

from our viewpoint...

New year begins, a tough one ends

The past year was rough from beginning to the end, and the Asian tsunami disaster put something of an exclamation point on the year.

In today's *Goodland Star-News*, we take a look back at some of the top stories of the year, and while there were plenty of good stories, the death and violence of 2004 seemed to stand out.

The year saw both some of the worst dust storms in the past 30 years, and a glimmer of hope for the end of the drought. Driving around, you see some of the best wheat that has been grown here for many years. True, the wheat can find many ways to die before summer, but farmers are starting the new year with a chance for a great crop.

Business in Goodland has had its ups and downs through the year, but at the end there are positive signs of growth despite the closing some of businesses and the announcement that the Aten Department Store is closing. Wayne and Barb Aten have provided a strong anchor for downtown for over 22 years, and we hope they enjoy their retirement.

Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp. got off to a shaky start, but the company is manufacturing gaskets, training employees and moving forward. Its success will be obvious when the parking lot at the Ed Wolak building hold more than a few cars every day.

Workers building the Cheyenne Plains Pipeline gave the city and county a big boost in business for the final months of the year, and the momentum may carry over into this year.

In selecting the top 10 stories, there were many that did not make the list one of those was the purchase of the old Apple Trail truck stop by Doug Irvin and his brother Mike. Their plans are not firm, but it already looks better out there with the old motel gone.

Another of those stories is the purchase of the old Safeway building by Harlan House. Whether this eventually will mean the opening of a new grocery remains to be seen, but it is certainly a step forward to have the building under local ownership.

Empty buildings remain on Main, and as the year opens, there will be a couple more as businesses close their doors. Plans for some of these buildings are on the drawing boards, and it will be interesting to see how many remain empty by the end of the year.

Heri Chevrolet has changed the appearance of the old Gibson's building with his new car sales facility, and it has to be a positive impression when people come off the Interstate.

The High Plains museum continues to develop plans and raise money to build at the east I-70 exit which would further develop that area.

It is good to see the Sinclair station open at the east exit, and there may be some plans for further expansion in that area.

The remodeling of the Howard Johnson's hotel was a major step forward, and the new car wash that replaced Kentucky Fried Chicken has improved the look of that area along K-27.

The new year is a chance to start with a clean slate and focus on the good things that can be accomplished. There is every indication this can be a great year. — *Tom Betz*

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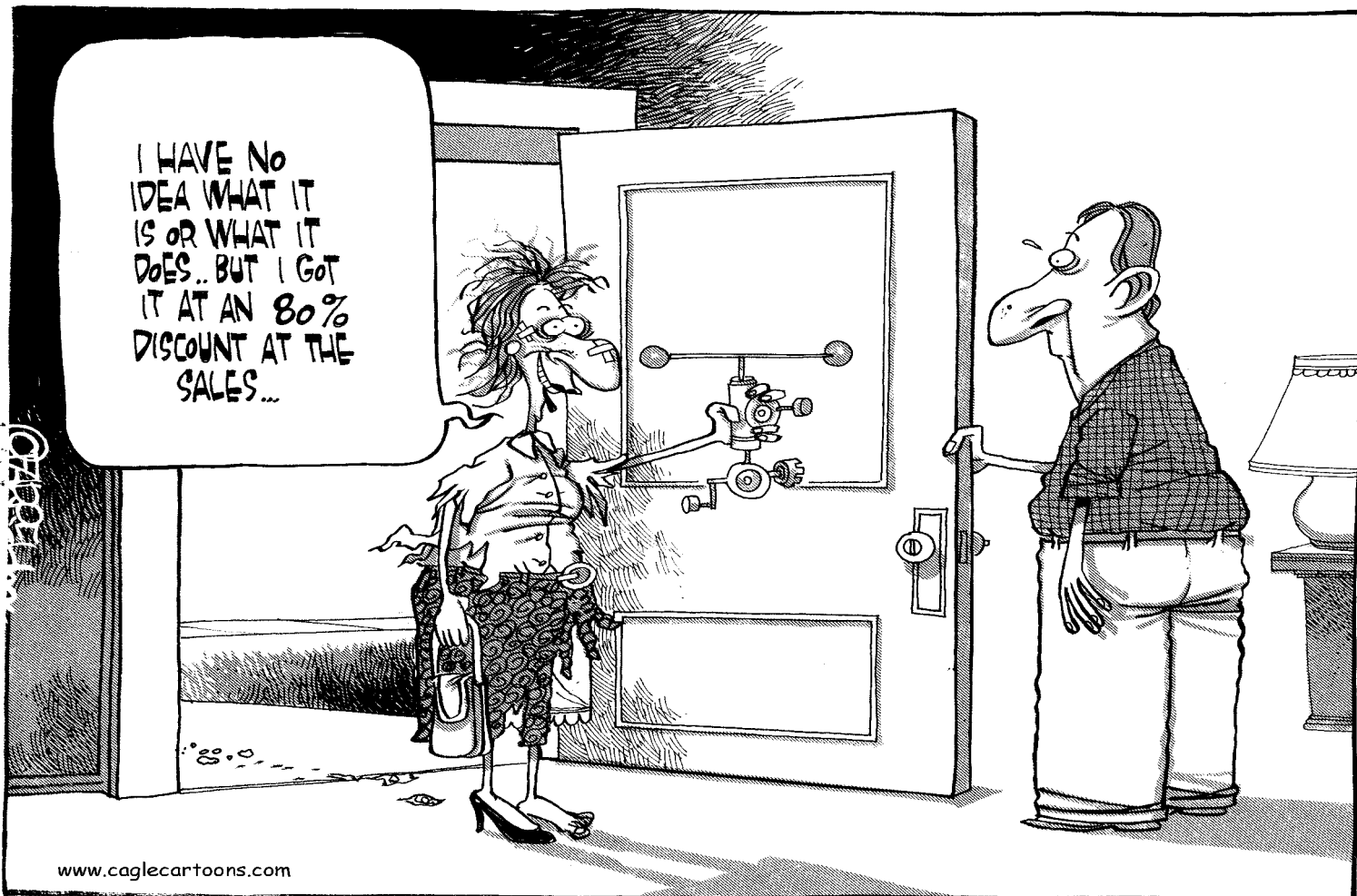
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Having children home is fun, nerve-racking

Having all the children home for the holidays was fun — and nerve-racking for all of us.

The children are no longer youngsters. Our oldest is 30, married and living in Georgia. She has been out of our home for a dozen years. In fact, she hasn't lived in Kansas (except for one summer during college) since she was 6.

The next daughter is 27. She graduated from college and taught for three years before going to graduate school. She has a steady boyfriend and lives in South Carolina.

Son lives in Lawrence, where he works, hangs out with his friends and raises cats. He's 24.

Son came home for Thanksgiving and he and youngest daughter were home at the same time last year. However, because of her job, husband and distance, oldest daughter hasn't been home for a year, so we haven't had our family together since she was married in August 2002.

This weekend, they were all here, and we were all wondering how we lived together, mostly in harmony, all those years.

Not that they fight. They all get along quite well.

It's just that they take up so much room these days.

For the last five years, Steve and I have had the



cynthia haynes

• open season

house to ourselves. Children's bedrooms have been converted into storage and an office.

Suddenly, we had people sleeping in beds that haven't been occupied in years. There were five adults needing to use one shower within an hour.

The grocery cart was overflowing and the fridge holds stuff I can't even pronounce. (What is humus, anyway?)

Our dining room table usually has plenty of room for us, the daily mail and a pile of newspapers.

This week, even the poinsettia I put out had to be moved to a side table. We filled all spaces and piles of Christmas cards were shuffled from place to place.

I was proud of us all, however. We were five adults used to living apart, and we got along beautifully for four days. We even took everyone on a road trip and no one got upset, even though three

adults in the back seat of an Explorer is a tight fit for a three-hour drive.

The kids were home because it was my mother's 80th birthday, and we all jammed ourselves in the truck and went to visit Grandma in Concordia on Christmas Eve.

We grabbed Mom out of the nursing home, went out for Chinese food, took family pictures and piled back into the Explorer for the three-hour trip home.

We skidded into town in time for church, then went home for our traditional Christmas Eve meal of steak, twice-baked potatoes and green beans.

Oldest daughter is back in Georgia now. Son left for Lawrence on Sunday, since he had to work Monday.

Only youngest daughter remains. She will be hitting the road this week for South Carolina. Since she's a student again, she has a little more time off.

I'm a little sad that they're all gone or going, but I've got to admit, there's a lot more room around here now. And I suspect they'll all be glad to get back to their own places.

It's nice to visit, but it's nice to be home again. And in our family, home is where the cats are.

Jingle Bells is full of violations

The Prosecutor frowned, going over the report.

This would not do. This would just not do. He sighed, and shook his head. A host of violations in this "Jingle, Bells" caper.

Line by line, he checked them off.

"Dashing thro' the snow."

Sounds like speeding, might be careless driving.

"O'er the fields we go."

Trespassing.

"Laughing all the way; bells on Bobtail ring."

Noise violation. Have to check the dB readings.

"Making spirits bright."

Spirits! Possible SWI (sleighting while intoxicated), maybe open container.

"Miss Fannie Bright was seated by my side."

Let's see, Bright, Fannie, age 15. Third-degree sexual assault on a minor if he touched her, contributing to the delinquency, minor in possession if she shared the spirits.

"The horse was lean and lank; misfortune seemed his lot."

Call animal welfare; possible abuse, malnutrition.

"He got into a drifted bank, and we, we got upstot."

Reckless and heedless driving, leaving the scene, duty to render aid. Was the horse hurt?

"Go it while you're young; take the girls to-night."

More underage girls. Call child welfare.

"Just get a bobtailed nag; two-forty for his speed."

Horse droppings. That's an environmental citation.

"Then hitch him to an open sleigh; and crack! You'll take the lead."

Wait until PETA hears about this! Animal



steve haynes

• along the sappa

cruelty for sure.

Let's see, that's what, 14 violations, maybe 15, all misdemeanors unless there's prior conviction on the SWI. The girl's parents aren't going to be very happy. We'll have to impound the sleigh as evidence, and take the girls in for questioning.

Need permission to search the sleigh, unless



garfield

