

from our viewpoint...

Climbing casualties raise anti-war cries

Casualties in the Iraq war passed 2,000 last month, with a predictable amount of moaning and carping from the Democrats and the anti-war crowd.

Deaths of American servicemen, and women, are never pleasant, but you have to ask, to what end?

Most of those who made this sacrifice, and their friends who carry on, probably would tell you it was in a just and valuable cause. That's not what you will hear back home, however.

The Democrats sense blood in the water with the president's popularity at an all-time low just before the congressional elections. They want control of Congress back.

And they seem perfectly willing to abandon everything these servicemen fought and died for.

Here's what you'll hear from this bunch:

- The president lied to get us into the war. There were no weapons of mass destruction.
- It's all about oil. Only the oil companies profit.
- We are bogged down in a Vietnam-like morass. We'll never win.
- The Iraqis hate us.
- The war is helping the terrorists. It's their best recruiting tool.
- The administration has no exit strategy.
- Our troops are dying in vain. We must bring them home.
- The terrorists are winning.

Only, on the face of it, none of that is true.

In fact, the Bush strategy of invading Afghanistan and Iraq and rooting out two violent, oppressive regimes seems to be working.

It's not about oil; it's about destabilizing the terrorists and putting them on the run.

There have been no terrorist attacks in the U.S. since the invasions. Al-qaida, while still making noise, is in fact on the run, its communications and command totally disrupted. We have picked off the leaders one by one, and eventually, we will catch up to all of them.

Outside Iraq, the Mideast is quieter than it's been in years. The Palestinians are having elections. Israel has withdrawn from some territory. Terrorism has subsided along the Jordan.

In Iraq, the people turned out to vote in two elections despite everything the terrorists could do to prevent them. The same happened in Afghanistan.

People were immensely proud of their democratic accomplishments, holding up their inked thumbs for the cameras.

Sure, the forces that backed Saddam Hussein are not happy. They are fighting us tooth and nail, and they have been far more effective than the administration expected. Still, there are signs the U.S. and the Iraqi government are winning, not losing, this war.

The millions of Iraqis who welcomed U.S. troops as they liberated Baghdad still, for the most part, back the change we have brought. It is the Saddam forces and the terrorists who are killing people, and most of the victims are Iraqi.

No war is easy. In this one, the initial phase was far easier than many expected, as American troops rolled from the border to Baghdad in just days. The next phase has been harder than expected, but the alternative to finishing the effort is not pretty.

Death. Violence. A victory for the terrorists.

And, eventually, more terrorist attacks here.

After 2,000 combat deaths, we can't and shouldn't allow that to happen. It's time to buckle down and finish what we have started. — Steve Haynes

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)
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Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
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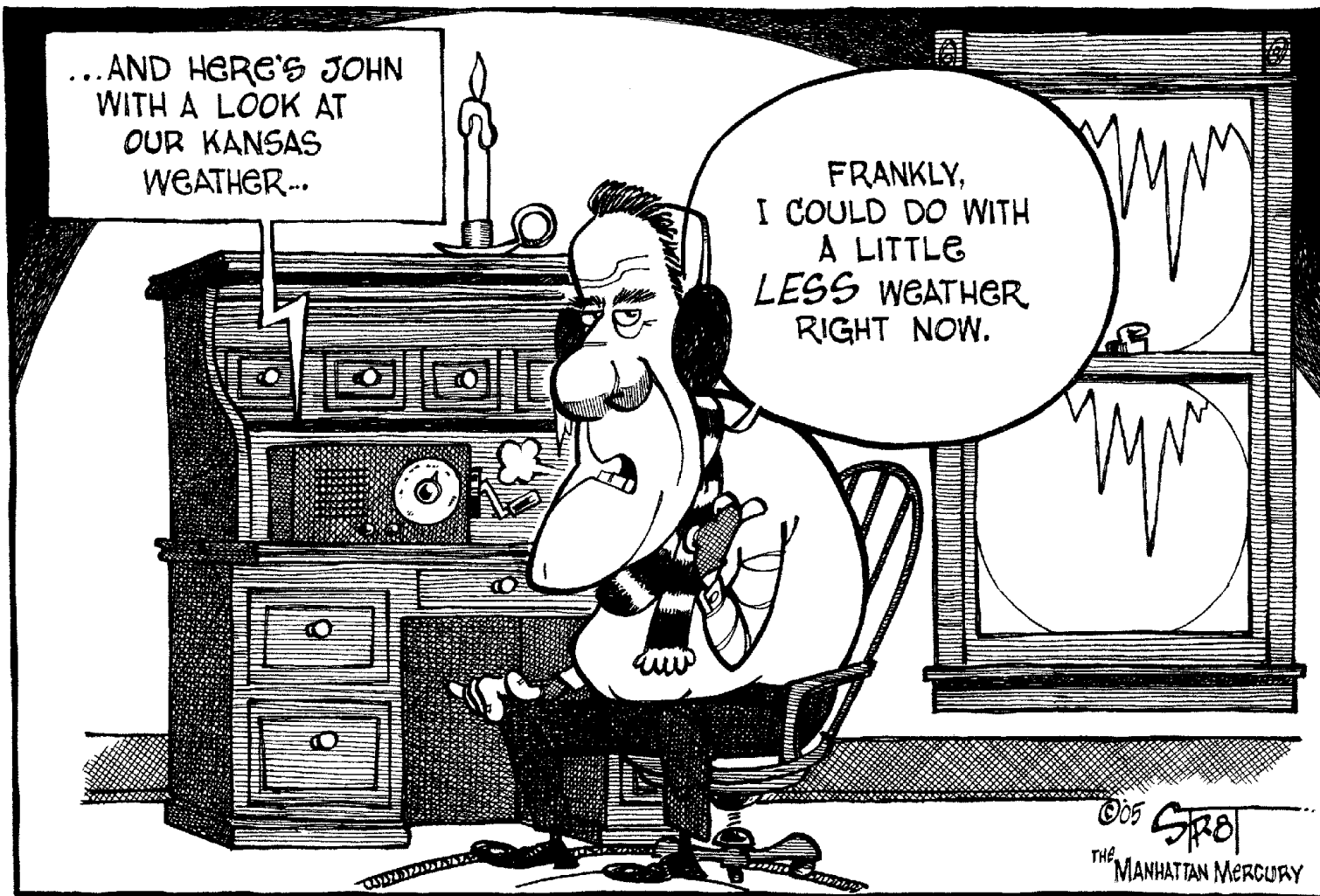
Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.
Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.
TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nw-kansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkan-sas.com
The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.
SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

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The Goodland Daily News
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Religious tolerance is needed now

To the Editor:

It wasn't that long ago in my lifetime that a Catholic man faced suspicion when he was seeking the office of president.

While addressing a group of Protestant ministers, John F. Kennedy said, "I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end ... where all men and all churches are treated equal ... where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice ... and where Catholics, Protestants, and Jews will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood."

As I observed the recent events unfold surrounding Professor Paul Mirecki of the University of Kansas and his course dealing with intelligent design, I began to realize what a different time we live in. His comments in e-mails were disturbing and inexcusable, and he has damaged civil discourse in Kansas.

While intelligent design is a legitimate topic in the Religious Studies department, Mirecki's hostile comments, particularly those ridiculing the religion of others, created a toxic environment for students, as well as other KU faculty.

Mirecki has disgraced a department and university which is otherwise a beacon of tolerance and acceptance. I believe it was the correct decision that Mirecki not teach this course.

During my 30 years in the Kansas Legislature, I have seen the political climate change many times. We are currently lodged in one of the most hostile political environments that I



from our readers

- to the editor

can recall. It is critical that we begin to recognize the diversity of our people and consider each individuals' opinions or beliefs, no matter how different they are from our own.

We may not agree with each of these beliefs, but all are worthy of respect and thoughtful reflection. Only through civil disagreement and debate will any real progress be made.

Religious tolerance is vital to a nation that was founded by people seeking freedom from intolerance in Europe. We must remember our roots and choose the high road. We should value our differences and use them to grow.

This diversity is the cornerstone of the strength and foundation of our nation's democracy. As JFK suggested, let us look past our differences and "promote the American ideal of brotherhood."

Anthony Hensley
Senate minority leader
Topeka

We celebrated Thanksgiving in China

Darin and Kati (Amos) Curts are serving as WorldTeach volunteers in the People's Republic of China. WorldTeach, affiliated with Harvard University, has an agreement with the Hunan Provincial Department of Education and Foreign Affairs to place volunteers as English teachers throughout the province. Darin and Kati are teaching in Yueyang, Hunan, PRC, at Yueyang Ba Zhong (Yueyang No. 8 Middle School) for a year.

Nov. 29, 2005

Nimen Hao (Hello Everyone)!

November is the month of giving thanks, and although Thanksgiving is an American holiday, we were celebrating it in our own way here in the People's Republic of China.

As anyone who has lived in a foreign country for an extended period of time could tell you, there are ups and downs to being a foreigner in a foreign land. For us, the first part of November was a time when we began to first feel the downs of life in China.

Perhaps it was the fact that we're so far from family during the holiday season or maybe it's just a bit of culture shock, but as Thanksgiving neared, we began to realize how far from home we really are! After four months here, the newness has begun to wear off. The things that at first seemed exotic and interesting began to feel taxing and demanding. The language barrier and personal appearance differences, at times, made us feel isolated and alone. Cultural differences occasionally lead to feelings of frustration or disappointment.

The lack of conveniences we enjoyed in America started seeming less "interesting" or "challenging" and more overwhelming and irritating. We began to really miss things like western toilets and carpet. We started craving things like barbecue, cheese and coffee. We dreamt about leisurely visits to the bookstore or a lazy day watching football. As Thanksgiving approached, we began to think of all the things we took for granted in the U.S. and seemed to be focusing on exactly the opposite of what the holiday celebrates.

Then, not long before families began sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner in America, we began to reassess our perspective. A group of

WorldTeach volunteers were putting together a Thanksgiving celebration in Changsha, the capital of Hunan, and only about an hour and a half by train from Yueyang. They had managed to find a frozen turkey at a western supermarket (not an easy feat) and were preparing an American-style feast.

As we made plans to attend, our focus began to shift. We started to think again about how fortunate we are to be in this country, to experience a new culture firsthand, to have made some amazing friends (both Chinese and American), and to see a part of the world that most have only seen in pictures. We remembered how blessed we are to have one another to lean on when we do feel alone or upset, and we thought about the wonderful people who helped us and supported us and made it possible for us to be here.

Just as there are downs. There are ups, and we continue to have many more ups than downs. Life abroad, in a foreign country and culture, isn't easy. It's an adjustment that we continue to make everyday. Although Thanksgiving is now over, we continue to give thanks each day for the experiences we're having here, and we'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Goodland community for your support. The sponsors who have helped make our volunteer work here possible are truly a blessing to us each and every day!

Zaijian!
Darin and Kati Curts

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.

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