

from our viewpoint...

Fireworks bans good for the public

Given all the recent fires, we applaud the decisions by the city and county commissioners to ban fireworks, at least for the moment.

Communities from here to Hays and beyond have all banned fireworks, with the exception of the professional shows. These are all good decisions. It is incredibly dry out there, not to mention hot and windy.

Independence Day actually comes at something of an inconvenient time as far as fire danger. It's in one of the hottest and driest months for this area, and it comes at a time when there are acres and acres of dry wheat, or dry stubble this year. Bad time to have sparks flying around.

Of course The Founding Fathers didn't take that into account when they decided to break away from England. Ironically many of them were farmers, including John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, but they had more immediate concerns than the time of year.

Its just as dry or worse in town. If you take a drive around Goodland, it won't take you long to see how dry many people's yards are. One good spark and the whole thing would go up like a Roman candle.

None of the major fires so far have been caused by fireworks, at least as far as we know. The big fire in Decatur County started when a man parked his overheating car on grass by the side of the road. We asked Fire Chief Brian James about that one, he said he was careful when pulling over. If the grass is more than six inches high, it might be good to find somewhere else.

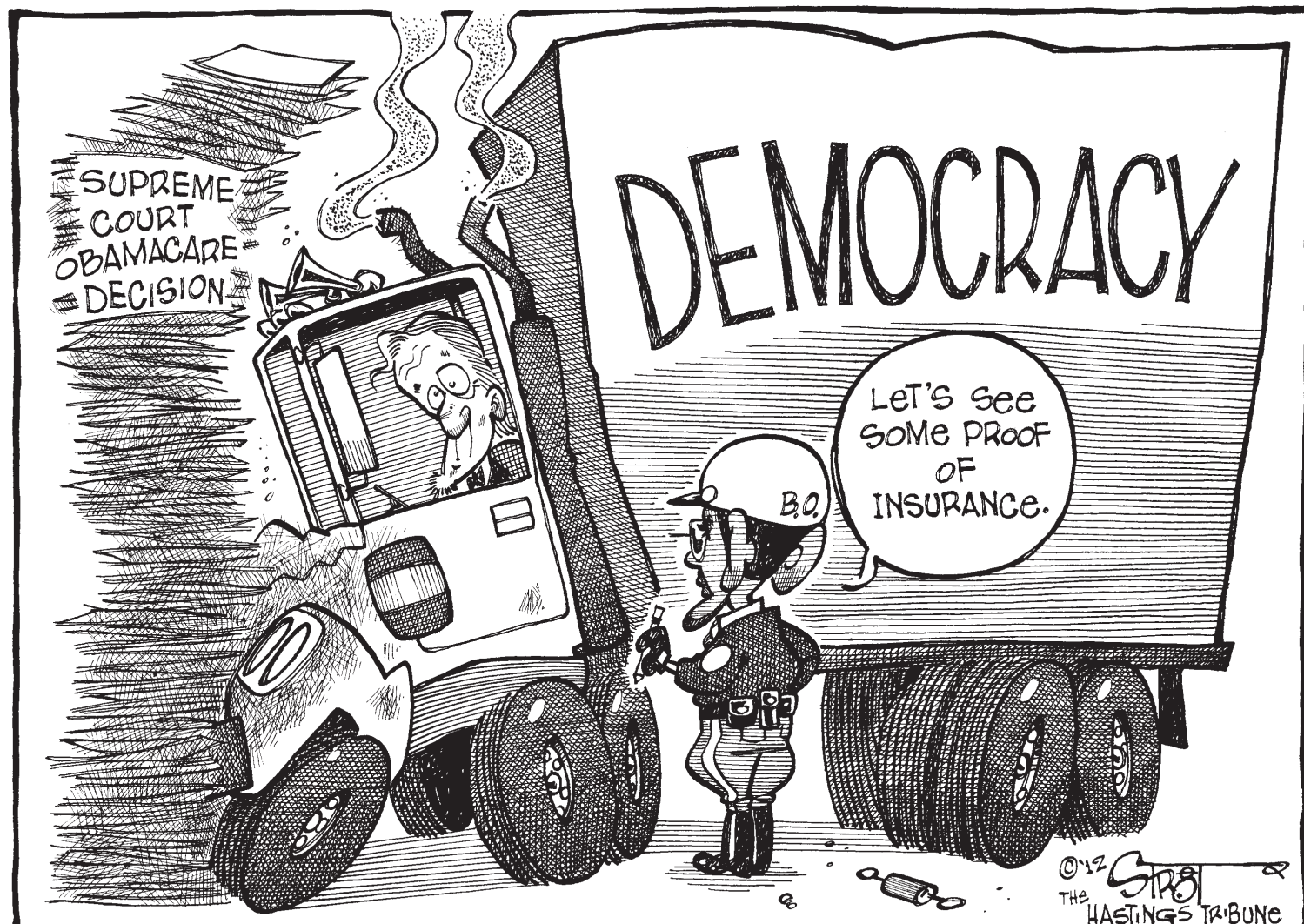
The big fire up by Fort Collins, Colo., was caused by lightning, as were several fires in Sherman County over the past few weeks. We're happy to say those were minor fires and put out quickly by our local firefighters, with a little help from Mother Nature.

The fire that is ravaging Colorado Springs may have been arson. We hope our local citizens are smart enough not to set fires for fun.

So the fire danger is extreme, and thankfully our city and county commissions have responded responsibly. That leaves it up to us to follow these bans for the sake of public safety. Given that sales of fireworks are still allowed in the county, we urge all citizens to voluntarily comply with the ban on lighting them off.

We did get some rain over the weekend. In town it wasn't much, but in the western part of the county they got quite a lot. Will it be enough? Our commissioners will have to decide that. But that's good, that's what we elect them to do.

Mayor John Garcia, speaking at the special commission meeting last week, had it exactly right when he said the safety of the people has to be the first priority. It means a little less fun, but in the end that's preferable to someone losing their home, or worse, their life. —Kevin Bottrell



Obamacare not the only important decision

Thursday was a big day in legal history with the 5-4 Supreme Court decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act, and the majority opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts.

We were pleased to see the ultimate decision, and believed based on constitutional scholars and the actions of the lower courts the law would be upheld.

Someone suggested Democrats could not accept a Supreme Court decision citing the Citizens United case to allow corporations free reign to spend money in elections, but we would submit Republicans have much the same problem accepting the high court decisions. Republicans were disappointed the Supreme Court dismissed most of the Arizona Immigration law, and Thursday the justices were giving their opinions when the Republicans began the "repeal Obamacare" chant.

We noticed they did not lose any time turning the decision into a money making effort with Mitt Romney touting he gained \$4.2 million after the decision, and Congresswoman Michele Bachmann asking those who "liked" her site to contribute to help give her the necessary money to defeat Obamacare.

We doubt the Affordable Care Act will be entirely repealed, and certainly not on his first day in office if Romney is somehow elected in November. I guess he does not understand the President does not have that kind of power.

Another case decision was handed down on Thursday mostly overshadowed by the healthcare ruling. We felt our nephew Jonathan Larrew, a U.S. Army master diver, had a good reaction posted on his Facebook page.

"Thursday many people around the world will be talking about Obama care and its final



tom betz

• t, t & o

approval in the Supreme Court," he wrote.

"However, very few spoke or noticed another ruling that hits a bit closer to home for a small estimated 1 percent of us. "The stolen Valor Act" was shot down today because it went against our First Amendment Rights.

"As I grew up I was taught the importance of free speech everyday as I worked in our family's local newspaper. I was taught about checking facts and how you are judged by your honesty and character.

"Now I am not trying bash the Supreme Court and I agree with upholding the freedom of speech. HOWEVER, during the next Superbowl, you will only hear Superbowl on those stations licensed to say Superbowl. All other stations will have to say something like "the big game" or "the main football game" as I am sure "the main event" is trade marked as well.

"Throughout our country schools and individuals have become subject to law suits from record labels for not getting a copy write release for songs used in school videos. Some would say these things are completely separate.

"One is about an award for Valor and who has the right to say they have been awarded such an Honor; the others are about the illegal use of a product without fair compensation. Maybe they are different in the eyes of the court.

"Now I am not a lawyer, nor do I spend my days looking up laws. However this has proven a few things to me. ONE: for those who understand the worth of an Act of Valor, Valor itself will never be equal to money! TWO: I have the right to so say anything and call anyone out I feel like!! THREE: Valor will always protect Freedoms even if those freedoms do not protect Valor."

We agree with Jonathan, and over the years have defended those who would try to reduce our freedom of speech and press.

For many the Second Amendment - I do own guns too - is the most important to them, but I have always felt the First Amendment is the most sacred and worth defending in any way possible.

I am among those who feel it is a disgrace when people take the Honor of Valor to use for personal or financial gain. I understand the Supreme Court decision, and applaud their efforts to uphold our First Amendment rights. It does not make it any easier to hear the stories of stolen valor, and one hopes more people will use their fact checking ability before falling for a vicious falsehood.

It is the same First Amendment right I defend for those who would burn an American flag in protest. I may not like or believe what they believe, but I feel I must defend their right to this expression - I can find a way to throw water on the fire, but know there may be consequences for that action as well.

Have a good July 4, and think of those who serve and have served to keep that day our nation's birthday.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Kevin Bottrell, Editor

Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Advertising Department

Jessica Corbin, Kayla Bentley and Jeff Dreiling

Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Jim Bowker, James Jackson,

Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,

Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day; (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

To the Editor:

Have you noticed the "GOOD" that is happening in Goodland? I sure have and I must express my appreciation, gratitude and pride to some of our outstanding citizens for the time consuming, back breaking and rewarding work they are investing in our community.

First of all, it has been my intention for three seasons to compliment Jessica Cole and Karla Thompson for the beautiful Main Street planters they have so diligently organized, planted and cared for. I also want to thank the watering crew for their time and effort to keep the planters looking great all summer. There are many individuals that contribute to this and other very successful and inspiring community projects. Thank you. Your efforts have breathed a breath of much needed fresh air and life into our city.

The latest beautification project has just been completed at the entrance planters for Pioneer Park. Congratulations on a job well done, and many thanks to Joyce Sanderson, Amy Thorson, Chris and Karla Thompson, Jessica Cole and Lloyd and Irene Smith.

Second, there are many citizens in our community that have invested countless dollars, a great deal of time and hard work but have had to endure criticism and negativity. Nevertheless, they have moved forward in their efforts to make Goodland a better, more enjoyable and interesting place to live. Thank you to Rod and Michelle Cooper for your investments in the preservation of some of our richest history, and for cleaning up so many undesirable properties. Chad and Gwen Mai, wow! What an amazing transformation to the building on the corner of 11th and Main. This young couple has cleaned up and put a fresh face on many properties in town and I applaud them for the tremendous job they are doing.

I know there are so many more people that have done wonderful things with their own homes and properties..

Third, have you recently taken a drive



from our readers

• to the editor

around town, just to see what's going on? Have you seen the new businesses that have bravely stuck their necks out to try to make a better life for themselves and a nicer place for all of us to live? Also, have you noticed all the business expansions that have transpired in the last 3-5 years? There are many, and these people have made huge financial commitments toward their progressive visions. I would like to thank those people for believing in themselves and Goodland.

Fourth, I would like to take my hat off to the many wonderful organizations that tirelessly work to help our city be a better, brighter and unique place. The home owned carnival, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Rotary, Historical Society, Arts Center, Flatlanders Festival, Freedom Fest, and the list continues.

I realize that it's not all about the way things look. Flowers on Main Street don't create revenue. I also am aware that it costs a lot to make improvements. However, just a little sprucing up goes a long way. Not to mention that it makes us all feel better when we can see things improving and Goodland becoming a place we want to reside. Besides, it's contagious. When your neighbor sees you have mowed and picked up your yard, he wants his place to look that good too so he gets to work. Before long the whole block is getting in on the positive transformation.

We should be hope-

ful and anticipate great things on the horizon for this place on the prairie we call home. Wouldn't it be nice to have a community auditorium, vibrant and thriving schools, and more people taking the initiative to start or improve their businesses, properties and homes? I also have a strong desire to see the City of Goodland's continued efforts in city wide clean-up of unfit/unsafe structures.

Those of us in retail and service businesses can have a huge impact on Goodland by being positive and enthusiastic about the "good" to the people we serve in our businesses, including those who are visitors.

We the people of Goodland are good folks. It is my sincere wish that we wouldn't be so hard on one another and that we would respect others' ideas and opinions. It would be wonderful if we were to embrace and learn from our rich history and look forward to the future with great hope for Goodland. Many of us really believe that Goodland is the "Top Side" of Kansas. If you disagree, I invite and encourage you to get plugged in and help make it so by joining our community through various organizations and community boards, by volunteering, or just by spreading some "good" news.

Rochelle Kling
Goodland

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 and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star.news@nwkansas.com.