

from our viewpoint...

The way to finish city park project

After years of waiting to finish Pioneer Park, the city commission finds there is not enough money to build what was designed.

The bids came in higher than anticipated, and now the projected cost of \$538,000 is about \$85,000 more than what the city has. That is about 16 percent more than the engineering estimate.

The commission has three choices:

It can accept the low bid and find the \$85,000, resize the project to fit the available money or abandon the project and give a \$210,000 grant back to the state for somebody else to use.

Gene Tromble, the volunteer fund raiser for the project, would like the city to give him a chance to raise the \$85,000. The problem there is over the past several years, the fund raising efforts have fallen short, and the city feels it must have the \$85,000 in hand when construction begins.

Commissioner Jim Mull likes the resize option, but is not sure how to be fair to the two general contractors in asking them to rebid a downsized project. He has a point, but we are sure the contractors would prefer to have a chance to rebid rather than not having the project at all.

Dave Walker, who is considering becoming a candidate for the city commission, seems to think the project should be abandoned. Walker came to Goodland from California a couple of years ago and works at the Kit Carson Correctional Center in Burlington.

Compared to the hustle and bustle of California, Goodland may seem to be withering away. However, while there are some empty buildings, that does not by itself mean the city is dying. Businesses open and close in cities all over the country because that is the nature of change in retailing.

The city has shown an increase in jobs and businesses over the past three years, and there is every reason to believe downtown buildings will again be filled with retail businesses and customers. Goodland is strategically located on I-70 and K-27, which keep the traffic of commerce flowing.

As Commissioner Dean Blume said, the development and construction of Pioneer Park is the final step to improving the area along Business U.S. 24 and Cherry Ave. which is one of the main entrances to the city.

“We have made great strides in this area,” Blume said. “There are benefits beyond the dollars and cents. I would hate to see it die. We need to pursue this project.”

Whether Tromble can deliver more money or the project has to be cut back some more, the best alternative is to move ahead. This is not the time to debate whether we need another park, but rather to understand the improved perception of the city a new entrance will produce.

There will be more talk about the city dying if this project is abandoned. The city has faced tough decisions in the past and found ways to get the work done.

We believe the park will be done, and once completed everyone, will be glad it was built. This is another bump in the process, but there is no reason to stand down from the challenge.

The Rolling Stones put it well in their song “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you get what you need.” — *Tom Betz*

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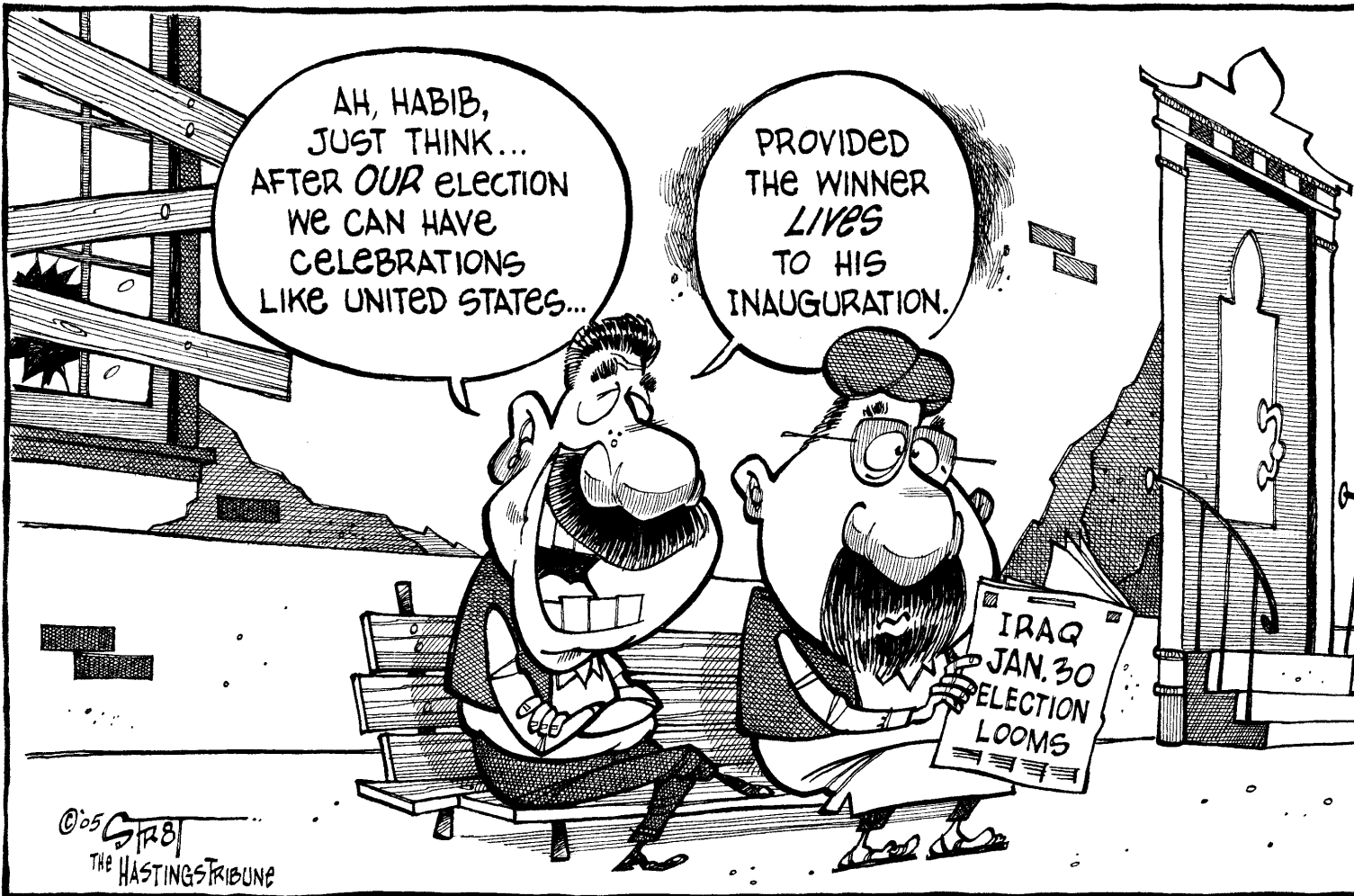
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Rodeo made me think of Roman gladiators

I went to one of my first rodeos ever last weekend. OK, I’ve been to one before, but I’ve never really paid any attention to what is going on until now.

And I had a reason. My cousin Matthew Whitman is a champion saddle bronc rider. That means he risks life and limb by climbing on top of an angry horse and hanging on for eight seconds.

As I sat and watched the proceedings at the National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City, I wondered how similar a rodeo is to the gladiator battles in ancient Rome.

Watching a massive force of muscular animal try to toss off a man at risk of life and limb seems barbaric to me.

My first impression of this display of force was the parking lot swelling with gigantic trucks. My compact car felt inadequate compared to the massive grills and huge beds of the half, three-quarter and full ton pickups.

Instead of body armor and swords, these warriors were decked out in protective fringed leather chaps, ten-gallon hats, leather boots and work gloves. Actually, some of the more safety conscious performers wore helmets or neck braces and vests for chest protection.

For weapons, the sturdy young men wore only spiked metal prongs, or spurs, on each boot. The only other tools they used were ropes to hold on and one carefully placed rope to spur the bucking.

The next similarity to gladiator fights might be in the hot, humid stinky animal smell that



kathryn burke

• commentary

filled the arena. I imagined the mixture of dirt and animal smells from the wild lions, elephants, deer, goats and dogs that permeated the original games. The smell reminded me of when the wind shifts on a hot day in Goodland, bringing in the scent from nearby ranches.

The rodeo builds the same sort of excitement a Roman coliseum game would have. Vendors and kids of all ages hawked rodeo programs, selling background information on the contestants.

The walk to our seats through the circular fairgrounds building took us past vendors selling every sort of cowboy paraphernalia. From the hat to the boots and spurs, I could have walked out of there playing the part of true blue cowgirl.

In one particularly fascinating part of the grounds, a mechanical bull was already tossing teen-agers eager to step up and see what it’s like.

The food created excitement, too, although the choices were probably less barbaric than gladiators had. Instead of meat on sticks, the smell of popcorn filled the air while workers grilled up burgers. (I think we ate our weight in frozen yogurt, soft pretzels, snow cones and popcorn.)

Celebrating Christmas is ‘specific’ event

To the Editor:

I am writing this in response to Kathryn Burke’s commentary in *The Goodland Star-News* on Dec. 24.

We make our Christmas greetings “specific” because we are celebrating a very specific and joyous event.

I once worked with a Jewish professional who would return my Christmas greeting with “Happy Hanukkah.” I certainly was not offended by that. Neither of us were attempting to change the other; we were happy to share in each other’s joy and special seasons.

The difference is, no one has asked Kathryn not to celebrate in a way she wants, but she is asking others to quit celebrating the way they want.

“Separation of church and state” is a long-propagated myth (falsehood, really) that is found in no form whatsoever in our Constitution. It’s use today is in direct opposition to the ideas and ideals of our Founding Fathers — brilliant men who framed a republic that would stand longer, by far, than any other in history.

The First Amendment provides for protection against a government endorsed single denomination as the official national church. Our Founding Fathers were Christian, as a study of their writings clearly shows. They had no intention of sterilizing the government they so carefully (and prayerfully) designed of any and all Christian beliefs or practices.

Religion has steadily diminished in schools because we believed the misconceptions



from our readers

• to the editor

propagated by a few people in the ’60s and have not stood to challenge them. As the Bible has decreased in school, crime, hate, murder, teen pregnancy, divorce and disrespect have increased astronomically across this nation. A historical graph shows the direct correlation. So no, peer pressure is not the “reason we don’t allow religion in schools.” Apathy is the culprit and it’s time to overcome that deadly enemy of a great nation.

There are plenty of non-Christian countries around this world. Why aren’t the masses clamoring to leave home and live there, rather than in America?

It is our Christian foundation that made this country stand apart from all others, as a land of opportunity and blessing. It’s our one great distinguishing trait. Let’s strive to keep that greatness.

Roberta Bretz
Goodland

To the Editor:

The Kansas Supreme Court has ordered that our Legislature spend more of our taxes on education.

Back in the arena, each “go-round,” or performance, put crazy young men in harm’s way.

We watched one unlucky bull rider get pounced by an angry bull. Most times, they roll out of the way, but this cowboy was stepped on with all the impact of an angry wild animal. The man was taken to the emergency room and treated for what the announcer speculated was a few broken ribs or punctured organs.

As I watched them carry the cowboy out of the stadium, I wondered really how much it was about the gladiator experience. Were we really all secretly awaiting that crash of a man being flung off a bull or horse? Were we waiting for someone to really get hurt? Just thinking about it made me feel sick, and I wanted to leave. If not risking their lives for glory, why would someone take up a rodeo life? If I wasn’t in the crowd standing and cheering, would someone have gotten hurt by that bull?

As soon as the injured man was gone, another mentally unstable cowboy was up on the back of a bull riding and the crowd was screaming.

The ambivalence to the violent nature of rodeo is much like the ambivalence the Romans showed during the gladiatorial games. The gladiators were the heroes of their time, just like the way the tiny cowboys admire my cousin Matt.

I guess standing up yelling at the top of my lungs — along with almost 30 close members of my family — for eight seconds is just support for my cousin. I’m not sure, though, that if the bulls keep winning I’ll ever go back.

If our Legislature allows seven unelected appointed judges to decide where any of our tax dollars are spent, then the Legislature is certainly irrelevant and we are not properly represented.

Our Legislature could and should forthwith pass a bill allowing voters to decide at the polls whether or not the Supreme Court judges should be elected by the people or appointed.

Kansas voters elected Supreme Court justices for over a hundred years before they became appointed.

We already spend \$2.7 billion a year, more than half of our tax dollars, for kindergarten through twelfth grade. Would an elected judge demand that we spend even more?

Kansas now spends more money per pupil than any state surrounding Kansas.

The court’s ruling is arrogant and insulting to the taxpayers.

Any legislator who submits to outrageous demands by unelected judges is not worthy of holding office.

How will your legislator vote?

Ralph Hiett
Topeka

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters will be rejected, if deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste.

garfield

