

from our viewpoint...

## Crews work hard; keep us safe, warm

We've been lucky in Goodland. Essential services continued through two storms, and the power stayed on.

We were warm and snug in our homes, even if we couldn't get out. There were no major disasters, no major emergencies or big glitches.

We owe a lot to those who go out in the night. The rest of the world doesn't pay much attention, but they keep things running.

The state highway crews put in a lot of overtime, working 12 hours on and 12 hours off during the worst of the storms. Even at that, they couldn't keep up with the heavy wind blown snow to keep I-70 and K-27 open. The crews worked to stay up with the snow, even when the roads were closed to traffic.

The city and county road crews put in long hours during the storm, plowing the main streets and county roads. At the height of the storm streets and roads were closed to all but four-wheel-drive traffic, and drivers were warned those caught could get tickets.

Some people found out there were consequences for driving on closed roads. Many drivers got an earful from city police and told to get off the streets, while those found on the highways got tickets from the Highway Patrol and county sheriff's deputies.

When Sheriff Kevin Butts wanted to buy a surplus Army truck as an emergency vehicle last year, there was speculation it would not get used very often. In fact, it has been used to great advantage in both recent storms to haul people and supplies.

A year ago, emergency people were reviewing the efforts during the Thanksgiving weekend blizzard of 2005 and making plans to handle future emergencies. Judy McKee organized a group of people as part of a Community Emergency Response Team, and their training paid off during the recent storm as they went into action to help with emergency calls. These people were able to respond to calls for help that allowed the police and others to handle major calls.

Dispatchers, hospital workers, restaurant employees, the list goes on. All struggled to get to work when many had the day off.

When the sun began to shine in Goodland on Sunday, the streets remained closed. The city crews started to gain on clearing the pavement. Those who had four-wheel-drive vehicles could dig a path out to the street and get out, but for most of us the first day was spent just getting the front door open and a narrow path out to our cars.

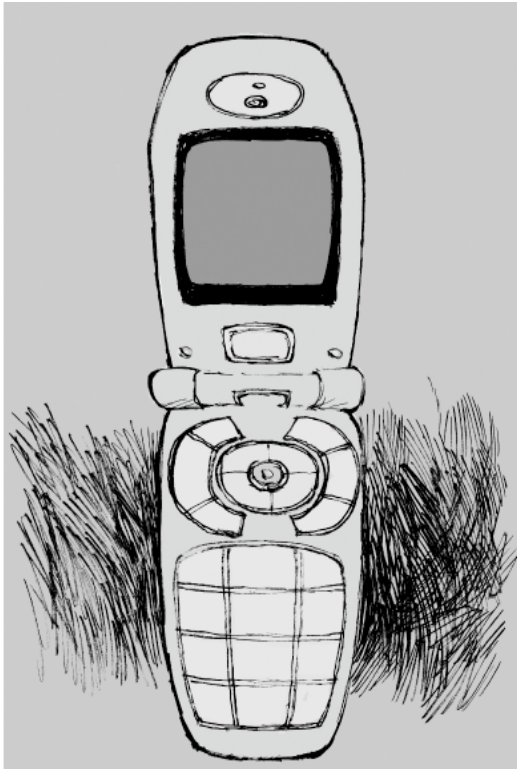
The main streets were opened to traffic on New Year's Day, and many made a quick trip to the stores. Many cars got stuck, but before the police could call a tow truck people had helped get them out and moving again. The youngsters, taking advantage of an extra day off from school, found the slopes of the pond at Pioneer Park great for sledding.

The storm wasn't much of a sacrifice for us, save and warm in our homes and offices, but our hats are off to those who were out in the night. Few see their work, fewer still stop to say thanks.

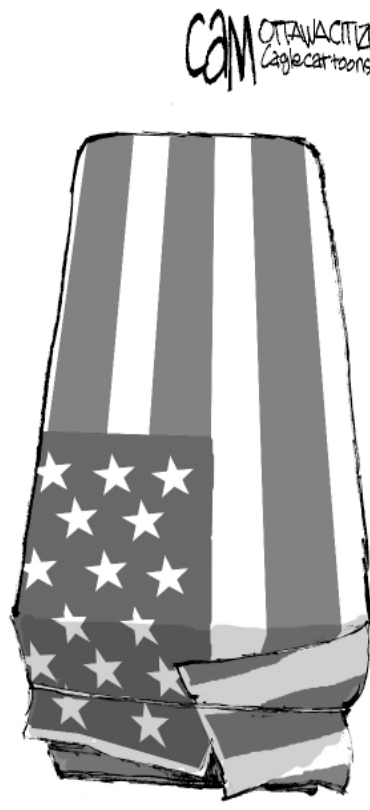
So to all of you who worked so we could stay safe and warm, here's one big Thank You. — Tom Betz



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## Questions raised about power plants

Should Kansas allow three new coal-fired power plants to be built at Holcomb, west of Garden City?

It's the top environmental issue of the year in Kansas. Above you can get a sample of the sort of logic being used to fight the plant, which is to say, not much.

Why bother with logic or facts when you know what's best?

Let's take a look at the arguments here.

• "This will allow corporate pirates to reap billion of dollars in profits...."

Just who are these corporate pirates, anyway?

The plant would be built by two "generation and transmission" power cooperatives, both owned by consumer-controlled rural electric cooperatives.

Sunflower Electric, based in Hays, is owned by six Kansas cooperatives, including our own Prairie Land, formed to bring power and light to the High Plains.

Sunflower's partner is Tri-State Generation and Transmission, a larger Colorado co-op owned by 44 local-service cooperatives. All are owned by their customers, including your editor, a member of the San Luis Valley Rural



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

Electric Cooperative.

So the owners of these plants, the evil geniuses behind this plot, are the farmers and rural residents of Kansas and Colorado, parts of Nebraska and Wyoming, a few in New Mexico and Utah. Us, in other words.

• "As a western Kansas farmer, I am sick and tired of the colonization of rural America. ... We cannot allow the continued exploitation of our natural resources."

Except to grow corn, of course.

• "Corporations don't die...they don't answer to society...they pay little in taxes."

There's one good point. Cooperatives don't pay corporate taxes, but their members do. Utility cooperatives have to pay taxes on their equipment, though.

• "If you are looking for the truth, follow the money (which) isn't even passing through our neighborhood. The imported coal will be trans-

ported by an out-of-state railroad. The vast majority of the energy produced will be exported."

BNSF Railway, which serves the plant, is one of two major railroads serving Kansas. The successor to the old Santa Fe, it has its largest freight yards in Wyandotte County, its main shops and a business office in Topeka and a division office in the state. It's one of Kansas' largest private employers.

• The power will go out of state. That's true. So do most of the cars produced at the General Motors plant in Kansas City. So does most of the wheat grown by Kansas farmers, most of the beef raised on Kansas pasture, finished in Kansas feed lots, killed at Kansas plants. That's how we make a living out here.

• "Speak your mind."

First, think about what you are saying. This country faces a real issue in whether it will keep adding to the "greenhouse gases" thought to fuel global warming. Hysterical debate grounded in emotion won't lead us to a better decision.

That is a question the country needs to face, but it's not one Kansas or the citizen-owners of the Holcomb plant can solve. Under present law, at least, they deserve a chance to build it.

## Dems' '08 race is Hillary's to lose

The battle for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination will come down to two candidates: Hillary vs. the Un-Hillary.

Sen. Clinton is so polarizing and a female candidacy is so novel, that the race for the nomination must revolve around her. Who will the Un-Hillary be?

The early front-runner is Illinois Sen. Barack Obama. As a new African-American face, he has the same sort of first-of-a-kind credentials as Hillary and boasts genuine outsider status as well.

But Obama is very, very inexperienced. He was elected to Illinois' state Senate in a one-party district, then won the Democratic U.S. Senate primary because his wealthy, spend-it-all opponent was caught in a messy divorce scandal just as his candidacy was peaking. He won in the general election of '06 because Illi-



**dick morris**

• commentary

nois is a blue state and the Republican who was to be his adversary dissolved in a marital scandal of his own, whereupon the talent-poor local GOP opted to import the absurdist candidate Alan Keyes - making Obama's victory a foregone conclusion.

In his book "The Audacity of Hope," he confesses that in his Senate campaign "no candidate ran a negative TV ad about me." That's as close as you get to a political equivalent of vir-

ginity. Can Obama weather a presidential race? He better ramp up his learning curve if he is going to try. His book is filled with feature-story fluff about his background, eloquent philosophizing on the state of our nation and its history, and freshly scrubbed naiveté about the political process.

But it lacks any substantive ideas, policy innovations or even any insightful analysis of public issues. Unless he can step beyond such Oprah-level content, the national press corps will have him for breakfast.

The bottom line? He could grow into the role of a national candidate, but don't count on it happening this year.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years.

## where to write

**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/CMEmail.me

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 124-N, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorrison@ink.org

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Rm. 128-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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