

from our viewpoint...

Tough choosing the top 10 stories

Sometimes it is easy to select the top 10 stories in a year, but 104 editions of *The Goodland Star-News* in the past year contained probably 50 stories that could have made it to the ballot.

This year the staff selected 25 to vote on. Among the stories that did not make it to the final list were the approval of the two incentive packages for tax abatement and tax rebates. We felt these programs will have a positive impact on the county for years to come.

The work the city and county have done to plan road improvements and a sales tax to pay for them is another that will continue to develop. We expect to have a special election this year to give the people a chance to decide if fixing the roads is as important as their elected representatives believe.

Asking the state Legislature for permission to hold the sales tax election is the first step, and a bill is being drafted to include a number of cities and counties who want similar permission. That bill will be introduced when the session opens next week, and it should move quickly through the process.

There is a good chance the road plan and a sales tax election will be one of the top stories of this year.

The top 10 chosen here are local stories, and are not as bit a deal as the top 10 chosen by the Associated Press.

However, there are local connections to two of the AP top 10, including the volunteers and contributions made to the victims of Hurricane Katrina by Goodland people.

Sherman County citizens had friends and family living in the southern states hit by the hurricane, and there were several efforts here to raise money and send supplies to those who lost everything in the storms.

Local churches, kids and volunteers had started the year raising money for the tsunami victims that hit southeast Asia in December 2004 killing over 200,000 people.

Nationally, the war in Iraq was the No. 3 story of the year, down from being No. 1 the year before, and coming in behind the death of Pope John Paul and the naming of a new pope.

The impact of the war was distant, although young men and women from Sherman County were among those sent to fight. A few of those had been wounded in action, but on May 1, the war came home with the death of Derrick Lutters in a bomb blast.

Max Jones Fieldhouse was packed for the funeral of this young man, who touched a lot of lives in his 24 years. It was the connection to the larger story that made it our top story of the year.

With a new year beginning, there are 362 days left until we select another top 10, and we can hope there will be plenty of good and positive stories to report on this year. — *Tom Betz*



There are choices when sending a package

When you want to send a parcel, you have several choices. There's United Parcel Service (UPS), Fed-Ex, DHL, the U.S. Postal Service — and then there's the friends network.

Of the paid delivery systems, the post office is almost always the cheapest. However, you have to pay extra for fast service. Still, you can't beat the friends network for cheap — it's almost always free. The speed of delivery varies a lot, however.

Back when we were living in a tiny hamlet of Creede in the mountains of Colorado, all our medication was delivered by the friends network. The pharmacy in Del Norte, 45 minutes down mountain roads and in another county, would give your prescription to whomever showed up from Creede. That person was supposed to leave the package at the Standard station.

Then you just picked up your prescription at the gas station, as long as the person picking it up remembered to deliver it. Occasionally, there would be some long-distance calls to find out where Johnny's antibiotics were or Aunt Sarah's arthritis medicine. Usually, it was just someone who forgot to stop at the gas station when they



cynthia haynes

• open season

got back to town.

Everyone in town helped move stuff. Steve once brought back a truckload of shingles for someone reroofing their home.

We still do that today.

Our offices are connected by our drivers. The Oberlin driver takes stops by St. Francis and trades mail sacks and picks up inserts. Then she goes to Goodland and trades mail sacks, drops off the inserts and picks up *The Oberlin Herald*. Then it's on to Colby to trade mail sacks and leave off a few papers. Then back to Oberlin. The Norton driver picks up mail and inserts in Oberlin on other days and delivers all of it to Goodland.

Last week, I noticed a sack on a desk in Oberlin. It was for an employee's sister, who would

pick it up later in the week. The sack was from her daughter in St. Francis.

That sack had been delivered to our office in Sainty, driven to Goodland and Colby before getting to Oberlin, and would eventually be picked up by its intended recipient or delivered to her by her sister.

Our family does the same thing. I made my son take a package to his grandmother after Christmas. He was stopping by Concordia on his way from Oberlin to Lawrence, so I sent the package with him. His sister in Augusta, Ga., sent to me for her grandmother, along with other presents for the rest of the family, knowing someone would take it to Concordia.

When we've had Oberlin kids going to the junior college in Concordia, we've sent stuff with them and delivered stuff to them. When a high school senior told me that she planned to attend Emporia State University last week, I was elated. Now I had someone to send stuff to my brother-in-law and sister-in-law in Emporia.

Poor girl, she just thought she was going to college. She didn't know she was joining the friends transportation network.

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>.

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THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

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1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Celebrating 25 years in publishing

Dec. 1 quietly passed, and Cynthia and I raised a glass to mark our 25th anniversary as newspaper publishers.

As they said in the song, what a long, strange trip it's been.

We had put in nearly 10 years in Kansas City when we took the plunge, or I had, anyway. She didn't graduate pharmacy school until 1971, and we were married that summer. I had been at *The Kansas City Times* for a year by then.

We enjoyed our time in Kansas City. I was a reporter and then an editor for the morning *Kansas City Star*, and she was managing a drugstore for the Revco chain. Our family grew to two daughters and a son. Kansas City is a great town, and not a bad place to live.

But at the drugstore, Cynthia had shift work. With only two pharmacists, they traded days and nights. At a morning paper, I always worked nights. It was fun, even when the kids were little.

By the time the eldest was in first grade, though, we never saw her. She went to school in the morning and came home to a babysitter. After a day when we drove two hours to take a walk in the woods, we decided there had to be something better.

A friend at work introduced me to weekly newspapers. He worked at Hallmark and at the paper, and he dreamed of owning his own paper. He spent hours pouring over the financial reports of papers for sale. I began to realize that you could make a living in a small town.

I just had no idea how small.

That summer, we made a couple of trips to look at papers. The one that kept calling us was the crazy one, in a tiny Colorado mining camp, at 8,800 feet elevation, with barely 800 year-around residents.

When we went over the books and talked to the owners, though, it made sense, and by October we'd sold the house, bought a four-wheel-drive and moved to Colorado. We arrived right before



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Thanksgiving, kids, plants and suitcases in tow. We hadn't even signed the contracts on the paper yet.

Creede was, if nothing else, an adventure, start to finish. The house we had rented wasn't ready, so we wound up in a two-room tourist cabin with three kids, who promptly came down with the chicken pox.

The old owners showed us the ropes and helped us out for two weeks, then disappeared. We hadn't a clue what we were doing, but somehow we got it done. Being a reporter, I found, didn't prepare you for dealing with advertisers or printing contracts or Wolf Creek Pass in the winter.

I'm not sure we exactly prospered, but our operation grew. We learned a lot. We made a lot

of friends, and I suppose a few enemies, though I can't honestly name one right now.

An out-of-state chain bought our competitor and took aim at our papers. Cynthia was managing a pharmacy for Dillons and working at the paper. When we sold, we had the luxury of looking around for another business.

And that turned out to be in Oberlin and St. Francis, a little more than 12 years ago, so we've spent nearly half our time as publishers now in Kansas.

It's been rewarding for the experiences we've had, the stories we've seen, but mostly for the people we've met. Readers and neighbors become like family. Sometimes they get a little irritated, and sometimes they're a little irritating, but still family, and you wouldn't trade this ride for anything.

It's not over yet, of course. There's a lot of adventure still on the horizon, but 25 years is both a landmark and a watershed.

A strange trip, yes, but so wonderful, so interesting, so unexpected and so rewarding. And so *not* in the city.

where to write

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