

from our viewpoint...

University gets ‘A’ for firing professor

The University of Kansas gets a big, fat “A” for canning Paul Mirecki as chair of the religious studies department.

In e-mails sent to students about a new class designed, apparently, to debunk the “intelligent design” theory, Professor Mirecki proved himself to be a bigot and a boor. While he’s apparently a top Bible scholar, he’s not the stuff academic leaders are made of.

Intellectual and academic debate needs to stay at a high level, avoiding prejudice and slurs. Mr. Mirecki, despite his high office, stooped to insults and bigotry. He referred to right-wing Christians as “fundies,” and said he would give them a “big, fat slap in the face.”

It was pretty obvious, in discussions of the state Board of Education and its science standards, no views other than his would get much of an airing.

Our universities pride themselves on teaching and upholding values of tolerance and diversity. Too often, though, that means only so much diversity and tolerance only of views similar to the faculty’s.

KU showed it means what is says, removing a chairman who obviously has little tolerance for anyone he disagrees with.

It’s not that Dr. Mirecki isn’t entitled to his opinions. He can say whatever he wants. As Chancellor Robert Hemenway pointed out, he’s a tenured professor and he still has a job. He’s just not leading the department.

Mr. Mirecki is making noises about suing the state, claiming that his rights to free speech have been abridged and his “career ruined.” He’s also mad at the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department, whom he says is not pursuing his claim to have been beaten by men who referred to his statements about Christian groups.

Mr. Mirecki claimed the men followed him, then cut his vehicle off and beat him with their fists and a “metal object” somewhere near Lawrence.

He claims he’s been “treated more like a criminal than a victim” since he reported the alleged crime.

Maybe they don’t buy his claims about the beating?

It is hard to believe that kind of thing would happen in Kansas, but you never know. There could be right-wing Christians nearly as intolerant as this left-wing professor.

Paul Mirecki is no longer a department chair, and that’s just as well. The bed sheets in his closet were showing.

The next step will be harder. As Christians, the people he insulted need to forgive him.

That won’t get him his job back, but they’ll prove they’re better than at least one left-wing bigot.

Left or right, the university has proved it stands behind its values. — *Steve Haynes*

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@nwkans.com>.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)
Member: Kansas Press Association
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
e-mail: star-news@nwkans.com

Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor
Erica Harlan, Copy Editor
Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor
Pat Schiefen, Reporter
Greg Stover, Sports Editor
Mona Carver, Yvonne Ornelas, Advertising Sales
Sheila Smith, Office Manager



Nor’west Press
Jim Bowker, General Manager
Richard Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight,
Betty Morris, Heather Merklin, Adam Stuhlmiller,
Jerry Kirkpatrick, Lana Westfahl

nwkans.com
N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(ntbetz@nwkans.com)
Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkans.com)

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.

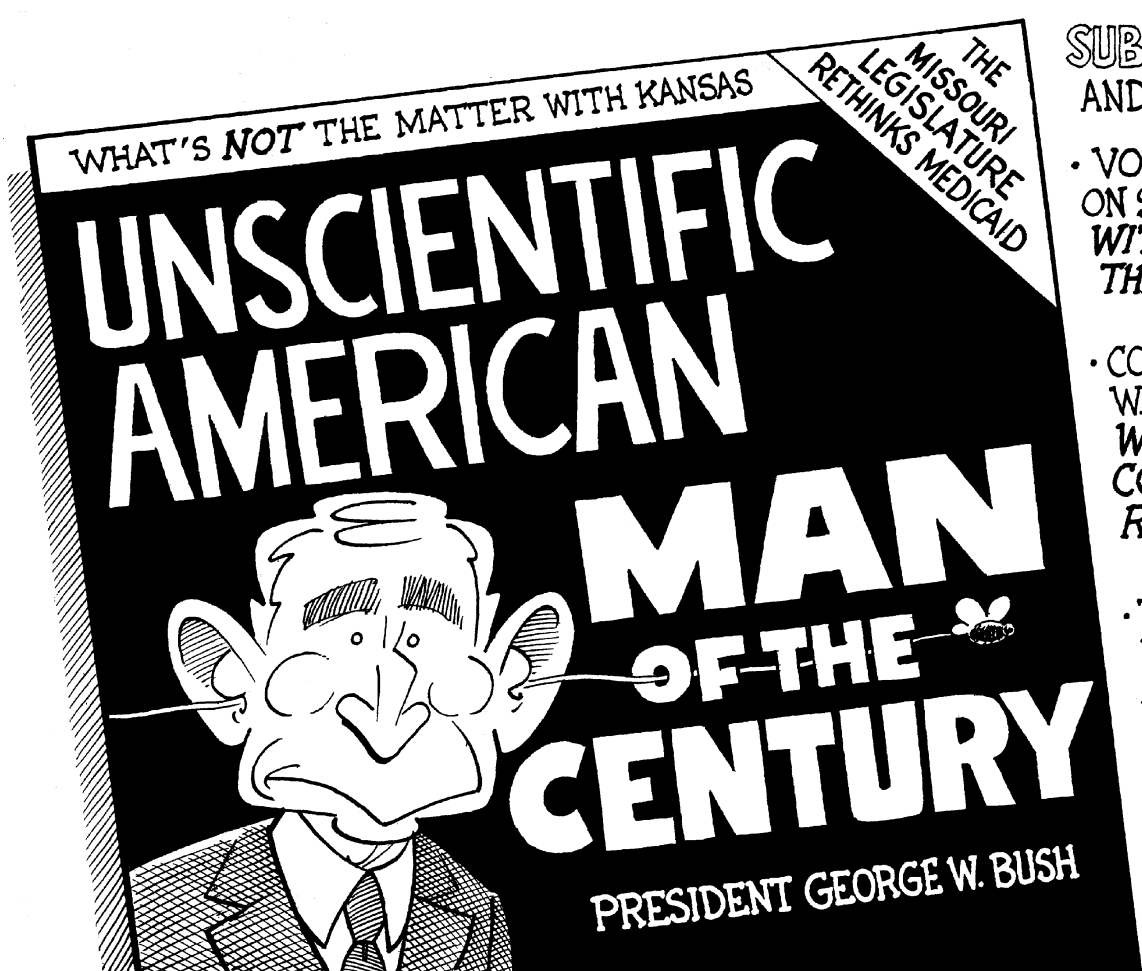
SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:
The Goodland Daily News
1932-2003

The Sherman
County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR
Founded by Eric and
Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor’West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company



SUBSCRIBE TODAY
AND LEARN HOW TO

- VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE ON STEM CELL RESEARCH WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS!
- COMBAT GLOBAL WARMING ALARMISTS WITH THE LATEST CORPORATE-SPONSORED RESEARCH!
- TRANSFORM YOUR BIBLE INTO A HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY TEXTBOOK!

Health secretary tries to get ahead of flu

Mike Leavitt has a mission.

Taking over a key post in an administration that’s been battered by storms political and temporal, he’d like to block the next blow.

Experts say bird flu is coming, maybe a killer virus like the one that took root at Camp Funston, Kan., in 1918 and killed as many as 40 million worldwide.

As the new secretary of Health and Human Services, one of Mr. Leavitt’s jobs is to fight bird flu. It’s no small thing.

While it’s been nearly a century since the last great outbreak, avian influenza is always there. For the most part, it’s a disease of chickens and other fowl. Once in a great while it mutates to the point where humans can spread it to one another. As in 1918.

If that happens today — and epidemiologists fear it might — the toll worldwide might be far greater than in 1918. Millions of Americans might die.

And someone would blame Mr. Leavitt’s boss, no doubt.

George Bush’s fault, along with the hurricanes and the war.

Speaking to the National Press Club in Washington recently, the former governor of Utah did not pretend the government is ready to prevent a bird flu pandemic. No nation on Earth is prepared, he said. There is a mad scramble to produce antiviral

drugs and vaccines, but no one has a stockpile.


“But we’re better prepared today than we were yesterday,” Mr. Leavitt said, “and we’ll be better prepared tomorrow than we are today.”

One task is to revitalize the U.S. vaccine industry, which can’t cope with demand for normal flu vaccines. If a pandemic comes, it’ll require vaccine made to match the virus as mutated. Millions of doses will have to be made and distributed inside six months.

That’s not much time in the drug industry. Today, vaccines are produced inside eggs, one dose at a time. New technology would cut the time required to build a vaccine.

Meanwhile, health experts are keeping an eye on bird flu. It’s killed about 126 people so far, mostly in Southeast Asia. It does not spread readily from human to human. So far.

Mr. Leavitt, just back from a tour of Vietnam and other flu hotspots, says the strategy health officials hope to adopt is to quickly contain any flu outbreaks until vaccine is available.



steve
haynes

- along the sappa

“Think of the world as a vast dry forest, susceptible to fire,” the secretary said. “It only takes a spark to set it off. If you’re there when it happens, though, you can put it out with your foot.”

In an age of global travel undreamed of in 1918, that might be more difficult than it sounds. Still, Mr. Leavitt says, it’s the only hope we have right now. If the current H5N1 variant of the virus doesn’t spread or mutate this year, the next version might.

Containment is vital, because the world lacks the ability to make vaccine fast enough or in large enough amounts to protect everyone. Current contracts for H5N1 vaccine amount to 3 to 6 million doses, hardly a drop in the bucket. New technology will be required to change that, Mr. Leavitt said.

It’s a race against time. Scientists are convinced a flu outbreak is coming because it always has come.

“If the past is prologue,” the secretary says, “then we are overdue for a pandemic.”

And if there could be a more perfect storm, this would be it. While hurricanes and earthquakes are over in a day or two, he notes, a flu pandemic could last a year or two. Full mobilization would be required for the duration.

All of which must make being governor of Utah, or even environmental protection administrator, look pretty simple.

Stranded motorists thank citizens for help

To the Editor:

I would like to tell you about the excellent support provided to my family and hundreds of other motorists who were stranded by the snowstorm that hit Kansas on Sunday-Monday, Nov. 27-28. Specifically, I wanted you to know about the exceptional efforts of several businesses in your community.

At 1:45 on Sunday afternoon, I-70 was closed to westbound traffic. We pulled off in Goodland, and, after getting gas, decided it best to try to find a place to stay for the night. There was already a line at the Howard Johnson check-in counter, but the staff was handling things well.

In spite of power outages, the restaurant served meals without interruption Sunday evening and all day Monday. When rooms ran out, the hotel provided shelter for at least 150 extra people, in the swimming pool area and some in the hallways. The staff provided all available extra bedding to help make these guests comfortable. Also, the restaurant fed well over its normal capacity for the next day and a half.

The Wal-Mart next to Howard Johnson’s lacked power, but still opened the doors to provide hot coffee and hot chocolate as well as free food to those stranded by the storm.

We encountered a gentleman in a check-out line at the Dollar Store who was buying groceries to feed a family he found in the Wal-Mart parking lot attempting to wait out the storm in their car. He took the family into his home and provided food for them.

We understand another large temporary shelter was opened up for stranded motorists as well. The ingenuity and creativity at several restaurants in the area allowed customers to eat even though there was no power. Particularly remarkable was the consistently positive and friendly attitude of everyone we encountered.



from our
readers

- to the editor

We know many were facing their own hardships at home without power, yet you could not tell that from the compassionate and cheerful service at the many places we patronized over the two-day snow-in.

This certainly made a huge positive impression on those stranded in Goodland, returning home from the Thanksgiving holidays.

We now have additional blessings to be thankful for. We continue to tell everyone we meet about the terrific community of Goodland.

Your community deserves high compliments and praise because your friendliness has left a lasting positive impression on hundreds of “accidental tourists.” I don’t know what we would have done without the won-

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

derful help from your community.

Stephen A. Shambach
Colorado Springs

To the editor:

We were unexpected guests in Goodland for two days and nights during the blizzard after Thanksgiving.

We were at the Max Jones Fieldhouse one night and the high school the next night. We were traveling with our three children and 93-year-old mother on our way back to Denver.

We were shown the utmost kindness and hospitality by the people of Goodland. All our needs were met — food, shelter, blankets, a mat and a cot.

It is so wonderful to know what great people make up our beautiful land.

We are spreading the word to all our family and friends about Goodland!

Thanks again for everything. Hope we can return the favor someday.

Joe and Mary Sixta and family
Denver

garfield

