

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

CONTACT US

PHONE: (605) 665-7811 (800) 743-2968 NEWS FAX: (605) 665-1721 ADVERTISING FAX: (605) 665-0288 WEBSITE: www.yankton.net EMAIL ADDRESS: news@yankton.net

SUBSCRIPTIONS/CIRCULATION: Extension 104 CLASSIFIED ADS: Extension 108 NEWS DEPARTMENT: Extension 114 SPORTS DEPARTMENT: Extension 106 ADVERTISING OFFICE: Extension 122 BUSINESS OFFICE: Extension 119 NEW MEDIA: Extension 136 COMPOSING DESK: Extension 129

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Published Daily Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

MEMBERSHIPS

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian is a member of the Associated Press, the Inland Daily Press Association and the South Dakota Newspaper Association. The Associated Press is entitled exclusively to use of all the local news printed in this newspaper.

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(Payable in advance)

CARRIER DELIVERY 1-month ...\$12.09 3 months ...\$36.27 6 months ...\$72.53 1-year ...\$133.09

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OPINION

Plaza Plan A Step Forward For City

Yankton's vision for the Meridian Bridge — and by direct extension, the downtown business district — took a big step forward Monday night.

The City Commission gave the green light to begin work on the next phase of the Meridian Bridge Plaza, a project that will further enhance a pedestrian connection between the downtown area and the bridge.

The next phase will add a fountain, spray pads and shaded seating to the north edge of the bridge area and is expected to carry a price tag of more than \$500,000.

The cost will cause some people to grumble — and in fact, that has been the case all along. The original price tag for this phase was much higher — with early estimates running up to more than \$900,000 — but was eventually brought down through some trimming, prioritizing and in-house work.

The plaza notion is not some fly-by-night dream that has been recklessly thrown together. It's a vision that city officials have owned practically since the Meridian Bridge conversion was in the planning stages a decade ago.

It's part of the broader vision — one that we have addressed before — of making the bridge and its surrounding area more than an inert space that people may or may not come to if they are so inclined. The purpose is to make the bridge — which is one of the more unique park features in this region of the country — into an enticing attraction, which in turn brings crowds to the riverfront and the downtown area.

Work on the plaza actually began in 2012, resulting in the north-end green space. The next phase will develop this area still further.

Monday's consideration of the bid for the project was not without some disagreement. What's important to note is that there were no objections raised to the notion or concept of the plaza, but rather to specific elements, their practicality and their costs. These are good discussions to have in order to move the project forward.

There are other phases that await, including the creation of a rain garden and the development of an area, just to the west of the bridge, where a fuel storage tank was once buried.

In the broader scheme, this area of Yankton is about to see some intriguing development. Besides the plaza, there is a committee considering aesthetic plans for the proposed new water treatment addition to the east of the Meridian Bridge next to Riverside Park. There are some really interesting possibilities there, as well. Combined with the plaza, these things could change the face of Yankton's riverfront.

The plaza also adds an interesting new feature to the character of the downtown area, which has a quaintly historic feel that is more attractive than some of us who see it all the time may realize.

We've long said that it's up to Yankton to do something with the Meridian Bridge now that we have it as a pedestrian feature. There is a lot of potential that unique to the bridge and, therefore, to Yankton. This will be interesting to watch as it develops.

kmh

THE VIEWS PAGE

The PRESS & DAKOTAN Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the PRESS & DAKOTAN. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, August 27, the 239th day of 2014. There are 126 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On August 27, 1964, President Lyndon Baines Johnson accepted his party's nomination for a term in his own right, telling the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, "Let us join together in giving every American the fullest life which he can hope for."

On this date: In 1776, the Battle of Long Island began during the Revolutionary War as British troops attacked American forces, who ended up being forced to retreat two days later.

In 1883, the island volcano Krakatoa erupted with a series of cataclysmic explosions; the resulting tidal waves in Indonesia's Sunda Strait claimed some 36,000 lives in Java and Sumatra.

In 1908, Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th president of the United States, was born near Stonewall, Texas.

In 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris, outlawing war and providing for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In 1939, the first turbojet-powered aircraft, the Heinkel He 178, went on its first full-fledged test flight over Germany.

In 1949, a violent white mob prevented an outdoor concert headlined by Paul Robeson from taking place near Peekskill, New York. (The concert was held eight days later.)

In 1957, the USS Swordfish, the second Skate Class nuclear submarine, was launched from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine.

In 1962, the United States launched the Mariner 2 space probe, which flew past Venus in December 1962.

In 1967, Brian Epstein, manager of The Beatles, was found dead in his London flat from an overdose of sleeping pills; he was 32.

In 1979, British war hero Lord Louis Mountbatten and three other people, including his 14-year-old grandson Nicholas, were killed off the coast of Ireland in a boat explosion claimed by the Irish Republican Army.

In 1989, the first U.S. commercial satellite rocket was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida — a Delta booster carrying a British communications satellite, the Marcopolo 1.

In 2008, Barack Obama was nominated for president by the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush signed executive orders designed to strengthen the CIA director's power over the nation's intelligence agencies and create a national counterterrorism center. Three students were killed in a fire at a University of Mississippi fraternity house.

Five years ago: Mourners filed past the closed casket of the late Sen. Edward Kennedy at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. Jaycee Lee Dugard, kidnapped when she was 11, was reunited with her mother 18 years after her abduction in South Lake Tahoe, California. Alex Grass, 82, founder of the Rite Aid drugstore chain, died in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

One year ago: Maj. Nidal Hasan, the Army psychiatrist who'd fatally shot 13 people at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009, rested his case without presenting any evidence during his trial's penalty phase. (Hasan ended up being sentenced to death.)

Today's Birthdays: Author Dame Antonia Fraser is 82. Actor Tommy Sands is 77. Bluegrass singer-musician J.D. Crowe is 77. Musician Daryl Dragon is 72. Actress Tuesday Weld is 71. Actor G.W. Bailey is 70. Rock singer-musician Tim Bogert is 70. Actress Marianne Sagebrecht is 69. Country musician Jeff Cook is 65. Actor Paul Reubens is 62. Rock musician Alex Lifeson (Rush) is 61. Actor Peter Stormare is 61. Actress Diana Scarwid is 59. Rock musician Glen Matlock (The Sex Pistols) is 58. Golfer Bernhard Langer is 57. Country singer Jeffrey Steele is 53. Gospel singer Yolanda Adams is 53. Country musician Matthew Basford (Yankee Grey) is 52. Writer-producer Dean Devlin is 52. Rock musician Mike Johnson is 49. Rap musician Bobo (Cypress Hill) is 46. Country singer Colt Ford is 45. Actress Chandra Wilson is 45. Rock musician Tony Kanal (No Doubt) is 44. Actress Sarah Chalke is 38. Actor RonReaco (correct) Lee is 38. Rapper Mase is 37. Actress-singer Demetria McKinney is 36. Actor Aaron Paul is 35. Rock musician Jon Siebels (Eve 6) is 35. Actor Shaun Weiss is 35. Contemporary Christian musician Megan Garrett (Casting Crowns) is 34. Actor Kyle Laster is 34. Actor Patrick J. Adams is 33. Singer Mario is 28. Actress Alexa Vega is 26. Actress Savannah Paige Rae (TV: "Parenthood") is 11.

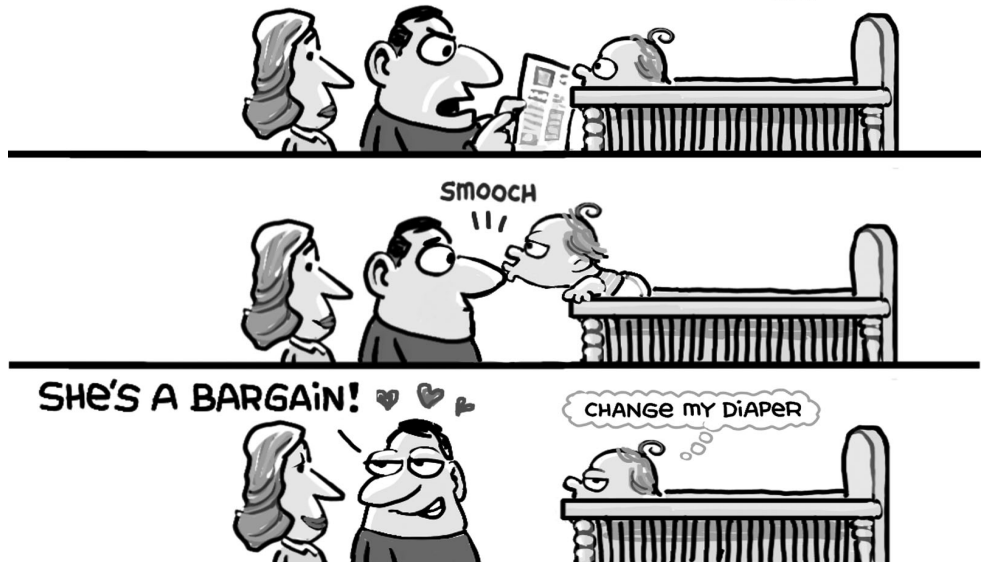
Thought for Today: "Reality can destroy the dream; why shouldn't the dream destroy reality?" — G.E. Moore, British philosopher (1873-1958).

FROM THE BIBLE

"Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with Him also reviled Him. Mark 15:32. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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LOOK AT THIS REPORT, YOUNG LADY— IT NOW TAKES \$245,000 TO RAISE A CHILD IN AMERICA! WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF???



Back To School – And To Widening Inequality

BY ROBERT B. REICH Tribune Content Agency



Robert REICH

American kids are heading back to school. But the schools they're heading back to differ dramatically by family income.

Which helps explain the growing achievement gap between lower- and higher-income children.

Thirty years ago, the average gap on SAT-type tests between children of families in the richest 10 percent and poorest 10 percent was about 90 points on an 800-point scale. Today it's 125 points.

The gap in the mathematical abilities of American kids, by income, is one of widest among the 65 countries participating in the Program for International Student Achievement.

On their reading skills, children from high-income families score 110 points higher, on average, than those from poor families. This is about the same disparity that exists between average test scores in the United States as a whole and Tunisia.

The achievement gap between poor kids and wealthy kids isn't mainly about race. In fact, the racial achievement gap has been narrowing.

It's a reflection of the nation's widening gulf between poor and wealthy families. It's also about how schools in poor and rich communities are financed, and the nation's increasing residential segregation by income.

According to the Pew Research Center's analysis of 2010 census tract and household income data, residential segregation by income has increased during the past three decades across the United States and in 27 of the nation's 30 largest major metropolitan areas.

This matters, because a large portion of the money to support public schools comes from local property taxes. The federal government provides only about 14 percent of all funding, and the states provide 44 percent, on average. The rest, roughly 42 percent, is raised locally.

Most states do try to give more money to poor districts, but most states cut way back on their spending during the recession and haven't nearly made up for the cutbacks.

Meanwhile, many of the nation's local real estate markets remain weak, especially in lower-income communities. So local tax revenues are down.

As we segregate by income into different communities, schools in lower-income areas have fewer resources than ever.

The result is widening disparities in funding per pupil, to the direct disadvantage of poor kids.

The wealthiest, highest-spending districts are now providing about twice as much funding per student as are the lowest-spending districts, according to a federal advisory commission report. In some states, such as California, the ratio is more than three to one.

YOUR LETTERS

Three Words

Fernande Colette Bitsos, Yankton

This is my answer to James Van Osdel's "Writer's Block" column (Press & Dakotian, Aug. 14) and his continuous vilification of Democrats, liberals and so forth.

His knowledge of three words — "liberal" and "liberal arts" — that he combined as a BLT chef clearly shows his lack of interest or simple lack of curiosity to discover the "correct" meaning of those words. So, I'll do my best to help him.

- LIBERAL: (1) Belonging to the people, free, to grow up, rise ... (2) Giving freely, generous ... (3) Large or plentiful; ample; abundant. (a liberal reward). (4) Not restricted to the liberal meaning; not strict (a liberal interpretation of the Bible). (5) Orthodox (6) Of democratic or republican forms of government, as distinguished from monarchies, aristocracies, etc..

(7) Favoring reforms or progress, as in religion, education, etc. specif., favoring political reforms tending toward democracy and personal freedom for the individual; progressive. (8) Designating or of a political party upholding principles.

• LIBERAL ARTS: [transl. of Latin artes liberales, lit., arts befitting a freeman; so named in contrast to artes serviles, lower (lit., servile) arts, and because open to study only by freemen (L. liberi); in later use understood as "arts becoming a gentleman".

(1) orig., the subjects in the TRIVIUM and QUADRIVIUM.

(2) the subjects of an academic college course, including literature, philosophy, languages, history and, usually, survey courses of the sciences, as distinguished from professional or technical subjects sometimes re-

ferred to as arts as in BACHELOR OF ARTS. • LIBERAL EDUCATION: An education mainly in the liberal arts, providing the student with a broad cultural background rather than with training in any special profession. Good luck, Mr. Van Osdel.

Even where courts have been requiring richer school districts to subsidize poorer ones, large inequalities remain.

Rather than pay extra taxes that would go to poorer districts, many parents in upscale communities have quietly shifted their financial support to tax-deductible "parents' foundations" designed to enhance their own schools.

About 12 percent of the more than 14,000 school districts across America are funded in part by such foundations. They're paying for everything from a new school auditorium (Bowie, Maryland) to a high-tech weather station and language-arts program (Newton, Massachusetts).

As a result of all this, the United States is one of only three out of 34 advanced nations surveyed by the OECD whose schools serving higher-income children have more funding per pupil and lower student-teacher ratios than do schools serving poor students (the two others are Turkey and Israel).

Other advanced nations do it differently. Their national governments provide 54 percent of funding, on average, and local taxes account for less than half the portion they do in America. And they target a disproportionate share of national funding to poorer communities.

As Andreas Schleicher, who runs the OECD's international education assessments, told the New York Times, "the vast majority of OECD countries either invest equally into every student or disproportionately more into disadvantaged students. The U.S. is one of the few countries doing the opposite."

Money isn't everything, obviously. But how can we pretend it doesn't count? Money buys the most experienced teachers, less crowded classrooms and high-quality teaching materials and after-school programs.

Yet we seem to be doing everything except getting more money to the schools that most need it.

We're requiring all schools to meet high standards, requiring students to take more and more tests and judging teachers by their students' test scores.

But until we recognize that we're systematically hobbling schools serving disadvantaged kids, we're unlikely to make much headway.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on iTunes, DVD and On Demand.

Derby Donations

Boy Scout Troop 102, Yankton

With much appreciation, we would like to thank all of the businesses/individuals who have participated in our 2014 FASCAR CLASSIC Pinewood Derby race fundraiser held during Riverboat Days.

With your generous donation, the scouts are able to fund their summer camping activities.

We are proud to live in a community which supports its youth!

No Rush To Judgment

Randy Tramp, Yankton

I found something I agreed with President Obama on. (It doesn't happen very often.)

Even though he has drawn criticism from some black Americans for his lack of dialogue on the Ferguson issue, I applaud his strategy.

I for one give him high marks on putting the justice department in play to investigate what happened in Ferguson.

I was troubled when in 2012, President Obama made this comment: "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon." in reference to the death of Trayvon Martin in Florida.

We have a good system, the best in the world. It's not perfect and needs adjustment. It looks like this president learned from his mistake: Don't get personally involved. In 2012 it appeared the president was taking sides. For the time being there has been no presidential rush to judgment.

He is allowing the system to work. Thank you, Mr. President.