

from our viewpoint...

## Kansas has power on water choices

Kansas needs to make a lot of decisions about water, and not all of them involve issues in the state's control. Kansas farmers pump more water out of the Ogallala aquifer underlying the western plains than nature puts back, drawing wells down each year. Eventually, there won't be enough water to grow irrigated corn out here. The big question is, should we slow down now, and make the water last? Or wait until we have to? Water in western Kansas river basins, including the Republican River drainage in our northwest corner, isn't adequate to cover current uses, especially irrigation wells in the so-called streambed aquifers. (These are separate from the Ogallala.) The state isn't giving out new well permits, but our use is more than interstate compacts allow. Nebraska farmers below us do the same.

Kansas is suing Nebraska in the U.S. Supreme Court to get its fair share of water from the river. Where does that leave north-west Kansas farmers? There is water in most of our federal reservoirs, but less every year during the turn-of-the-century drought. All of the lakes out here in the northwest have fallen during the current drought. Already, irrigation is losing out at these lakes, designed more than a half century ago as "multiple use" facilities. Recreation, cities, storage and industrial use seem to win out. Back in eastern Kansas, though, the reservoirs are being sucked down to perpetuate the folly of barge navigation on the Missouri River. Relentless releases designed to bring the river up just a few inches draw down lakes which have become vital to the Kansas economy.

Over the years, the Army Corps of Engineers has deepened, narrowed and straightened the river channel to help move barges. In dry times, that's not enough, though, and the Corps calls on Kansas water. Who benefits? Barge operators, mostly. Grain and other commodities moved on the river could be moved by taxpaying railroads and existing highways rather than using federal dollars to dredge and straighten the river.

The deep, fast flow barge operators threatens fish and other river life, with little benefit to anyone in this state. We're not alone in this. Nebraska and Dakota economies depend on federal reservoirs, too. Many people up there want their lakes left at levels that promote recreation. Drawdowns to promote barge traffic can leave boat ramps and marinas high and dry, driving off boaters and fishermen.

All across the plains, farmers face the same decisions about wells and irrigation. There's not enough water anywhere. The right thing to do is to maximize the resource, which means using water well and wisely. Knowing what that means isn't always easy, but one thing is for sure:

In the future, we'll all have to do more with less. — *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.

## The Goodland Star-News

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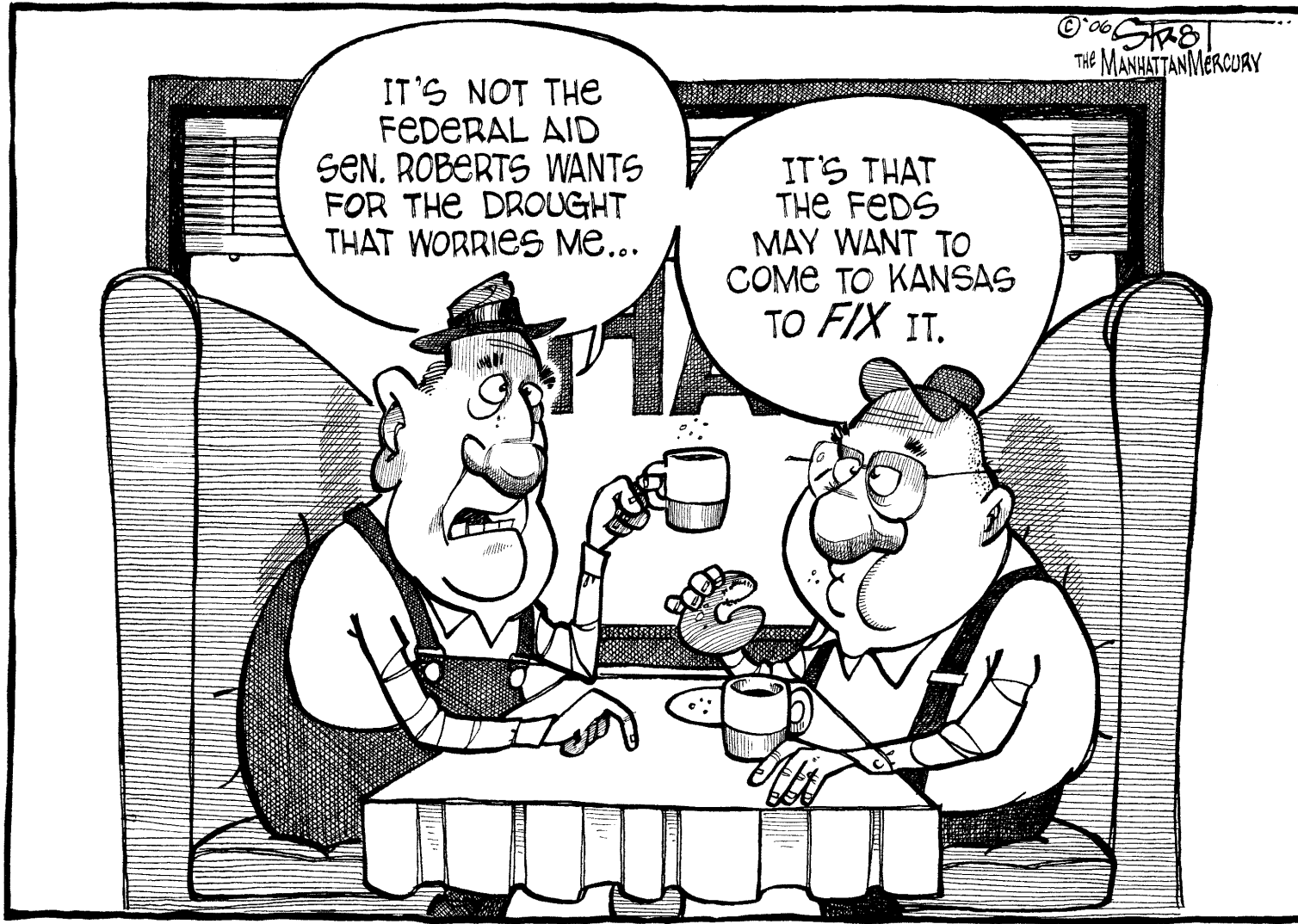
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## Wondering about having grandchildren

I don't have any grandchildren, but my baby sister Marie has five.

It's just not fair. My kids are all older than hers and one of mine is even married, while both her boys are single.

Of course, she cheated.

While my kids are out partying and getting older and older — the oldest is 32 and the youngest 26 — little sister went off and married a guy with six kids and a pair of granddaughters.

Since her marriage two years ago, the step-children have added twin boys and another little girl.

Last month, Marie and her husband took off for our place in Colorado with a son, daughter-in-law, the two oldest granddaughters and twin boys in tow.

I'm told they had a great time.

I know I had a great time planning for their arrival.

We have a children's room in Colorado with bunk beds and a closet with a few toys —



## cynthia haynes

• open season

mostly boy toys, since my youngest is a boy. The girl stuff had long disappeared into who knows where.

I wasn't sure what to do about the boys. They weren't going to be able to play with my son's "guys." (Boys don't play with dolls. They do action figures, known in our family as "guys.")

Still, I picked up a couple of toddler toys at the thrift store. Later, I heard that they fought over my choices.

The girls were a different story.

I was a little girl once, a long time ago, and some of my favorite memories are standing in front of grandma's mirror decked out in her costume jewelry, scarves and aprons.

I hit the yard sales and thrift stores and searched my jewelry box.

I came up with dozens of strings of fake pearls, satin beads, bright strings of Mardi Gras leftovers and hair ribbons. I picked up a couple of dolls and some clothes and about two dozen filmy scarves some little old lady once used to protect her hair as she left the beauty parlor.

I left all my goodies in the closet and told my sister she had to report back.

The report was that she had two little fairy princesses decked out in beads on their heads, necks, arms, legs and middles. Many of the necklaces were used to hold the scarves in place and the bedroom was a shambles, with stuff strung everywhere. The dolls ended up wearing nothing but hair bows.

There's nothing like a messy kids' room to spell success.

I may not have any grandchildren — lucky sister — but I was a little girl for about 20 years, as I recall.

## A thank you for another reader's letter

To the Editor:

I would like to express my appreciation to James Waugh for his letter to the editor published in the Tuesday, Sept. 5, issue of *The Goodland Star-News* discussing the recent plea agreement made in the Oct. 1, 2005 accident which resulted in the death of my father, Roger Blau, and Roberta Casey.

I would like to invite your readers to send me their comments or reactions concerning the decision. I would also like to thank everyone who has supported our families since the accident.

I hope to hold a memorial motorcycle ride in honor of Roger and Bert. Please watch for



announcements for the ride.

David K. Blau

Oberlin

To the Editor:

To give or keep.

How did Bill Gates or Warren Buffett sneak that much money past their wives?

## from our readers

• to the editor

## What it's really like in Fidel's Cuba

Your average income is \$15 a month. Your meat ration is 3.3 pounds a month.

Owning a car is forbidden unless you are among the ruling elite. Computers are illegal. So is Internet access.

The prices of the basics you need to live on are low. A decent-size urban apartment rents for \$10 a month. But everything is extremely scarce — food and gasoline to bicycles and bank loans.

To get by, you must supplement your income by moonlighting, working in the black market or getting remittances from relatives abroad. Bath soap, shampoo and chicken are luxuries.

Welcome to the Republica de Cuba, the 1950s police state and time warp that Fidel Castro and his fellow goons have spent the last 47 years "perfecting" for the 11.3 million souls who've had the misfortune to be born there.

Welcome to the politically abused country American leftists have slavishly adored, defended and given excuses for since Fidel took absolute power in 1959.

One of only five communist anachronisms left on Earth, Cuba today is a nice place to visit, but unless you subscribe to *The Nation* or belong to the Communist Party, you don't want to live there.

One political party, Partido Comunista de Cuba, runs the government, owns everything of importance, sets wages and prices, controls all the media, makes all the plans, writes all the rules, puts up all the candidates, wins all the elections and kills or jails the dissidents.

Fundamental human freedoms — to speak, act, own property and trade — are paper promises or nonexistent in Fidel's paradise of government-coerced equality and shared misery. In a form of apartheid, Cubans are forbidden to mingle with tourists.

Cuba's command economy is overtaxed, over-regulated and pathetically unproductive.



## bill steigerwald

• newsmakers

The Cuban peso — equal to about 4 U.S. pennies in Havana — is worthless beyond Cuba's shores.

Fidel and his fellow travelers in America blame Cuba's sorry state on the trade embargo the United States slapped on the country in 1959. And they never fail to point out that though Fidel isn't perfect, at least he's made sure everyone gets free health care and a good education. And that's more than any U.S. president has done, the casual socialists sniff.

When word broke that Fidel was sick and had handed off control to his brother Raul, Cuban exiles in Miami were dancing in the street and planning their returns. If the Cuban people get lucky, by now the favorite dictator of the American left will be dead.

But unless the Bush administration's

neocons have prepared an expeditionary force we aren't privy to, Fidel's death isn't likely to immediately bring freedom or capitalist prosperity to Cuba. Some experts think it's more likely that Cuba under Raul will slowly evolve into a communist-free market hybrid like China or Vietnam.

Anything would be better than what Fidel has created — an impoverished, crumbling, living museum to the evils, idiocies and inefficiencies of unfettered Soviet socialism. The more you read about daily life in Cuba, the more obvious it becomes that it is a victim of too little Yankee imperialism, not too much.

Unfortunately, Fidel's demise may not be enough. What Cuba's beautiful people desperately need to liberate them and vault them into the 21st century — political and economic freedom, billions in American investment, Nike factories, Wal-Marts, a Major League Baseball franchise in Havana — may still take decades to arrive.

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