

from our viewpoint...

## Election reaffirms power of one vote

Our congratulations to all the winners in the elections last week, and to all the candidates who came forward to run for these important, and mostly unpaid, positions.

Once again, the American process of peacefully giving the people a choice has been accomplished, there will be a peaceful and orderly transition, and we will see some new faces in the city commission and school board.

The election had some strange turns, with the three new Kanorado council members tying with 42 vote each. Citizens made a definite choice for the three, and on an equal basis.

People who don't vote in elections often say "my vote doesn't count," but a single vote last week could have changed the outcome of the city election.

As the final votes were canvassed Friday morning, it looked like the race between Annette Fairbanks and Gary Farris for the third seat on the city commission might even end in a tie.

The switch of one vote from Fairbanks to Farris would have given him the two-year term.

No one in the commission room Friday could remember an election that close.

"This sure shows the power of one vote," said Commissioner Chuck Thomas.

Voting is an important and vital part of the American political process, and one we are trying to export to other countries such as Iraq.

The news was full of the problems in January that led up to first national election there. It was fascinating to see the pride of those who participated, despite the terrorist threat, holding up an inked finger to prove they had voted.

Tuesday across the state of Kansas, there were no special security precautions, no guards the polling places.

There was a sense of pride when an election official offered an "I Voted" sticker, and friendly "hellos" when people wearing the sticker passed on the street.

After more than 200 years of local, state and national elections, Americans seem to take them for granted. We spend a lot of time complaining about how much of the news is taken up by politics.

Watching the continuing strife in Iraq it is hard to remember what took us there. Two years ago, the world watched in triumph as the statues of Saddam Hussein were toppled in Baghdad, but today protesters march through the same streets saying they are being oppressed by the American occupation.

But even the ability to organize protests and march in the street are signs of progress toward democracy. It may seem to be at our expense, but looking back, we need to remember our early days.

Elections are the American way. They signal the renewal of our democracy, the differences in our points of view, and how we embrace them all.

It's a remarkable process. — *Tom Betz*

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# star-news opinion



## Walking Washington not exactly beautiful

A walk around Washington in the springtime should be a beautiful sight as the cherry blossoms and masses of flowers provide color everywhere.

However, I was there before the cherry trees bloomed, and only a few hardy flowers peeked out of the cold earth to get pelted with a mixture of rain and snow.

Still, we walked from our hotel to the train station a couple of miles away to look for a leather shop and check the schedule to Baltimore. I didn't find the leather shop, and Steve didn't quite make it to Baltimore, but we still had a good time.

In a small park about a block from our hotel, two churches had set up a soup kitchen and every homeless person in that half of the city was enjoying soup and sandwiches on the benches, sidewalk and steps of nearby buildings.

We walked on towards the White House. At Lafayette Park across the street, a demonstration was underway. Here, surrounded by statues of Revolutionary War heroes — Marquis de Lafayette, General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben and Jean de Rochambeau — 50 or so people chanted, beat



**cynthia  
haynes**

• open season

on drums and held up signs calling for free elections in Togo.

Around the park are unobtrusive huts for guards and barriers for vehicles. Uniformed Secret Service guards stand by to make sure all is well. They smile, answer questions and watch the parade of humanity.

In the street in front of the White House, two men played hockey on skates with a ball on Pennsylvania Avenue while tourists got their pictures taken against the fence with the grounds and grandeur in the background.

We walked on past the departments of everything and then some. Over on one corner is the Postal Service. It looks huge and ominous. I'm not sure what they do there, but it's obviously the top of the bureaucratic food chain that handles millions of pieces of mail every year.

"Put a letter in there and you never see it again," I told Steve.

## Coach admits it has been tough year

To the Editor:

This year has been the most difficult personal experience of my life, and I know it has been tough for many others. People have said that I should "just let it go." But, I care far too much for the people I have helped, the program I have created, and the influence I will leave behind to remain silent about how much I care for them.

Sure I am still bitter over many injustices that occurred and over the false accusations concerning drug addiction and the vandalism. And I am very skeptical of some of the leadership of the school district, but none of that matters compared to the awesome privilege I had in coaching and teaching the kids in Goodland. So, I will say my piece with all due respect.

Most importantly, I would like to truly apologize for the pain in so many lives, especially the many terrific athletes I worked for and with. I wish they hadn't experienced the pain and confusion that they went through. Also, there were a few people who supported and comforted my wife and me during the most trying time of our lives, and for that, we will be always grateful.

I know that a list of accomplishments I made in Goodland would far outnumber the negative. I am proud of my efforts to make a difference. I listened seriously to the lives of the kids. I deeply cared about them. I gave my all to them to create something special. Anyone close to me or the program would know how much I did. I hope that most of my players would agree that I did as much for them as I possibly could have.

But I took far too much upon myself, and the impossible weight broke me. There was so much that needed to be done for the kids, and I



**from our  
readers**

• to the editor

committed to them fully. I spoke on behalf of those who were accused. I cared about the students who weren't popular. My motives were good, so I am not ashamed of my efforts.

Teddy Roosevelt said, "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat." I dared something great. I enjoyed much. I suffered a lot.

I know that I rebuilt Goodland football by enabling kids to believe in themselves. It was an astonishing turnaround in the football program, and my influence on future success will always be there. But, of course, I know that many were hurt because of my tragedy. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, "Show me a hero, and I will show you a tragedy." I am human, like everyone else, so I am not perfect.

However, I would ask one thing of the people of Goodland, and that is not to judge too quickly about the events leading up to and including Aug. 28. I can only say that almost all of you know only the sketchy details that were presented in the media.

None of you were in my shoes and none of you knows the substantial factors involved. There were components of the situation that would have broken even the strongest among us who try to do the right thing. Those closest

Just before we got back to the hotel, we got stopped by a hole in the ground.

The sign in front of the block-long dig proclaimed it the future home of the Newseum, a museum dedicated to newspapers.

I was sorry that the Newseum was still a set of drawings and a muddy hole but I was amazed and delighted to find full-size front pages from around the world behind plastic all along the boardwalk that runs in front of the construction area. I counted 52 daily newspapers from everywhere in the country. Each paper had the news of the day. These were the same papers that people in Alaska, Tennessee and Arizona were reading that morning. While I didn't see either of the Denver papers, the Lawrence Journal World, Kansas City Star, Omaha World-Herald and New York Times were on display.

There were also a dozen or so English-language papers from around the world.

I don't know how big a deal this new museum will be, but I was impressed with their start.

All too soon, we were back at the hotel and getting in a cab for the airport. Our visit to the capital was over before the cherry blossoms — or spring break crowds — had arrived.

to me — my family — know the full truth, and it is them alone who judge my heart.

So, we will move on and hope the best for the kids in Goodland. I also wish to thank Jon Mclean, a great coach, for a great season in my absence, and I wish him continued success. I hope real leadership emerges in Goodland — leadership that refuses to be intimidated by entrenched people of power and influence. I hope that leadership emerges that takes on the pervasive drug epidemic, but I read of no intention of confronting the drug problem in the last issue of this newspaper from the public office candidates. Illegal drugs are everywhere, and they are ruining young people's lives.

Good luck and God bless. Maybe I will see you again, but probably from the opposite sideline.

Coach Tony Diehl  
Goodland

### Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: [<star-news@nw-kansas.com>](mailto:<star-news@nw-kansas.com>).

### garfield

