

from our viewpoint...

National memory must remain true

Plain truth is what most people want to hear, and those who attended the Veterans Day service Friday got some from the podium.

The service was well attended, and the Voice of Democracy speech by Michael Smith deserved the standing ovation. This talented young man had a wonderful message about his heritage and the importance of the freedom he enjoys.

He had a varied background as an African American who spent time in both Mexico and Texas. He coined the phrase AfrAmMexTex to cover his heritage.

Smith said his goal in life is to help to improve the world, and with his ability to express himself both in speech and music, he should succeed. His speech has an excellent chance of taking him into district competition and possibly higher.

The World War II music presented by Jillian Parker and Jena McCall brought memories back for many in the room. McCall sang "April Blossom time" for her solo.

Korean War veteran Bill Bennett, a retired teacher from Colby, gave a stirring speech, reminding those present that everyone must continue to care and preserve their country and their freedoms, or it will diminish and perish.

"War produces veterans," he said, "and we know there will be casualties."

Bennett said there have been soldiers fighting to keep this country free from the time the Continental Congress called on George Washington to recruit, train and lead the first army.

He congratulated the kids for their participation in the Voice of Democracy contest, and said the most important thing veterans can do is reach out to the kids of today to help them grow and understand the importance of the freedoms Americans enjoy.

This annual service never fails to send chills down the spine, as the color guard presents the flag, and the crowd stands to salute and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

There are questions about the war in Iraq similar to those raised 30 years ago before we graduated from high school. The number of soldiers killed may not be the same, but every life is important.

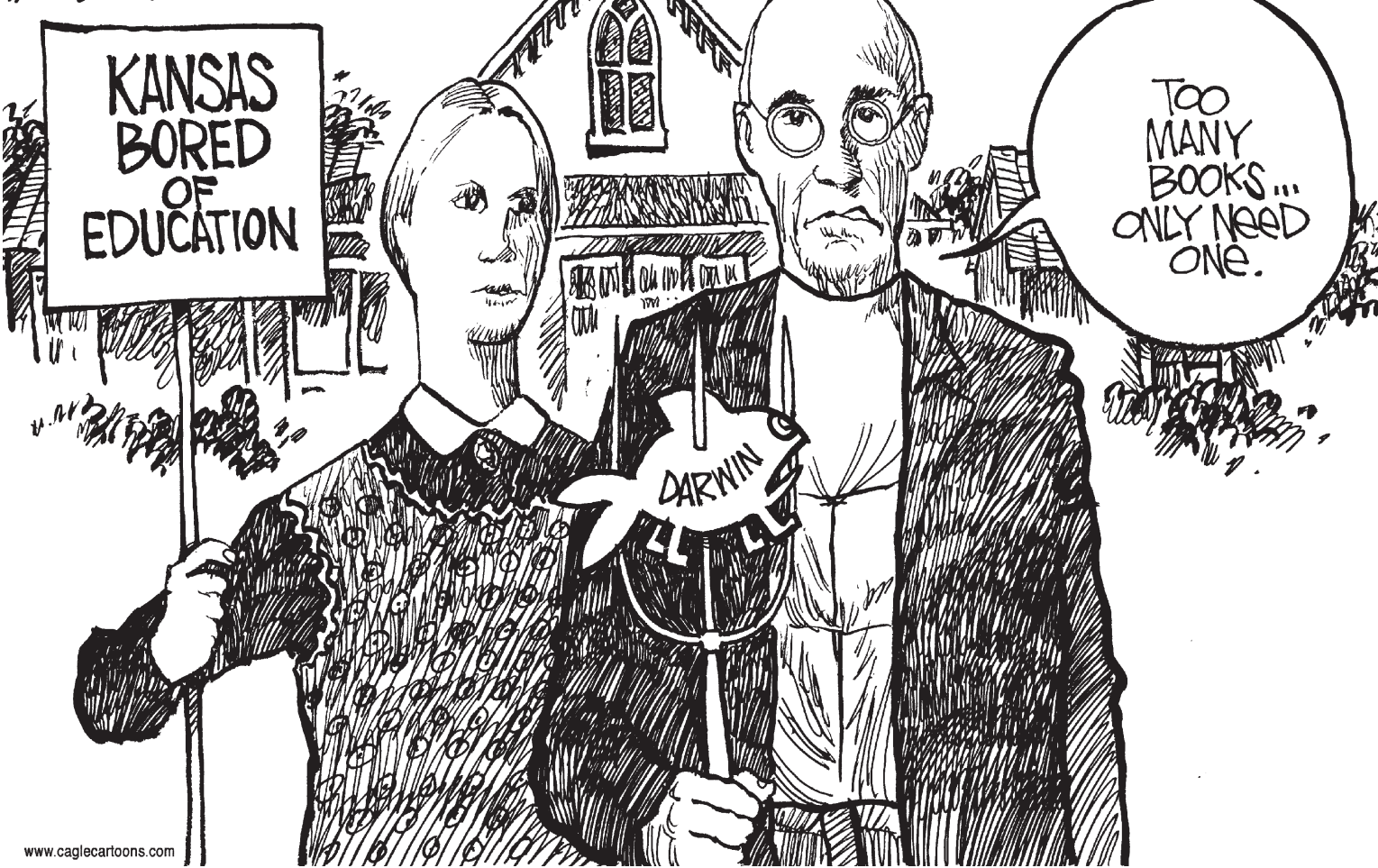
Veterans Day reminded us of the sacrifice made by Derrick Lutters, and the over 2,000 who have died in the current war. Bennett was right when he said, "We always have sadness when we come back from war."

Patriotic spirit swells up, and we remember the friends who marched off to Vietnam after high school.

The weekend of salutes and patriotic music fit right in with the excellent rendition of South Pacific at the high school.

When there are doubts about the direction or stability of this country, it is good to be able to pause and reflect on the history the American veterans have made possible for over 229 years. They deserve our thanks. — Tom Betz

Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 2005



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Visit to the amazing city of Hong Kong

Letters from China

Darin and Kati (Amos) Curtis are serving as WorldTeach volunteers in the People's Republic of China. WorldTeach, an organization affiliated with Harvard University which has an agreement with the Hunan Provincial Department of Education and Foreign Affairs, places volunteers as English teachers throughout the province. Darin and Kati are teaching at Yueyang Ba Zhong (Yueyang #8 Middle School) for one year.

Nimen Hao (Hello Everyone!)

October was quite an exciting month for us. In addition to our everyday adventures here in the People's Republic of China, we visited the amazing city of Hong Kong for the National Day holiday.

China's National Day is similar to America's Fourth of July. However, it is also China's major travel holiday for the fall season, much like Thanksgiving in the States. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese travelers swarm buses, planes and trains destined for destinations throughout this colossal country. We joined in this quasi-controlled chaos and embarked on a 14-hour overnight train ride to Shenzhen, a large mainland city and transportation hub bordering Hong Kong, followed by a jaunt through customs and a subway ride into the bustling metropolis that is Hong Kong.

Perhaps due to its complex history, Hong Kong is like no other city in the world. The epitome of East meets West, Hong Kong fuses ancient Chinese culture into the ever-spreading influence of western life.

After a century and a half of British rule, the influence of English culture can be seen, heard, and tasted on every street and in every building of this sensational city. The Chinese way of pushing and shoving is replaced by lines; street signs, maps, and menus are nearly always bilingual; and the prevalence of western food resembles any city in the States.

However, Hong Kong still manages to maintain a distinctly eastern feel. We visited popular tourist destinations like Chinese gardens, ancient temples and religious relics, such as the Tian Tan Buddha statue, which is a massive bronze Buddha sitting on a lotus flower. We

took a sampan ride down the harbor and visited night markets in search of Chinese knick-knacks, cheap clothes and fake name-brand goods. The large majority of the population speaks Cantonese, the form of Chinese spoken in southern China, and dim sum restaurants and tea houses abound.

The intertwining of East and West also happens below the surface. Hong Kong is both politically and economically different than mainland China, and the residents seem to have a separate and distinct self-image. Our first day in the city, we ventured down a main street and witnessed a police-escorted protest, an unexpected sight in China.

When we asked whether protesting was legal in China, one man adamantly stated, "This is not China, this is Hong Kong." Although the official handover of Hong Kong took place in 1997, a century and a half of British rule is a memory not so easily forgotten. It appears that Hong Kong residents, like the rest of the world, will continue to adjust to the changes taking place in their city.

Our time in this astounding city was one of constant excitement and intrigue. The view of Victoria Harbor at night was spectacular. The wide array of cuisine was refreshing. Watching the lights of the city dance from the ferryboat was breathtaking, and the ease of communication was comforting.

As tourists during the National Day holiday, we were fortunate to experience some of the fanfare that accompanies a major holiday in China.

As the country that invented the brilliantly colored explosives, China boasts fireworks that are popular, exciting and lavish. The 30-



A photo of us at the base of the Tian Tan Buddha Statue, the world's largest outdoor seated bronze Buddha statue. We climbed the 260 steps to see the gorgeous views.

minute display culminated with rows of huge glowing red 8s, a number that Chinese consider to be very lucky. As we watched them fade into the dark night, we thought about how lucky we were at that moment. Hong Kong is truly a unique and special place.

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e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

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

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