

from our viewpoint...

Bet on a deal to avoid the cliff

So, are we going to fall off the fiscal cliff at the end of the year?

You can hear about any opinion you want these days, and the signs from Washington are anything but encouraging. The president glowers at the Republicans in Congress, and they glower back. No one smiles.

And this hand is being played closed to the vest. Neither Speaker John Boehner nor Mr. Obama will say much about what might happen. Neither wants to give in inch before actually sitting down at the table.

Jim Kuhnnehn, an Associated Press White House correspondent, speaking to AP publishers in Kansas City last week, said he thinks there'll be a deal.

"Not a big deal," he said, no overall solution to the entire budget-debt-economy problems, but maybe a step toward a solution.

"It'll be a small deal, he said, "with a player to be named.

"What they'll probably do is set up another 'fiscal cliff,' maybe in August."

And while the head of the International Monetary Fund spoke out Sunday against just that kind of solution, it seems more and more likely that Congress and the president will go for a small deal again.

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the fund, spoke on CNN's *State of the Union*.

"If the U.S. economy was to suffer the downside risk of not reaching a comprehensive deal," she said, "then growth would be zero. It would be much better to actually have a more comprehensive approach and to deal with all the issues."

Lagarde, a former finance minister of France who grew up, oddly enough, in Washington, went on to the the uncertainty of not having a deal could put the U.S. back into a recession.

While you have to believe in miracles, though, they're not common. And this problem is so big and so persistent that it's hard to see how the opposing sides can solve it all at once.

Like the proverbial eating of an elephant, it'll have to be done one bite at a time.

What we've been hearing from the parties has been mostly posturing. Speaker Boehner said another week had been wasted. President Obama said he had to have a tax increase on the rich.

And then the two met Sunday behind closed doors at the White House. No one would say what transpired, which seemed oddly reassuring. Instead of blasting each other, it at least looked like they were talking.

A growing consensus seemed to point toward a deal that would let the president have the tax hike for "the top 2 percent" he campaigned for in return for real reforms of entitlement programs such as welfare, Social Security and Medicare. That might include raising the retirement age some and backing down the formula for automatic increases to payments.

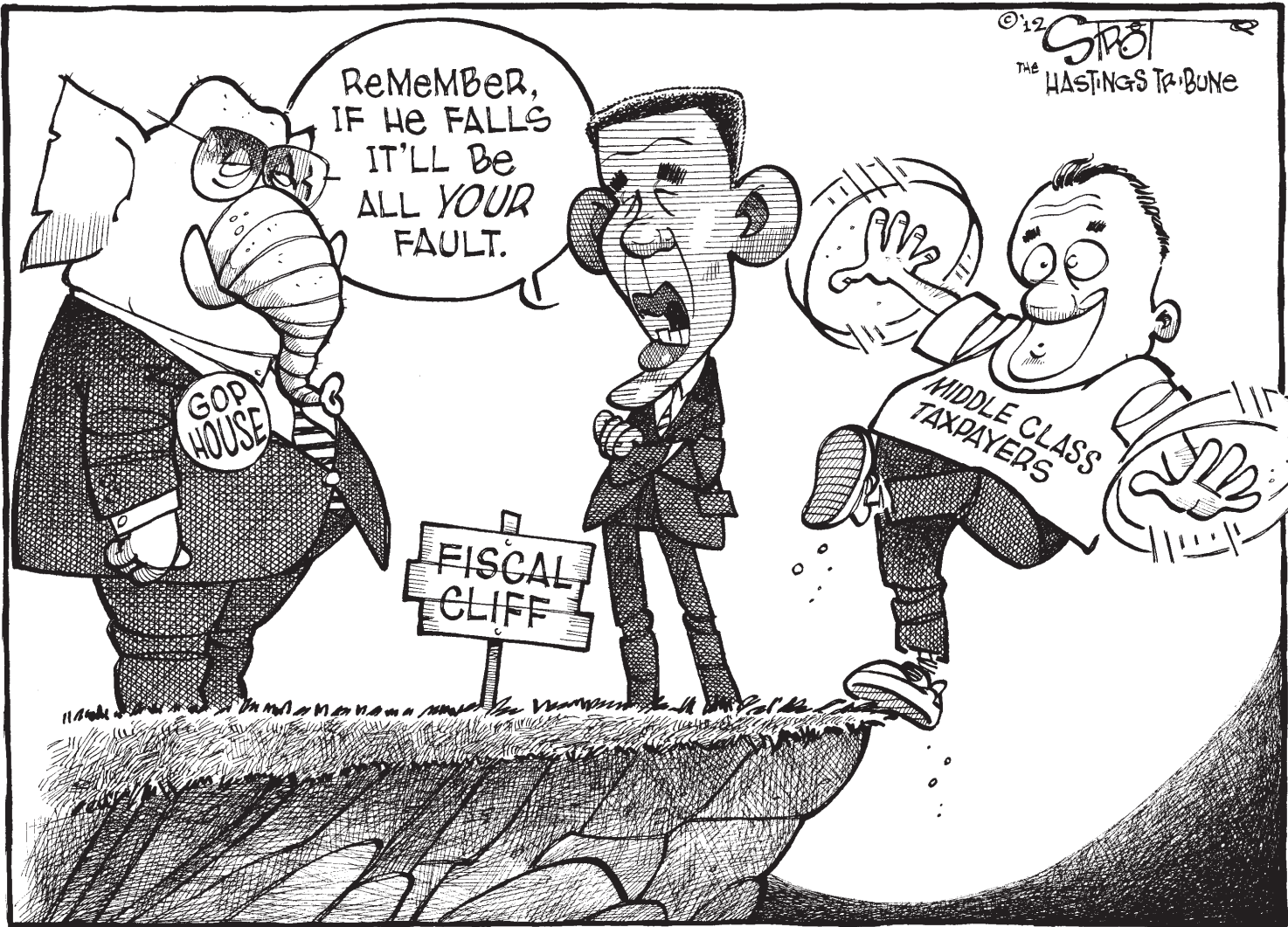
One Republican said he might agree to trade a symbolic tax hike "for something that might really save the country."

For Republicans who've vowed there'd never be a tax increase, that might be tough to swallow, but most observers agree it would be mostly symbolic. The rich simply don't make enough to pay off the deficit, and the hike would be small.

But Democrats have trouble backing away from cherished New Deal and Great Society programs, even when it's obvious the country can't afford continual increases. And no one is arguing that a 40 percent deficit can be sustained.

And no one wants another recession so soon.

So, we're betting on a deal at the edge, not a leap off the cliff. Cross your fingers and keep watching. —Steve Haynes



Pat Robertson and evolution

On Nov. 27, televangelist Pat Robertson shook up many viewers when he asserted that young-earth creationists were wrong.

In response to a viewer's question, he responded "Look, I know that people will probably try to lynch me when I say this, but Bishop Ussher wasn't inspired by the Lord when he said that it all took 6,000 years. It just didn't. You go back in time, you've got radiocarbon dating. You got all these things, and you've got the carcasses of dinosaurs frozen in time out in the Dakotas."

Reported widely in the press, Robertson said he believes science is correct about dinosaurs being ancient and "... if you fight science, you're going to lose your children." (www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/28/pat-robertson-creationism-earth-is-not-6000-years-old_n_2207275.html)

This may not sit well with some literalists who believe that evolution is the root of all that is wrong with modern society. Some contend that evolution undercuts a person's special status as a product of a creator. They assert that without a divine creation and purpose, life has no meaning or accountability.

What is not generally recognized is that the large majority of Christian denominations have no problem with stellar or biological evolution.



education frontlines

• John Schrock

Robertson is actually in full agreement with most major denominations.

As far back as 1998, Molleen Matsumura, then at the National Center for Science Education, found "of Americans in the 12 largest Christian denominations, 89.6 percent belong to churches that support evolution education."

This official position of support for evolution was taken from three sources. Leaders of some denominations contributed pro-evolution statements to the 1995 *Voices for Evolution*. Some denominations endorsed "Religion in Public Schools: a Joint Statement of Current Law." And finally some were plaintiffs in the *McLean v. Arkansas* case where they opposed a law requiring the teaching of "creation science."

Non-literalist churches that have no problem with evolution include: The United Methodist Church, National Baptist Convention USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Presbyterian Church (USA), National Baptist Convention of America, African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church and others. (See: ncse.com/book/export/html/2410)

However, many members of these denominations (and sometimes their ministers) are unaware of the official position of their church on evolution. Robertson's proclamation may help many people discover that their church has no quarrel with a concept that is as central to biology as atoms are to chemistry.

Matsumura's 89 percent evolution-friendly figure that addresses only the top 12 denominations is probably an overestimation. The much smaller or independent churches not surveyed are often not big enough to issue any public position statement on evolution but are more likely to be literalist.

Many scientists are Christian and see absolutely no conflict between their religious beliefs and their research on how the physical and biological world works. And many are genuinely and pleasantly surprised that Robertson has let the secret out: for a large majority of Christians, there is no conflict between evolution and their religion.

An alligator for Christmas

As I put up the Christmas tree last week, I came face to face with a head with beady little eyes and lots of sharp teeth.

Nope, it wasn't one of the cats. They were both decorating the furniture.

It was the alligator. The alligator that went missing three years ago.

I guess I should backtrack a little on this one.

I'm not sure where I got him. He's about 18 inches long and looks just like the small alligators they let you hold at animal preserves. Since he's plastic, he doesn't eat much and shouldn't be able to get away.

But he did — get away that is.

Three years ago, Barbara was helping me clean. She would come in, clean the house and hide the alligators — the one that went missing and his much smaller little brother.

I'd find one or the other of them in the pocket of my robe, made into the bed, hiding in the bathtub or crouching in a large potted plant.

Sometimes it would take several weeks to



cynthia haynes

• open season

discover where the gators were hiding.

Then Barbara got a full-time job with benefits at the state prison in Norton. I found the small alligator in a pot in the kitchen, but the larger one was AWOL.

This wasn't a big deal. It was, after all, a plastic alligator. It had no great emotional or monetary value, but we would wonder now and then where it was. I searched a few times, but to no avail.

Now, each year since Steve's mother died, I've dragged her artificial Christmas tree from the basement to the living room. It's starting to show its age, but it's also a family heirloom. Each year, at the end of the season, I remove the

tinsel and ornaments and drag the tree, with its contingent of lights, back to the basement.

There, it sits in a corner with odds and ends of furniture destined to go to the repairman.

Two years ago, a friend brought us a real piñon pine from Colorado. We were thrilled and got out the old tree stand. We had always had real trees when we lived in the mountains, cutting our own each year.

Last year, the friend brought another tree and again there was great rejoicing and the old artificial tree stayed in the basement another year.

Well, you guessed it.

Barbara hid the alligator in Grandmother Barb's tree. It was sort of fitting, I thought.

Now, the old faithful tree is trimmed and sitting in the living room. The alligator and a cat are under the tree and I'm keeping my distance.

There's a lot of beady eyes and teeth under that evergreen.

Midlife crisis just a matter of biology

So, if your husband decides all of the sudden to buy a little red sports car and cruise around with the top down, scientists says, it's not really his fault. It's just biology.

And not the kind that might prompt him to seek a younger blonde to ride around with him. That's just poor taste.

No, the authors of a recent study say maybe that's just the way we are. Others have shown that people tend to show a low ebb in emotional well-being at midlife. And now at least one study shows the same it true for apes.

It's not that apes start leaving their mates for younger females or go out and buy a red Ferrari. In fact, one of the authors hastened to add that there was no proof an ape ever bought a red sports car.

I say it could have happened. Several chimps made it to start status in Hollywood in decades past. Today, of course, it's frowned upon to use chimps in entertainment. And the SPCA would mostly likely give the producer a ticket if anyone allowed an ape to be filmed smoking a cigarette, and that used to happen in Hollywood, too.

But we know the midlife crisis is staple in



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Hollywood, and who's to say that one of those chimps making the big bananas years ago didn't go out and buy a flashy car. Heck, he might have had a blonde or two to run around with him for all we know.

It could have happened. But back to the study at hand, which shows that the great apes are just as susceptible as the rest of us to midlife depression. Captive chimps and orangutans show a remarkably human tendency to midlife decline that could have been passed down through evolution.

So in scientific terms, you might not be "a monkey's uncle" — technically, as the forebear on the evolutionary tree, wouldn't the monkey be your uncle, anyway? — maybe you and the monkey are depressed for the same reason.

Your old car's a clunker. Younger females no longer turn and watch you walk by. Midlife is

just no fun without a sports car.

None of this scientific malarkey is going to help you, however, when the wife finds out how much that car really did cost, however, and I'm supposing for most of us, it won't be a Ferrari. Maybe an old, used MG or a nice little Mustang.

"You paid what for that? We could have had the bathroom redone and new curtains in the drawing room."

Whatever a drawing room is.

And if there's a blonde involved, well just forget about scientific explanations. She's not going to want to hear about evolution or biology, let alone nature and nurture.

You might as well hire the lawyer first.

Come to think of it, the depression that precedes your midlife crisis might pale beside the headaches you'll have after you get the car and the blonde.

My suggestion is just leave the whole thing to the apes. Take up gardening or golf, and consider yourself lucky. Let them chase the younger female.

A midlife crisis is just going to be too much trouble.

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 and Kayla Bentley

Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Gary Stewart, Jim Bowker, James Jackson

Kris McCool, Tracy Traxel,

Judy McKnight, Sheri Arroyo.



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nbetz49@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