

Abilene hurt by highway closure at town's exit

The Kansas Department of Transportation made a terrible mess out of a project down in Abilene this fall, causing millions in damage to businesses near the town's main exit while it was closed for more than two months.

Imagine any town cut off from its major highway for two months. Think what that could do to business, and did to businesses in Abilene.

Apparently to save time and money, the department decided to just close the eastbound exit from Interstate 70 to K-15, which serves as Abilene's Main Street and the main access to tourist attractions including the Seeley Mansion and the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum.

The only detour took drivers several miles east to a rural exit, where signs directed them to turn back and use the westbound exit. Most, apparently, just kept going.

And Abilene, with its museums, attractions, restaurants and antique stores, is a tourist town. Business feeds off that exit from I-70.

Business people said they heard little about plans to close the exit before it happened. Department spokesmen said they met with city officials and told them about the plans, earlier but merchants say the only warning they got was from a press release issued by the state a couple of days before the ramps closed.

The city manager estimates the closing had cost businesses between \$9 million and \$12 million as of a couple of weeks ago, and the interchange did not open for another week. And these are mostly small businesses that

operate on a thin margin. Every dollar counts, and these businesses have lost too many.

There are tradeoffs between closing a road and keeping traffic going to businesses. If the department takes time to listen to business people, it usually finds a way to keep them going. But the department doesn't always do that.

Some projects include advance scoping sessions, where officials listen to citizen comments. Hearing and public meetings are held, comments recorded. That apparently did not happen with the \$12 million project in Abilene. It should have.

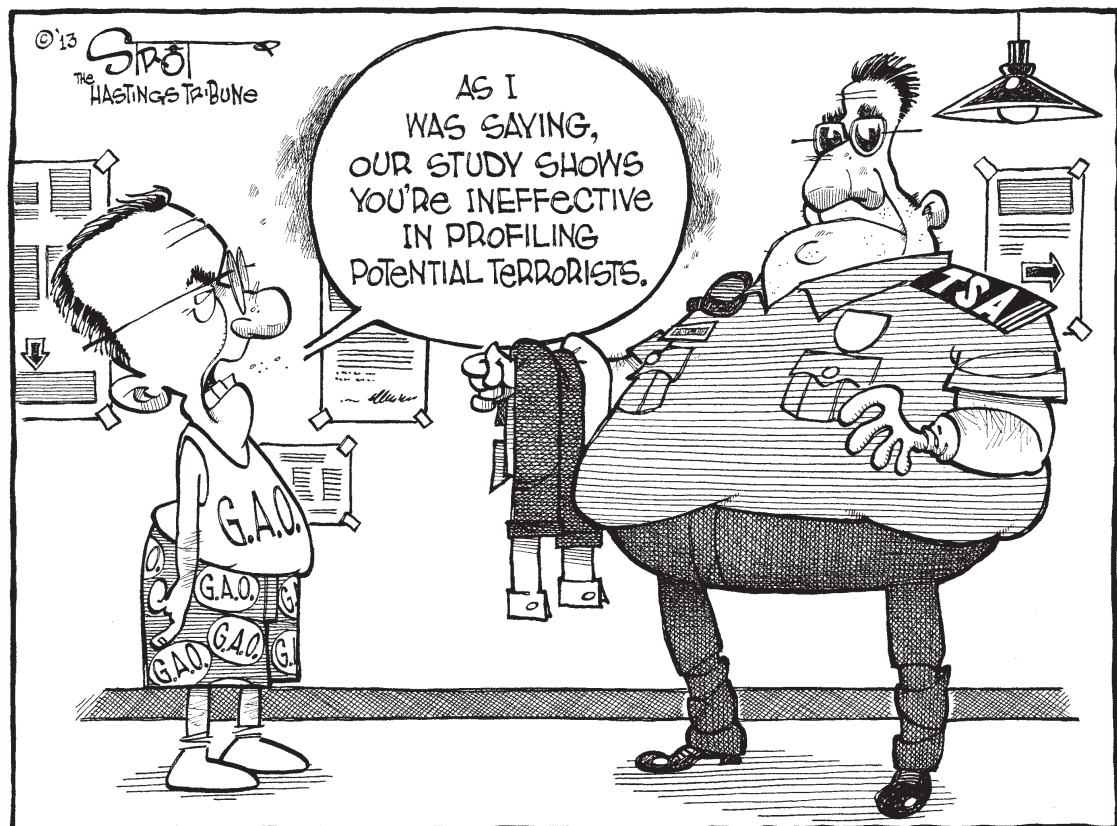
Sometimes, it seems like consultants hired to plan a project do a better job than the state itself, but whoever is running a project, citizens' needs ought to be considered. Small businesses cannot take the kind of blows suffered here and long survive.

Taking the Abilene project as an example: if the repaving costs the state \$12 million and merchants lost that much business because of it, maybe the department should have spent another million to build temporary ramps or carry traffic through the construction to K-15.

Saving money for the state - while damaging tax-paying businesses and maybe bankrupting a couple - does not seem like much of a bargain. No project like this should begin without complete and proper public input, and the department ought to realize that by now.

It seems to us what happened in Abilene should never happen again in Kansas.

- Steve Haynes



Open Season

Thanksgiving with family

By Cynthia Haynes



We have a lot to be thankful for this year, and we started our Thanksgiving celebrations a little early.

We loaded up coolers, suitcases, an electric roaster and even my mixer in the back of the Explorer and headed off to Lawrence for Thanksgiving dinner with our son.

What started out as just us and the kid (he's only 33) ended up as quite a family celebration. Steve's sister, who lives in Emporia, heard that we were going to be in Lawrence, so she decided to join us, although her husband was on call and had to stay in town. Their brother Doug, who also lives in Emporia, was able to come too, however, and on the way to Lawrence, they picked up Doug's youngest - she's in college now - so we had quite a party.

After my mother-in-law died in the early '90s, the dining room set moved to our place in Colorado,

where the kitchen had only a card table with four folding chairs for awhile.

Last year, we remodeled our kitchen and moved a glass-topped table to Colorado and the old set moved on to our son's home. By then, the screws were loose and the chairs had a tendency to fall apart when you sat on them.

So last week, he glued and screwed the chairs back together, and on Saturday, six of us sat down to a Thanksgiving feast in rock-solid chairs that brought back a lot of memories.

We had cooked all day.

I put Steve and our son in charge of the turkey. They put the roaster on his tiny back porch. Lacy learned how to take the giblets out of both ends, wash the bird, stuff it with celery and onion, set the temperature and make up the browning sauce

needed to keep it looking good. And, I will say, they did an excellent job.

I made the mashed potatoes and made three pies - two apple and one pumpkin. (When I had asked Lacy earlier if he wanted apple or pumpkin pie, he'd answered, "Yes.")

When we were done, everyone helped clean up, and the relatives headed back for Emporia with a plateful of leftovers for Barb's husband, who we figured might be hungry, especially if he'd been called out.

We came back home on Sunday with a package of leftovers, but there is still lots of food in son's refrigerator for him and his friends to feast on this week.

It was a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner, and we were all thankful to be there - with at least some of our family.

Casey's Comments

Losing a childhood hero

By Casey McCormick



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When we grow up it seems we're less likely to idolize individuals and have heroes. I suppose that's because with time we see more of the flaws we all carry.

But looking back at my childhood in Colorado, I had a next door neighbor that was truly larger than life.

John McCormick, no relation, lived beside us with his wife, Gail, and children; Robin, John and Michael. Two things made Mr. McCormick seem so big.

First he was a professional football player who stood well over six feet tall. Second was that he played quarterback for the beloved Denver Broncos.

There were periods when my siblings and I would spend about as much time at the Mc-

Cormick's next door as the McCormick's of our parents. John McCormick was always ready to throw us passes. Or he would have us go to the cul de sac up the street on Carmel Drive as he punted footballs which we were never brave enough to catch. When his good friend Mick Tingelhoff, the All Pro center for the Minnesota Vikings, was in town all the area kids would gather and the men would each quarterback a team.

There are so many more stories to tell, but this newspaper just couldn't hold all my memories of that time.

Today some of my most cherished items are the football cards of him and the Bronco publicity photo that is signed "Casey, Best always, your neighbor, John McCormick."

Sadly, last Friday, word traveled to our neighborhood now in northwest Kansas that Mr. McCormick passed away.

Along with the sorrow of losing a friend and knowing a family is saying good-bye to a

loved one, there is an emptiness that one of my heroes is gone, never to be replaced.

4-1-1

Cheyenne County Development meets

By Helen Dobbs



The annual membership meeting for the Cheyenne County Development Corporation will be held on Thursday evening, Nov. 21, at Captain Hook's in Wheeler at 7 p.m. All members (registered voters of Cheyenne County) are encouraged to attend.

The featured speaker will be one of Cheyenne County's young entrepreneurs, Joseph Augusta, who attended the Young Entrepreneur Tool Kit Class held this spring.

This meeting will include an election of board members. There are three openings for directors - 2 for 3-year terms and one for a 2-year term. If you are interested in serving this community-wide organization, please contact the office

by calling 785-332-3508. Nominations will also be accepted at the meeting.

The board of directors currently meets once a month to discuss the business of the organization, which deals with economic development and tourism in Cheyenne County.

Kansas WORKReady!

If you are looking for a job, the Kansas WORKReady! program might be for you.

The Kansas WORKReady! certificate was created to ensure Kansans have easy access to training and great job opportunities as well as the best skills.

The main feature of the initiative is the WORKReady! Certificate, which assesses the skills of Kan-

sas' workers and is a valuable tool for Kansans to prove their work readiness to employers. Kansas also offers training to help improve scores, which aids in job growth and continued on-the-job success. Earning a certificate can help you get the job you've always wanted. It's free and easy to access. It verifies your skills and work readiness skill level to employers. Kansas also has training programs available if you would like to improve your skills. You have a competitive advantage for better jobs and a brighter future. Additional benefits include:

- Provides you the confidence of knowing your specific strengths.
- Allows you to assess your skills

and choose the best career for you.

- Shows employers proof of your skills before they meet you.
- Gives you an advantage over non-certified job seekers.
- Makes interviews less stressful because your skills are already documented.
- Leads to higher starting salaries.
- Improves your chances for career advancement and promotions.

It is recognized by employers nationwide. For more information on this program, contact Helen Dobbs, director, Cheyenne County Development Corporation at 785-332-3508 or stop by the office at 107 W. Washington in St. Francis.

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New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Spencer Schlepp, St. Francis; Susan Schlepp, Denver, Colo.; Tammy Schlepp, New York, N.Y.; Aubree Schlepp, Columbia, Mo.; Thelma Raile, St. Francis; Shelly Culwell, St. Francis; Harvey Holzwarth, Mesa, Ariz.; Janine Thomason, Grants Pass, Ore.; Dennis Weeden, St. Francis; Dana Timmons, St. Francis; Marjorie Richardson, Alamo, Calif.; Randy Dinkel, St. Francis; Goodland Public Library, Goodland.

GOD SAYS

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all mallice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:31, 32

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