

from our viewpoint...

Many leave state with centralization

While the state centralizes offices and pulls state jobs out of rural Kansas, thousands of people are leaving for cities or other states to find jobs.

Our population decline is not the state's fault, at least not most of it.

Rural populations have been on a slide since the turn of the century. Since Cyrus McCormick invented the reaper, better equipment, seed and farming practices have boosted productivity every year.

That has meant fewer farmers and fewer farm jobs nearly every year. And while the government has spent billions to "keep farmers on the land," it's spent millions for research and land-grant universities to accelerate the trend.

If you count jobs saved or farmers kept on the land, the money has been mostly wasted. Our population continues to decline, and the government at best has bought people a few more years.

You can't blame the state for that.

You can blame the state, though, for a lack of commitment to rural towns. At best the state has a split personality: taking jobs away on one hand, promising to help out of the other side of its mouth.

So what can the state do? Sen. Stan Clark, before his death in May, was pushing to move state jobs out into rural areas.

Economic development experts keep saying with modern communications, including the Internet, there is no reason why work has to be done in any one central location.

People work from home, in airports, on trains, wherever they can plug in their computers.

So instead of using telecommunications to centralize state work in big towns, why not farm it out to rural areas that really need the jobs?

This is no wild-eyed dream. Rural Kansas is full of old schools and other buildings that could house a state agency or two. Except for top executives, most state work could be done by "branch offices." They'd be as centralized and efficient as the agency cared to make them.

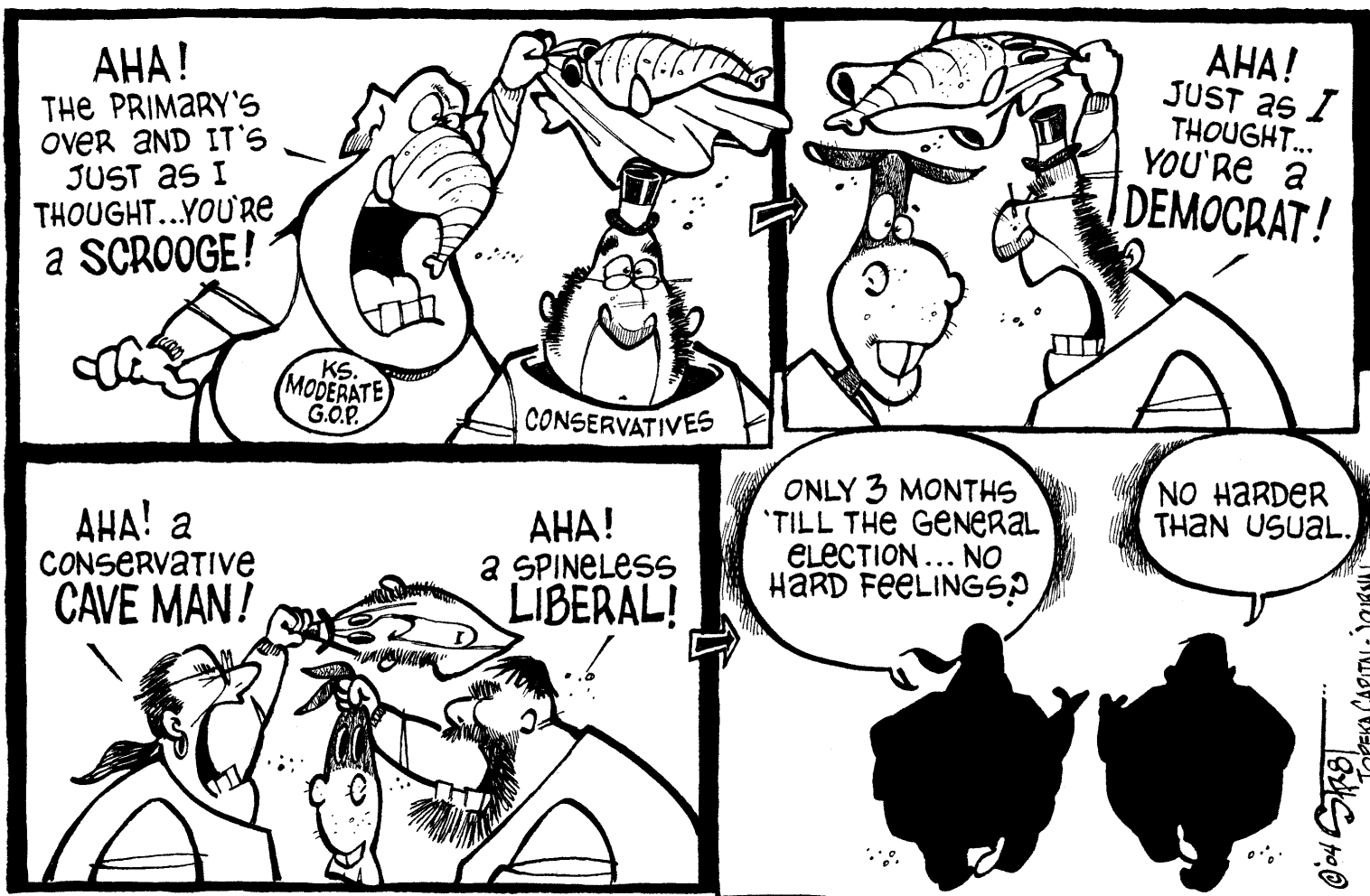
They just wouldn't be in Topeka.

Sen. Clark thought that instead of building a new office building in Topeka, the state should spread the jobs around.

This would take some commitment from the state. For one thing, many current state workers would not want to move to rural areas. The state would have to hire many new people to fill jobs it "outsourced" to rural areas.

The state, which always promises rural economic development, would be putting its jobs where its mouth is. It might cost a little, but it would be far better than having Medicaid calls answered in India or driver's licenses made in Washington.

And it just might start a trend that would make rural Kansas much more valuable to the state. It just might work. — Steve Haynes



I don't consider myself overly-sentimental

I don't know about you, but I don't consider myself an overly-sentimental person.

There are times, of course, when I get caught up in memories, nostalgia and wondering "what if."

Someone wrote humans are made in God's image only in that we have the gift of reason and can understand that at some point we're going to die.

Other animals operate through instinct and self-preservation. There are times when I wonder if we wouldn't be better off with more instinct.

Too many of us worry too much about death instead of being thankful for life.

Life would be drab indeed without love. Love makes life worthwhile. And it also makes death difficult. We hate to lose those we have loved. We have some of ourselves invested in their lives, just as they are always part of ours.

I guess we never really totally lose them; they are still alive in our memories. But often I catch myself wishing I could still talk to them, clarify some event with them.

Worse yet, I wish I had been more loving and understanding of them when they were still



lorna gt

• commentary

alive. We get so involved in day-to-day living; we neglect the little signs of appreciation. Then suddenly one day they're gone.

There are times when I remember a family trip or a special holiday celebration and I miss my parents or my husband's parents or my sister-in-law.

I miss my children being little and lively — and living at home. The other day I felt a rush of loss over my brother-in-law with whom I often disagreed, but still loved.

Why is it so hard for us to overlook faults and appreciate others when they are alive? Heaven knows they have a lot to tolerate with our faults and thoughtless remarks!

Dreams are one way of retaining loved ones and can seem real. My husband died over 38 years ago, but I still occasionally dream of him. My dreams used to make me happy, as it

seemed he had returned to me. Lately though, I wake up crying because he doesn't want me in his life anymore. The face in my mirror isn't young now, but he will never age. I know I've changed, and often wonder: if he were living, would he still love me? Then I wonder: if he were still living, would I have changed as much as I have? Losing him and having to become more self-reliant and independent changed me more than anything else.

Well, I'm not sure there is a point to this column. I had a dream last night, and I woke up thinking about it. Too bad we can't remember all the details once our eyes are open.

Dreams can be unnerving. Last week I dreamed I was invited on a date by Al Gore! Although my family is traditionally Democrat, I was very happy when George W. Bush won the presidency over Al. That election will be remembered by many people; some probably even have nightmares over it.

Already another election is upon us. And many people worry and once again predict the outcome will herald the end of the free world. Think about it: If we can survive Bill Clinton and Al Gore, we can probably survive anything.

Trip home clears his mind, but disappointing

He has trouble telling the time and has to ask the day, month and year repeatedly, but once he has a mission, he is ready for action.

His days are filled with pain and frustration at not being able to do the things he used to enjoy, and these days, they are filled with dark thoughts.

He has Alzheimer's Disease, my 77-year-old father.

At the beginning of the month, we took a family trip back to Lamar, Colo., where he was born in 1926 and spent all but a few years of his life.

We had been to see the doctors at the University of Colorado Medical Center, who confirmed the diagnosis that a spot on his spine that is causing pain can't be removed. The pain hasn't eased the fact he has been suffering through the early stages of Alzheimer's.

Dad had been thinking of going to Lamar for several days while he waited for my mother to fly back from Michigan, where she visited with her family and 102-year-old mother.

Dad told my younger sister Lynn and I that he had been dreaming about Lamar, and wanted to go there if he could. We told him we would talk to mom about it when she got back.

He began making a list of places he wanted to see, including the Lamar Daily News, which the family owned from 1920 to 1989; the Lamar Elks Lodge, of which he is a life member; the United Methodist Church; and Fairmont Cemetery, where his parents and my younger brother are buried.

Lynn was interested in going because it was supposed to be the weekend of her 25th class reunion, but she had not been able to find any information about the plans.

We talked to mom when she returned, and agreed it was probably a good idea. Then it was time to see if we could make arrangements to



tom betz

• t, t & o

get to the places that dad had on his list.

A call to the paper by my wife posed a problem. Since it was a holiday weekend it appeared there would be no one around to let us in. It looked as if we were going to have to look through the windows, but before I got to Lamar, they had found someone to open the door.

We called and talked to some friends who knew dad, and specifically to Ray Sanders, who had worked at the newspaper for over 50 years. He had started as a carrier and worked his way to backshop foreman.

The trip went well, and it was good to see dad remembering better times. The town had changed since he and mom had moved to Arizona, but there were many familiar things too.

Brenda Brown, publisher at the newspaper, had Marsha McElroy, the bookkeeper, let us in to visit. It turned out Marsha had been a next-door neighbor when I was younger, and her brother was a friend and classmate of mine.

Sanders met us at the paper and we toured it with dad. He went into the office he shared with his father, and seemed to remember it despite a complete redecoration. He did not remember the press in the back shop, and realized that a lot of the things had changed.

The toughest point was as we were leaving, and he turned to Sanders and asked him his name. Sanders told him and shook his hand. We got a photo of them outside the paper office. Later, dad asked me if Ray was someone he should remember.

We visited the church, drove down Main

Street and had lunch at Willow Creek Park. My wife Ava met us at the park for lunch and took dad back to her apartment for a nap while mom, Lynn and I went to Safeway to get flowers to take to the cemetery.

Dad got a good nap, because every time we turned around we met old friends, and it took quite a while to get the flowers.

At the cemetery, we stopped at my brother Greg's grave, and dad announced he wanted to be buried in the same row as Greg on the outside. He wanted to be sure we all knew what he wanted and made us promise to remember.

When my brother died accidentally on Halloween in 1974, we had gone out to the cemetery and mom, and dad had purchased a block of six plots.

We are not sure how we managed it, but the stone for Greg is on an almost exact line with the graves of Grandpa and Grandma Betz and two of Grandma's sisters who had lived in Lamar and taught school. We placed flowers on all the graves, and looked for a few of our friends, too.

The last stop of the day was at the Elks Lodge, where we all had a cool drink. As we were leaving, Lynn met one of her classmates, who told her indeed the reunion was that weekend, and the big dinner was to be that night.

We talked Lynn into going out to meet her classmates after we had enjoyed a nice dinner at the Cow Palace Inn.

Mom and dad have returned to Arizona, and the pain continues to be the major focus for him each day. There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but there is some hope that research may find new ways to slow the process. No matter what miracle drugs they find today, though, it will not bring dad back.

At least I got to have a wonderful visit with him in his hometown.

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Pat Schiefel, Copy Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Greg E. Stover, Reporter/Sports Editor

Kathryn Gurfinkel, Reporter

Doug Jackson, Advertising Coordinator

Anne Hamilton, Jennifer Arntt, Adv. Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl Ron VanLoenen Judy McKnight Betty Morris

Aaron Hickert Matt Breninger Kris McCool Lana Westfahl

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

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

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, \$20; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

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

garfield

