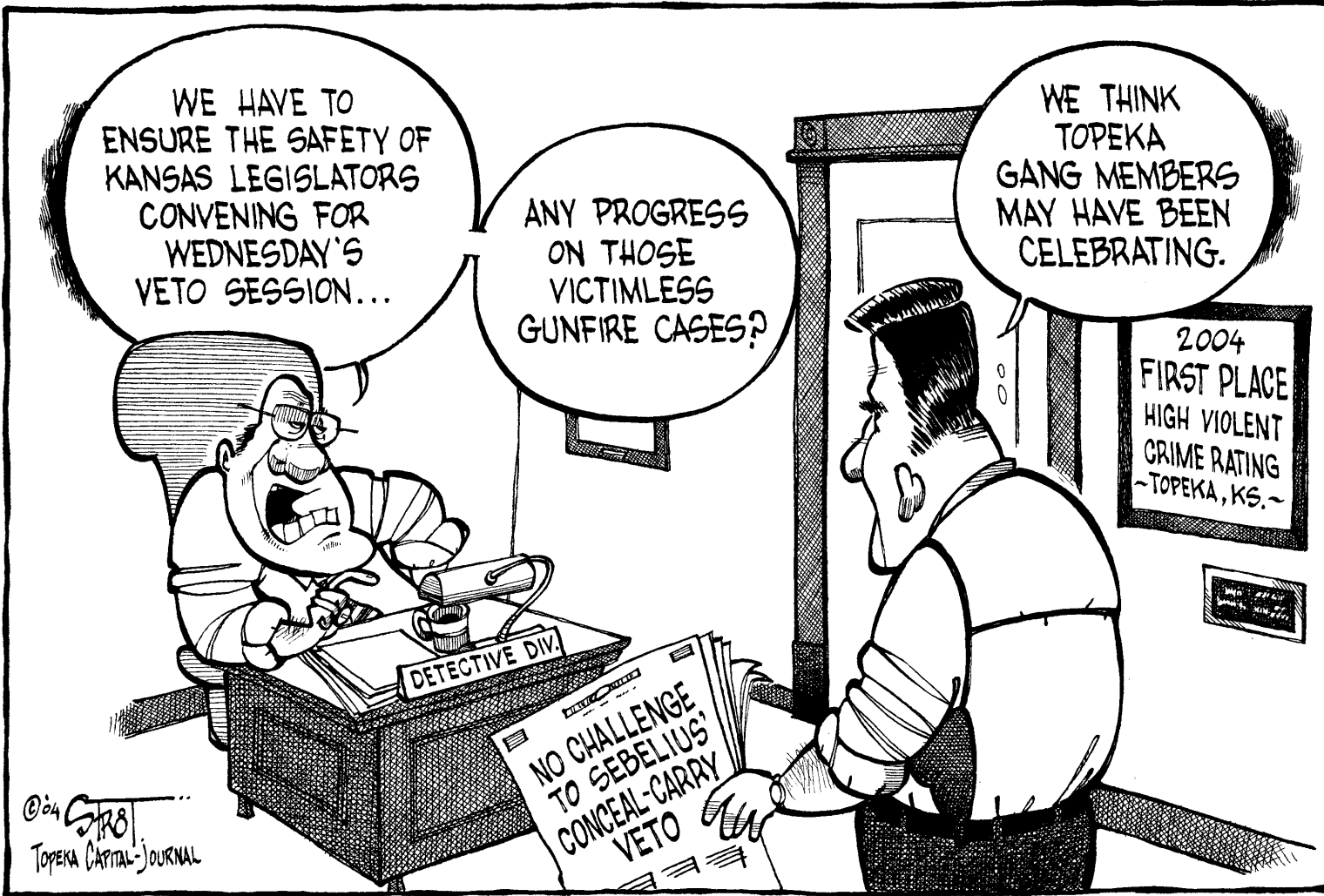
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## Mother Nature gets giddy in spring

They really should call spring the silly season.

I know that term is usually reserved for the legislative session, but Mother Nature gets downright giddy during the spring.

Easter was sunny and cool, but flowers were popping out all over the place.

In front of my house, the daffodils I planted along a wall were all in bloom and the tulips were budded.

The forsythia was fitfully blooming and the crocuses were past their prime.

It was really a beautiful day. Steve mowed the yard and we enjoyed the cool sunshine.

Then we had to go to work. We always work on Sundays. Usually, we go in late and work until midnight or so.

At 12:10 a.m. Monday morning, I stepped out into the darkness and spotted the first few tentative snowflakes.

With the drought we have been having, all moisture is welcome and I remembered the



**cynthia  
haynes**

• open season

snowstorm we had six or eight years ago when they almost had to cancel prom because there was such a bad storm a day or two before the big event.

However, I was praying for a snowstorm that would melt quickly — like right away, so I wouldn't have to deal with bad roads on the way to work the next day.

The next morning, I awoke to about six inches of snow on the back deck. The ornamental pear tree, which had been in full bloom, hung heavy with snow on its branches and flowers. The tulips, which had been ready to open, were clamped tightly shut.

I was more than an hour late getting to work.

## I like your paper, but can't see to read it

To the Editor:

Thank you for sending *The Star-News*. I like it very much, but I'm unable to read it anymore with one good eye.

I can't go to any of the doings advertised, and I can't drive like I did for years in Goodland.

Salina is a real nice place to live. I live here with my daughter Karen and granddaughter Erin.

They talk about going back to Goodland. I will probably end up in a nursing home or retirement center.

Our best to you.  
Mildred E. Tippery  
Salina

To the Editor:

Thank you so much for bringing the Taste of Home Cooking School to Goodland.

I really enjoyed it and learned alot! I made several of the recipies for my family this past weekend.

I won a gift bag from the Craft Peddler in Brewster, filled with Wilton Products. I can't wait to use them!

Mary Lou Hansen



**from our  
readers**

• to the editor

Goodland

To the Editor:

In the Letters to the Editor column in *The Kansas City Star*, Sunday, April 4, Jim McDowell, who interviewed college faculty and administrators, stated that to a person, they told him verbal and communication skills of incoming freshman have been declining for years.

He quoted one department head as saying, "it is one of the most serious problems facing education today."

Well done, Jim!

I would like to make some additional comments. One columnist/college professor stated in one of his columns that from the evaluations of many sources, that a century ago the average person with a sixth grade education knew

The roads were icy, and I decided to give the plows a little time to do their work.

The day warmed up, like it was supposed to do, and Tuesday was beautiful. By Wednesday, temperatures were back up in the 70s and 80s and the snow was almost gone. Even the tulips had consented to open up and show off their beauty.

Wednesday night, we got home from work early and cooked outside on the grill. Then we washed off the picnic table and ate outside under our gloriously blossom-filled pear tree. I had really worried that the cold snap would cause all those beautiful blossoms to fall off.

Sitting there as the perfume of the tree drifted by and the cats took turns slipping in and out of the house, I know I loved spring and I loved Kansas.

However, I was wondering if someone didn't need to give Mother Nature a Prozac. She seems a little confused. Oh well, maybe she's blonde, too.

and understood more English words and had better grammar than the average college student of today.

University of Kansas provost David Shulenburg, in an article in the *Lawrence Journal World*, April 28, 2003, was quoted as saying "there hasn't been a focus on writing."

An education department professor used the word "atrocious" to me to describe the writing of his doctoral candidates.

When I graduated from college, it was required that students pass a written language competency exam.

Recently, I asked about 100 students of high school or college age to correct every grammar mistake in this five word sentence "He sure did real good."

Five were able to get it completely correct and three could not even pick out the subject and verb. Can you correct every mistake?

You would hope with all the education moeny being sought today, that the product would be better.

Leo V. Kerwin  
Wellsville

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### garfield

