

from our viewpoint...

Give thanks for emergency crews

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time of year, the beginning to the holiday season which runs through Christmas and New Years.

It is a time to enjoy family and friends, reflect on the blessings we have and look forward to the better times ahead.

However, for some heading home from their Thanksgiving celebrations Sunday afternoon, there was a new blessing. That was the emergency response people of Sherman County, who found themselves rushing from one accident to another along I-70 as cars slid off and rolled on the black ice.

In a short time, there were about seven accidents in a stretch of freeway from four miles east of Goodland to four miles west. At least two were rollovers and one forced troopers to close the bridge at the east Goodland exit while a car that hit the guardrail was removed.

Injuries were minor, and the ambulance crews from Goodland and Kanorado responded with care because of the slippery highway.

Goodland firefighters were called out to assist, and moved from accident scene to accident scene as needed.

Sherman County Sheriff Kevin Butts and Deputies Roger Studer, Burton Pianalto and Jason Showalter worked the accidents on I-70. Showalter, who was on his way back to the police academy, helped with three accidents along I-70 east of the city as he headed back to school.

Ambulance crews were kept busy not only by the accidents on I-70, but there were several calls in the city, including one where a man had fallen and apparently broke his arm. At one time, dispatchers were trying to get an ambulance to a home where a man was unresponsive and another to the airport to pick up a flight crew.

Things were buzzing as the number of accidents piled up. The worst reported was a five-car pileup two miles west of Levant.

Trooper Brian Horney stayed busy along with the Sherman County officers. Wreckers from Alex's, McB's and Stagecoach were all called to help pull cars out of the snow, and some had to be brought in for repairs.

It was a busy few hours for these men and women who respond to emergencies in all types of weather and all times of the day and night.

For those people heading home from Thanksgiving, though, it was a real blessing to have the emergency people from Sherman County come out to rescue them from the unfortunate effects of the icy weather.

While I-70 was not closed, it remained a dangerous stretch of road, and the Kansas Department of Transportation had crews out to spread salt and sand.

We often forget the efforts of the many volunteers who help with the ambulance and fire rescue services, but days like Sunday come along to remind us of their importance and their courageous service to our community. Same goes for those whose jobs take them out into the storm.

We are thankful they are there. — Tom Betz

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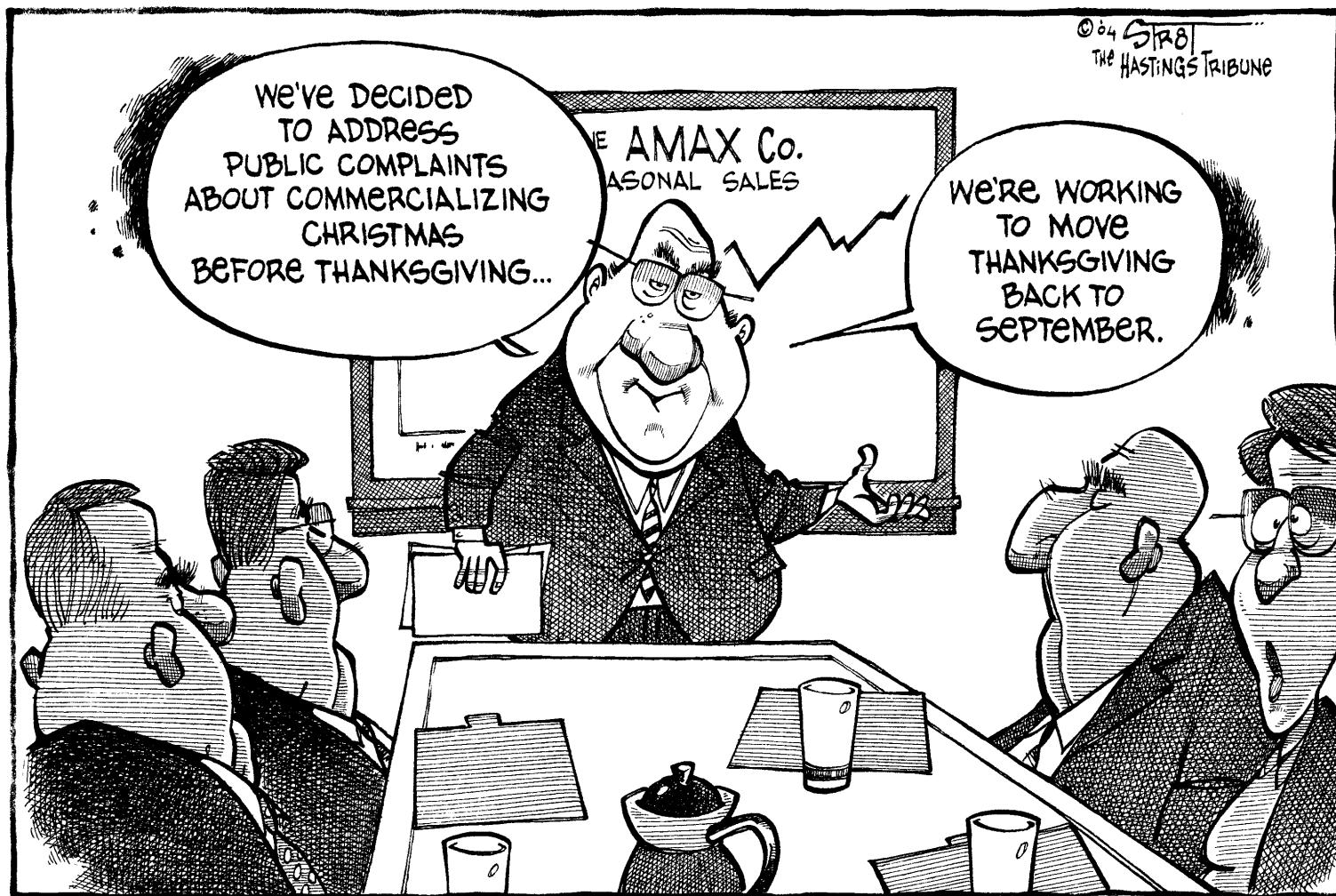
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Getting to Milwaukee a bit worrisome

Milwaukee's a nice city, but getting there was a little worrisome.

We were on our way to Milwaukee by train on Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorist attacked the U.S.

We ended up getting off at Ottumwa, Iowa, rented a car, drove to Lincoln, Neb., then got back on a train for McCook.

The National Newspaper Association convention we were attending was canceled and the next year we went to Portland, then Kansas City and Denver.

Next year, we're going to try to hold the convention in Milwaukee, so last week we headed for Wisconsin for a "site visit," since hubby Steve is the convention chairman.

The train leaves from McCook at about 1 a.m. and arrives in Chicago between 2 and 3 p.m. on a good day. However, the trains are notoriously late.

We were lucky, however, and our train ran close to on time. We were able to transfer to the Milwaukee train at Union Station in Chicago and arrived downtown not only on time, but within five blocks of our hotel.

We grabbed our luggage and trotted down the street — the snow that had threatened us in Nebraska hadn't made it to Wisconsin.

Our hotel, the Hyatt, is in the heart of the city and we walked to a nice German restaurant for dinner. The restaurant, Mader's, turned out to be a Milwau-



cynthia haynes

• open season

kee landmark and the food was excellent.

The next day was for work. We met a Convention and Visitors Bureau representative and he took us to visit the sights.

First stop was the County Museum, which is their natural history museum, where they have an old Milwaukee village set up. You could look in windows at the apothecary, the grocer, the hardware store and see what was for sale 100 to 150 years ago.

In our 30-minute tour, we also got to watch them dust the dinosaurs.

Next stop was the art museum. The new wing looks a little like the prow of a ship, and the front part is all glassed in so you can see Lake Michigan, and watch waves come over the breakwater in the bay.

We inland folks were amazed. We loved the place, and the pictures and statues were nice, too.

Our next visit was to the Domes, three geodesic domes holding gardens — one for the trop-

ics, one for the desert and one that changes four times a year. The changing dome was being outfitted for Christmas as we walked around.

Our last stop was the city's botanical gardens, which were mostly dead. However, we were told that next September, when the convention is held, the last of the roses and many fall flowers would still be in bloom.

That was all in the morning.

After lunch, we discussed the sites and decided we liked the two museums best. Our convention planner still has to talk costs and find out how many tables and chairs we need and deal with all those little details that make the difference between a well-run meeting and a mass of people descending on some unsuspecting tourist attraction.

The next day, after details were finalized, Steve and I went for a walk through the city's many sky walks. There was one from our hotel to a shopping mall across a couple of busy streets. However, it runs through Milwaukee's federal building.

We got to go through a metal detector and have my purse searched. It's the first time I've had to go through security to go for a walk.

The trip home on the train was uneventful and we're looking forward to returning to the city of brats, beer and baseball in September.

Townships find it difficult to fill positions

As hot a topic as township government is these days, there were a couple of contests here and there for township office.

For the most part, county commissioners have to scrape around to find people to fill the three-member township boards.

It's no wonder. Townships don't do too much these days. Many contract road maintenance to the county. Their budgets are minimal.

Decatur County, with 25 townships, probably has as many as in the state. Some of them draw 25-30 voters, some fewer, come election time.

While townships don't do much or spend much, they do cost money. And it's likely that removing an extra layer of government would save taxpayers some dough.

If nothing else, the county would save the cost of keeping a set of books for each township and of publishing the annual financial reports.

There may have been a time when the township was a useful unit of local government, close to the people and easy to deal with. That was a century and a half ago.

Since then, we've streamlined courts and police powers, doing away with justices of the peace and constables. The sheriff and the district court handle legal matters today.

Schools that used to dot the landscape have closed and consolidated. Soon, we may have just one school in many counties where once there were dozens. Many of the old township roads are closed, or on "minimum maintenance," and the county grades much of the rest.

Most of all, the farm population has faded away, leaving no one living in vast stretches of townships that once harbored dozens of families.

Add to that the fact that township boards don't really have much to do on the best of days, and it's easy to see why there's not much interest in many of these jobs.

In Sherman County, commissioners had to can-



steve haynes

• along the sappa

vas those who got write-in votes to find people to fill many board positions. Often, even those who got voted in turned the jobs down.

There ought to be some way to disorganize townships when interest lags. I'm not saying just



garfield

