

from our viewpoint...

# Prairie dog fight out of character

*This editorial, published Nov. 29, 2006, won third place among smaller weekly newspapers in the National Newspaper Association's annual Better Newspapers Contest.*

Government agents enter land against the owners' will, spreading poison.

An armed officer stands guard, keeping the landowner away. The government plans to send the landowner the bill for killing his animals.

This happens in Communist China, perhaps? Soviet Russia? Fidel's Cuba?

No, western Kansas, where the deer and the antelope play, and the skies are not cloudy all day.

It's a high-stakes game of prairie dog eradication, and the script just drips with irony.

The land in question is owned by Larry Haverfield, a maverick rancher who touts unorthodox grazing ideas and thinks that deep down, prairie dogs might not be so bad. He's convinced there's a place for all of God's creatures and he *sure* doesn't want the county telling him how to run his ranch.

His neighbors don't see things quite that way. They share the average western prejudice against prairie dogs. They read all the stories about how we've killed millions and millions of the little critters, reduced the range and driven them near to being listed as an endangered species.

And they think that's a pretty good start.

Most of them, if they could push a button and eliminate every single prairie dog from the face of the earth, they'd do it. In a heartbeat.

Larry Haverfield thinks you should leave some, maybe not all, the rodents around. His neighbors think he's nuts — maybe worse.

Other landowners want Haverfield's dogs eliminated. They have the Logan County commissioners and the weight of the law behind them. Commissioners, under pressure from other landowners, refused to approve any plan from Haverfield that includes keeping prairie dogs around.

What really rankles many landowners is that Haverfield and a couple of friends have invited the federal government to help them "manage" the prairie dogs by reintroducing the black-footed ferret on their land. This rare, endangered species lives among and eats prairie dogs. How well it can control them remains to be seen, since only a few hundred of the cute little devils remain.

Commissioners and landowners fear if the endangered ferret is let loose in Logan County, they'll never be able to poison prairie dogs again. Opposition is at a fever pitch, and you can almost see the villagers gathering, pitchforks and firebrands in hand, to confront the evil that lurks.

On any given day, we're sure, most of the farmers, ranchers and county officials of Logan County are decent, conservative types who support the National Rifle Association and belong to the Farm Bureau. They likely espouse the freedom to own guns and private property.

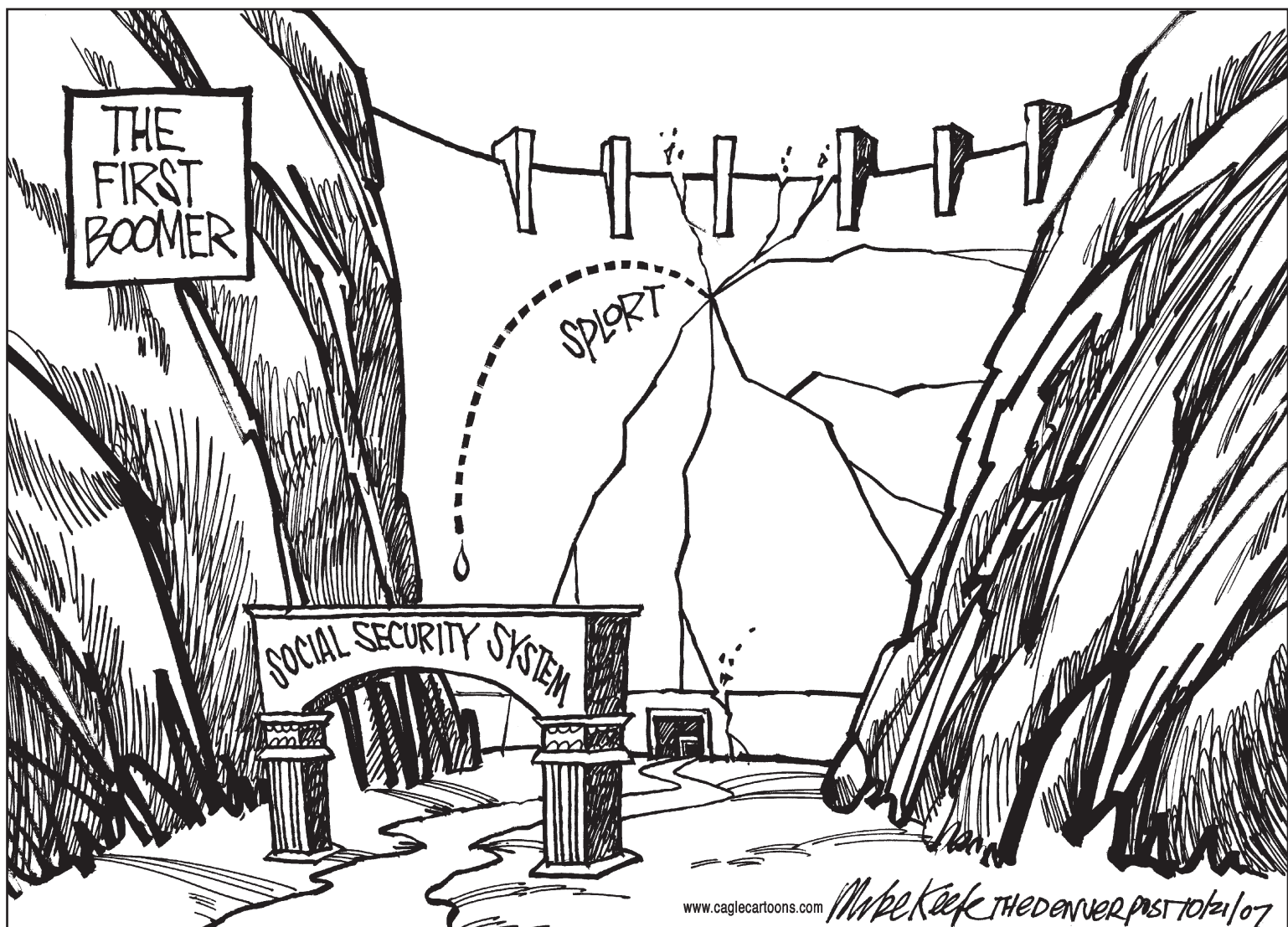
Property rights, however, go just so far, and in Logan County, they apparently don't cover harboring vermin — or cute little endangered ferrets.

How else can you explain the county sending exterminators unannounced onto private land and an armed officer to keep landowners from interfering.

Sound sort of un-American to you?

Apparently, property rights are only for those we agree with.

With all due respect to the feelings most ranchers and stockmen have about prairie dogs, maybe this is carrying things just a bit too far. — *Steve Haynes*



# Weddings make you introspective

There's something about a wedding that makes you introspective.

After our daughter was married earlier this month, we drove out to Creede, Colo., the spot we called home for a few years and the place we thought we were putting down permanent roots.

We lived there for five years. It's funny how impermanent those roots sometimes are. On the other hand, we go back there every summer and plan someday to buried there. Last summer, we picked out the plots, with a sweeping view of the Rio Grande valley.

I guess we were too young and dumb to be scared back in 1980. Steve and I were both 32. The children were 6, 3 and 6 months. The oldest had just started first grade.

We were tired of the city. We're both small town kids, and we wanted to return to small towns like our homes in Emporia and Concordia. We were tired of working nights and not seeing our children and we wanted to have our own businesses.

However, we didn't have that much money, and newspapers are expensive.

A friend told us about Creede, a tiny mountain community in southern Colorado. The newspa-



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

per was for sale and the price was right.

We sold our home, quit our jobs and packed up the kids and house plants in two vehicles and headed west. It took two days to get out to Creede and most of the house plants froze. It was mid November.

We arrived from the city to find a town, no a county of 800 people.

There were no morning and evening newspapers. No diaper service or milk delivery. There was no drug store and the grocery and gas station closed at 5 p.m. on weekdays and all day Sundays and holidays.

And we had no place to live. We stayed in a one-bedroom summer cabin at a guest ranch for about three weeks — long enough for all three children to come down with the chicken pox.

But things got better. We bought a half-finished house and finished it with the money we got from the home we sold in Kansas City.

We learned that the newspaper business wasn't quite the same in small town America as it is in the city. I learned to write, sell ads, make up pages and clean clothes covered in ink.

They were hard years in some ways. Creede was a mining town, and when the mine closed, times were tough for everyone.

But we branched out, opening a paper in the nearby community of South Fork, a ski and resort town, and purchasing *The Conejos County Citizen* out of bankruptcy to add several farming communities to our economic base.

Still we struggled, and when we had the opportunity to buy a partnership in our biggest competitor, we grabbed the chance and moved down the mountain to Monte Vista.

A lot has happened since then. We lived in Monte for seven years and our oldest daughter graduated from high school there. Then we got the opportunity to return to Kansas, and with two children, two dogs, three cats and a rabbit, we came east again.

We've been here for 14 years now — longer than we lived in Kansas City, Creede or Monte Vista. We hope to stay, but we know that someday we'll return to Creede to stay on the mountain top forever.

# County urged to add plastic to recycling

To the Editor:

Recently you ran an article on the extremely important subject of recycling. You noted that for more than seven years Sherman County has been part of the East Central and Southeast Colorado Recycling Group, resulting in the collection and reuse of tons of trash that would have otherwise been buried in our county.

I am proud that the citizens of our county made such a wise decision concerning the future health and success of our county and its people in the 21st Century.

However, one drawback to this recycling group is the fact that it doesn't include the collection of one of the major land and sea pollutants we have today - plastic! We love plastic! We use it in some form in almost everything we do every day. In hundreds of ways it is used to contain food or drink products; we use it to store and mix and serve these products; we use it to bring these products home from the store, including using it to bring most everything we bring home from any type of store; and the list of uses goes on and on. Just take a look



**from our readers**

• to the editor

around your house at your use and dependence on plastic.

So, why is this a drawback? You know, don't you! Plastic doesn't go away ... it takes thousands of years to decay. I recently saw an article that said 3 out of 4 plastic bottles (which are extremely popular today) in this country are NOT recycled.

Of course, in Sherman County we can brag that we lead the way with a 4 out of 4 standard.

So, we are polluting our land with plastic artifacts for those who follow over the next thousand or more years. Also, we are clogging our street gutters and subsequently polluting our waterways and ultimately the seas. We have a great responsibility to stop this abuse ...

to leave this country (specifically this County) in better shape for our descendants.

In the same article you noted that a regional company, the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Organization, explained its operations to our County Commissioners at one of their recent meetings.

It appears that they provide the same recycling opportunities that the Colorado group does with one addition ... they also provide for many types of plastic recycling! Just what we need! Also, note the name ... Northwest Kansas REGIONAL Recycling Organization ... what a great idea!

We need to jump aboard this opportunity to help us break our 'plastics abuse' problem.

Tell your County Commissioner that as soon as our current contract with the East Central and Southeast Colorado Recycling Group ends, you want Sherman County to join this Northwest Kansas REGIONAL effort. You know in your heart it's the right thing to do.

Randy Coleman  
Goodland

# Investors warned about 'prime bank' scams

By Chris Biggs,

Kansas Securities Commissioner

I want to warn all Kansas investors to be wary of "prime bank" scams. The Office of the Kansas Securities Commissioner continually looks for people offering these fictitious investment vehicles.

Investing through the supposedly secretive portfolios of prime banks can be appealing to investors. Promoters claim that prime bank trading programs can yield huge returns with no risk. In reality neither prime banks nor the instruments they claim to trade exist.

In a typical pitch, increasingly made over the Internet, investors are promised access to secret, high-yield investments made through trades among the world's top banks. Promoters falsely claim their investments are guaranteed or secured by some sort of collateral or insurance and they represent that common investors can pool their money and invest "like the big boys."

Regulators say that many victims of these scams fail to report their losses because they don't want to appear foolish. People want to believe there are secret ways to make fabulous amounts of money.

Prime bank scams appeal to those who

want to avoid paying taxes through offshore accounts. One reason prime bank scam artists are able to mislead people is because the instruments they claim to be using — standby letters of credit, bank debentures and bank-secured trading programs, to name a few — mimic legitimate financial instruments closely enough to deceive people outside the specialized world of international banking.

Nationwide, these scams result in losses totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. Promoters often used investor funds to lead lavish lifestyles.

Anthony Montana was sentenced to 44 months in prison on Feb. 17, 2004, in Kansas for operating a Prime Bank scheme from his home in Moundridge via the Internet.

In this scam Montana claimed to be "FDIC Insured" and guaranteed 600 percent interest. Both of these claims could have been red flags to tip off the 32 victims who were scammed out of a total of almost \$85,000 in just over a month's time.

First, the Federal Deposit Insurance Commission insures bank deposits and not investments. Second, all investments involve some kind of risk. If anyone offers extremely high, guaranteed, returns then the investor should beware.

A phone call from a potential investor alerted

the securities commission to Montana's website and made it possible for our investigators to shut down his site and place him under arrest.

In prime bank schemes like these, investors should ask themselves, "If this scheme really works, why is some stranger offering to cut me in on it?"

Investors should ask questions before making any investment:

- Are claims realistic? Get a professional, third-party opinion when presented with investment opportunities that seem to offer unusually high returns in comparison to other investment options.

- Has the seller given you written information that fully explains the investment? Make sure you get proper written information, such as a prospectus or offering circular, before you buy. The documentation should contain enough clear and accurate information to allow you or your financial adviser to evaluate and verify the particulars of the investment.

- Is the salesperson licensed to sell securities in Kansas and is the investment product properly registered with the state securities commission? To check, call the commission's Investor Protection Hotline at 1-888-40-SCAMS.

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## THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

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## Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company