

from our viewpoint...

Mistreating animals tarnishes area's image

We were aghast when we saw the photos of the horses found without food and water north of the city last week. The statewide coverage of the mistreatment was not the best way for Sherman County to hit the news.

Without judging the owners or the reason they were unable to take care of the horses, the plight of these animals was a graphic reminder about the responsibility we taken on when we have an animal or more than one to take care of.

The courts may exact some punishment in the future, but thanks to a citizen who reported the conditions, most of the horses are recovering. Responding to the report, Sheriff Kevin Butts acted to take the horses to a veterinarian.

Taking care of any animal is not cheap, but we have to take that into account when we accept the responsibility. When things get tough, we find ways to be sure the animals get fed, or find another option.

With dogs and cats, the option is to call the Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter for help. Horses are a bit more difficult, but the option to sell them or even give them to someone who can take care of them is more humane than allowing them to starve.

Filling the water tanks for the horses would have been more humane, and calling someone for help would have made the present situation less horrific.

People have been calling the vet clinic and the sheriff to ask about the horses, and to offer to help pay the costs. Sheriff Butts said the offers are welcome, and anyone who would like to help the horses can call his office at 890-4835 or Prairieland Animal Clinic at 899-6166.

The future of the horses will be up to the courts, and we can hope the results mean a home with lots of love and care.

The situation reminded us that it was six months ago when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita pounded the Gulf Coast, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and destitute.

After six months, New Orleans put a brave face on and held Mardi Gras complete with the parades and parties. It was not the same as in previous years, because the city is a long way from recovering.

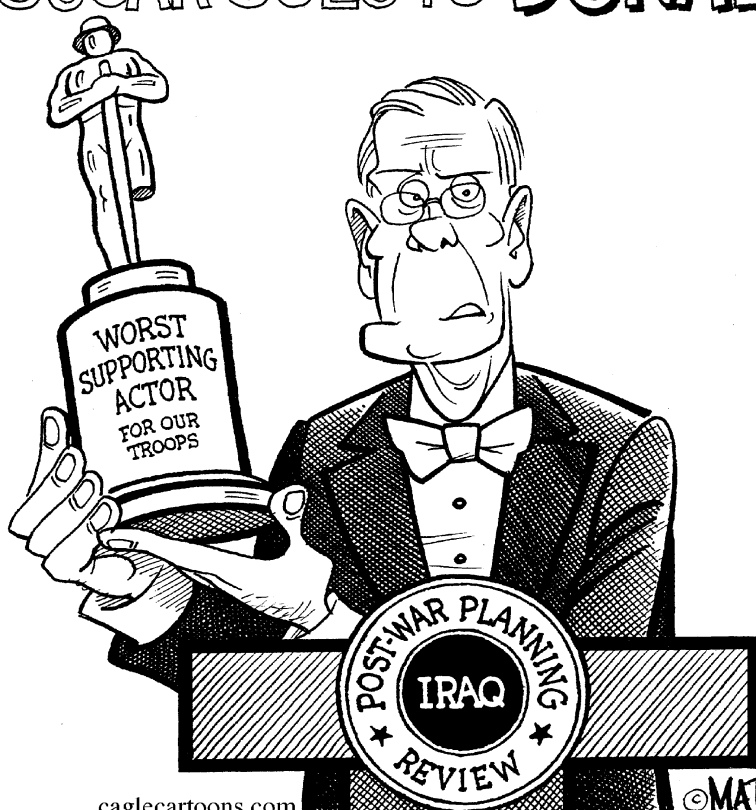
In some parts of New Orleans, the rebuilding has been moving forward with cooperation and success, but there are parts of the city where there is mostly frustration at the red tape people find as they try to rebuild their lives.

There is no way to know how many more months or years it will take for the Gulf coast to fully recover. At the same time, there are animals from the Gulf Coast which continue to be taken to other cities in the country because their owners cannot be found.

As we feel sorrow for the loss of horses and the apparent mistreatment of others in our county, we should pray for the relief of those who lost their homes and more.

May we remember that we are known by our actions, and to treat everyone — and every creature — with the love and compassion we would expect ourselves. — Tom Betz

AND THE OSCAR GOES TO DONALD RUMSFELD!



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"THERE ARE KNOWN SHOULD'VE-KNOWNS AND UNKNOWN SHOULD'VE-KNOWNS AND SHOULD'VE-KNOWNS WE WOULD'VE KNOWN IF WE COULD'VE KNOWN WE SHOULD'VE KNOWN"

Celebrating my birthday or spring training?

My husband is taking me out tonight for my birthday, or maybe it's to celebrate the start of spring training.

Steve promised to take me out since my birthday's Feb. 22. He usually takes me out on or around my birthday, and this weekend we're supposed to be in Denver for the Colorado Press Association meeting.

However, I'm worried about this date. My husband has been muttering about the pitchers and catchers reporting for spring training ever since we took down the Christmas lights.

Steve isn't a great sports person, but he lives for baseball season.

We used to attend the Royals games in Kansas City when we lived there.

After we moved to Colorado, he kept looking for a way to rig an aerial to pick up the Royals games. He never figured out how, so his sister would tape a game or two each year and mail them to us. He would listen to games over and over again until I could practically give you a play-by-play and was ready to strangle him



cynthia haynes

• open season

with the tape.

Eventually, the Rockies came to Denver and we ran out and bought a portable radio to listen to the games. We even made the five-hour trek to the metropolis occasionally to attend a contest along with 70,000 of our closest friends.

The radio reception was terrible but — if we stood outside on one leg and faced north with a pair of rabbit ears draped with foil on our heads — we could get the game. (We could also get picked up by the police for impersonating a teen-ager.)

The move to western Kansas saved my sanity. The radio reception is better and Denver became an hour closer and by three mountain passes. We get to attend a few more games.

Still, each winter as the dark days drag us down, Steve would start muttering, "Only six more weeks before the pitchers and catchers report to camp."

Well, the pitchers and catchers are in camp and the rest of the team was to report today. That's Wednesday, Feb. 22, the first official spring training practice with the whole team was scheduled. It's also my birthday.

My birthday may be important to me — not as important as it was the first 50 years, but still important.

However, I'm not so sure where I stand on this matter with Steve — he's had me all winter but the Rockies have just been a faded memory and a dream of better things to come. (After last year he says, anything'd be better.)

So if I end up in a sports bar, I won't be surprised. I can just see myself sitting in a roomful of television sets with the sound turned off.

If I do, I may have to strangle him with a television cord or maybe just one of those old Royals tapes. Well, maybe I should save those — they were winning back then.

I'll have to find the next batch of salsa

I guess I am going to have to find the next batch of chips and salsa by myself.

That was Jack's job. He always knew where the best Mexican food was, usually some out-of-the-way dive in Bartley or McCook.

It wasn't much fun unless we had to drive for half an hour to get to lunch. That gave us time to talk.

It also drove our wives crazy. I think they thought we were goofing off. Maybe we were.

We didn't go to lunch that often. Not nearly often enough, now that I think about it.

We'd drive and talk, take the back roads through Danbury or Beaver City. We'd talk about the town, people, politics, the public good, and sometimes, things men talk about when their wives are not around. We never did take them to lunch.

Jack Metcalf loved Mexican food, and especially he loved salsa. He'd drive all day to get a good bowl of sauce. He talked the gal who cooked at the little cafe in Bartley to selling him her salsa by the jar. He prized that.

Jack loved a lot of things: He loved life, he loved his grandkids, he loved Oberlin and its people. He loved his wife Karen.

He had made a little money now and then. He had the Pepsi plant in Oberlin, then went into the



steve haynes

• along the sappa

insurance business and later into real estate. He was proud of the work he'd done.

His family was among the earliest settlers here and some of the most prominent. They controlled the old Farmers National Bank for years, and Jack was more than a little sad when they finally sold their interest.

After he sold the real estate office a few years ago and retired, he focused his time on all those he loved. I guess I was glad to get a little of it.

Jack was proud of his accomplishments, proud of his family, proud of his sobriety, most proud of that. He had 30 years of love with Karen and tried to lead a respectable life, but that meant he

was past 40 when he settled down.

I don't know that he was exactly proud of the years before that, but he sometimes smiled when he talked about those days. Oh, there were some stories.

He wouldn't have gone back to that life for anything, and he was always ready to lend a hand to anyone who had decided to leave the wayward path.

We had a date for Mexican food. It had been way too long.

We were going to go to Norton on a Friday night, and take our wives. That was something new. We had to wait until after wrestling season, though. He couldn't miss a grandson's match.

We never got there. Jack checked out while I was out of the country, and I never got the chance to say goodbye.

I think that makes him lucky. I think that means he left me holding the bag, too, since I'm pretty sure I bought lunch last time. He'd have gotten a kick out of that.

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