

from our viewpoint...

## Rural America has stake in bailouts

Congress and the Bush and Obama administrations need to take care that, while trying to save the Big Three automakers, they don't deal a death blow to small-town America.

A sensible, controlled bailout of the Big Three is a must. So is preserving the new-car dealerships in rural America. Our towns depend on these dealers for jobs, tax income and economic health. Over the years, the government has done plenty to hasten the decline of our towns. We do not need another body blow.

Yet, in talk about the auto rescue, the supposed "need" to reduce the number of dealers' automakers use has come up again and again. Who determined this need is hard to pin down. It became one of the "assumed" facts of the debate.

The National Association of Auto Dealers says its members already are an endangered species. More than 700 already have closed their doors in the last few months, the group says.

If someone decides many — some estimates are as many as half the 20,000 dealers in the U.S. — should close, where would they be?

Not, you can rest assured, in cities dominated by block-long superdealers. No, the ones Detroit might like to ax would be in your town and mine.

These are businesses we depend on out here, far from the city. They provide not just cars, but employment and a tax base for our cities and counties.

An auto dealer often is the largest single sales-tax source in a small town. If the dealership closes, the tax revenue goes to some larger city. The county or town where it was located just loses a big chunk of its income.

Rural dealerships may already be disappearing. Their numbers have been in decline along with rural population in many areas. Already this winter, one Kansas dealer announced that he'd close his "store" in a small Kansas town but keep open one in a nearby city.

Government may not be able to prevent this. Government certainly should not encourage it.

Neither Congress nor the administration should do anything to force small-town dealers out of business. Nor should the Big Three be encouraged in any way to slight rural areas.

It'd be a grim day if all of us in the hinterlands were forced to drive to some city to buy a car, where sharp dealers would lurk, knowing they'd never have to give warranty service on a car that was going 400 miles away.

City services, schools, county roads all could deteriorate if car dealers go away. Even state tax revenue could be affected if, say, everyone in western Kansas decided to go to Denver to buy cars.

Thousands would be jobless, families would have no income, public workers might be laid off. This is no small matter, and the government must not take it lightly.

Something that sounds like a "good idea" can have terrible consequences. This is one of those times. — *Steve Haynes*

## The Goodland Star-News

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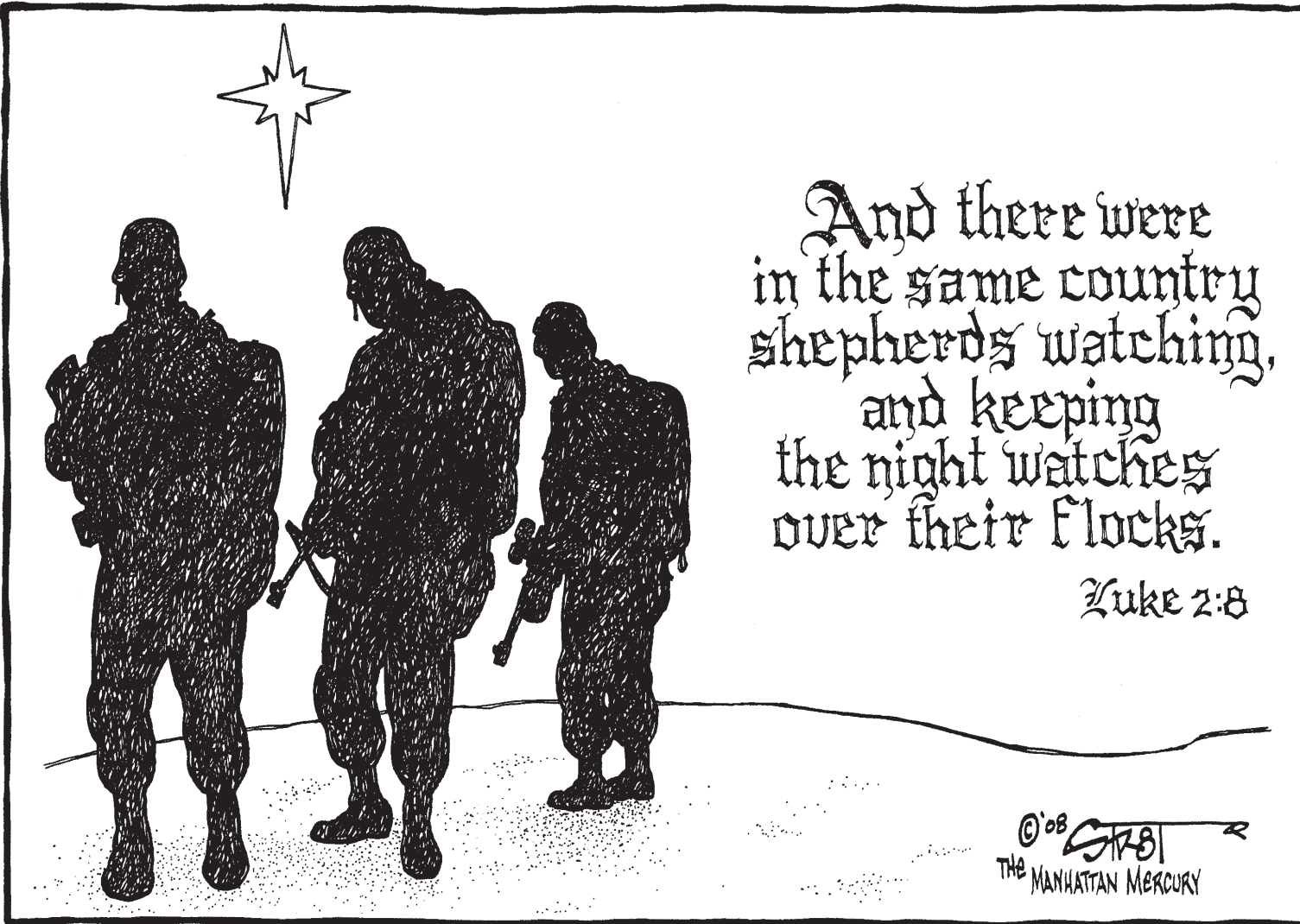
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## Christmas lights fun, harder without help

I love Christmas lights, and Steve and I put them up every year.

It was really great when we had kids around. We'd go out on a nice Saturday or Sunday right after Thanksgiving and string lights all over the yard. Then we'd get out ladders and send the children with a staple gun onto the roof of the porch to string lights.

Rather amazingly, we never had a trip to the emergency room — or even a stapled hand.

Since the last child left home almost 10 years ago, though, it's been tough getting the lights up. These days, we just put them out on the bushes in front of the house. Since at least some of those are rose bushes and the rest are a sticky kind of evergreen, even that can be exciting and occasionally painful.

For the last few years, Steve and I have gone out anytime between Thanksgiving and a couple of weeks before Christmas and spread lights all over the yard — sometimes on the grass and sometimes on the snow. We then spend several hours testing lights and tossing them on bushes and the smaller trees. We no longer mess with ladders.

Then through Christmas, we enjoy the lights. In fact, we left them up so late after Christmas one year, a neighbor came by and unplugged them. I think it was just before Valentine's Day.

So this year, I got Steve to help me move



## cynthia haynes

• open season

the decorations from the attic of the garage on Thanksgiving Day with plans to put things up that weekend.

The weekend came, the weekend went and the boxes of decorations sat cluttering up our kitchen and living room.

Then on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Steve left on a week-long trip to Kansas City, Columbia, Mo., and odd places in eastern Kansas.

I was left with a dozen boxes of Christmas decorations and a forecast of approaching storms, cold weather, ice and generally nasty conditions.

I had to work until 6 p.m. Tuesday, but that night, while it was still relatively balmy, I unpacked outside lights, tested them and started throwing them at shadowy bushes.

I found the orange extension cords in the garage, the controller box with the decorations and several strings of dead lights, which I tossed. Soon I was ready to plug it all in.

The colored lights on the front bushes looked great. Now all I had to do was connect the

white chasing lights on the forsythia beside the house. However, the two plugs I had to connect to each other and the controller box seemed to be missing those little metal ends. They were both female ends, so neither would plug into the box. Somewhere on that bush were the right ends, but it was dark and I wasn't in any mood to pull everything apart and redo it. So, I figured I'd go on to the lights on the little 10-foot cedar tree in the back yard.

I had a new set of commercial-quality lights — 150 new sparklers with two-strand wire. This time, I made sure all the little prongs were at the right end. Unfortunately, they didn't seem to want to go into the little holes in the next cord — no way, no how. I tried putting an adapter between them. That worked, but when I turned on the power, I could either get the top of the tree, where the new lights were, lit, or the bottom, where the old lights were. Basically, I couldn't get the new guys to work with the old ones. I was stuck with half a tree, so I chose the top half. It looks less silly that way.

It only took me a week and a half to get back to the lights. I just bought new ones for the cedar tree and rearranged the forsythia.

Everything is lighted now. It looks great, and it will until sometime after Christmas, when the neighbors get tired of all that holiday cheer and unplug them again.

## Thanks from Genesis

Saturday, a miracle happened in Goodland.

All the angels in the community saw the realization of a huge project come to fruition. One hundred forty families received a large box of food and Toys for Tots for 168 children.

Hundreds and hundreds of people volunteered hours, generously given to help, and all the individuals, businesses, churches, and organizations who helped with food, toys and monetary gifts, came together to complete another Genesis Christmas.

On behalf of the Genesis/Salvation Army



## from our readers

• to the editor

Board, we want you to know how much we appreciate all the outpouring of love and caring.

Even with the poor economy, or because of it, the wonderful people of Sherman County

gave Christmas to the families.

Genesis is Sherman County's own special charity, and all resources donated are used in the county.

It was a true miracle and all of you made it happen. Thank you for all your gifts of food, time, and money.

The Genesis/Salvation Army Board of Directors

Mel and Linda Pfau

Goodland

## Christmas memories and greeting cards



## tom purcell

• commentary

In the city neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, where my parents grew up, families were together, neighbors were close, people watched out for each other. Life was surely a struggle, but it wasn't without its upsides.

People had fewer choices — they had less stuff to distract them — and therefore enjoyed a greater wealth of the spirit. Friendliness, kindness, compassion and laughter were a measure of that wealth.

Those children of the Depression became parents during '50s, '60s and '70s. By their measure, they enjoyed tremendous economic good fortune during their adult years -- stability, modest homes, the ability to provide for their families and save enough dough to retire.

My father worked hard to bring home money while my mother stayed home to watch over us and conserve money. We never had the material things we thought we wanted, but we had an abundance of everything we needed — love, togetherness and parents who sacrificed everything so we could do well in life.

My sisters and I are doing well in life and every day my parents enjoy huge dividends on their investment — just as millions of parents from that era have done.

That brings us to the children who grew up

during the '50s, 60s and 70s. As adults, during the last 25 years, we've enjoyed a period of unimaginable financial wealth. We haven't managed it very well though.

I think of so many single people in Washington, D.C., where I lived for eight years, who drive BMW's and live in luxury condos completely isolated from family. Or the parents who work long hours to lavish their kids with money, clothes and cars -- when all their kids really want or need are their presence and their love.

Too many of us in recent times have had everything we think we want, but so little of what we really need.

Well, much of our material wealth is gone now — but gone with it is the noise, distraction and isolation material wealth, poorly managed and applied, can bring.

And so, as this year's Christmas cards suggest, we are finally getting back to our senses.

We're longing for the simpler, more traditional times of our childhood — when our parents lived within their means, always planned for a rainy day and retained a clear sense of what was and wasn't important in life.

I remember sitting around the tree on Christmas morning surrounded by my parents, my five sisters, our dog Jingles and a handful of modest gifts — while all of us were immersed in laughter, togetherness, security and love.

Now there's an idea for a Christmas card.

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