



When It's Oh So Quiet ...

BY KELLY HERTZ
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I've learned a lot about reading facial expressions in recent months, thanks mostly to city editor Nathan Johnson. When he comes back from covering a meeting, I'll usually ask him how it went, and I can tell immediately from his face whether it was something that's going to immediately grab my attention or if it's going to be a struggle just to come up with a semi-compelling lead. This exercise has been refined to an art lately thanks to the Yankton City Commission. When Nathan returns from a meeting and I ask him what happened ... well, let's just say that he can wordlessly tell me that nothing occurred that would force me to frantically, or even casually, rearrange page 1. Sometimes, Nathan and I discuss what is or isn't going on with the city. In our combined years of experience in covering and/or observing City Commission business, we've never seen meetings that have been so, shall we say, uneventful. There are no dynamic discussions on big issues, no public hearings on contentious topics, no verbal fire-works and no one getting tasered (which actually did happen at a city meeting once, although it was done for demonstration purposes; it *was*, however, perversely entertaining). The City Commission currently seems to mostly pay bills and take care of other routine matters that don't exactly entice the imagination.

We sometimes go so far as to wonder what's wrong. However, I was reminded this week that dull meetings don't necessarily mean nothing is getting done. Such meetings can also reflect a smooth efficiency in operation. With a city manager form of government, this is actually not out of the realm of possibility. It also speaks to the tenor of the moment in Yankton, which seems fairly quiet and under control — an oasis in contrast to so much around us. The city doesn't really have a budget problem, nor is there a compelling issue in terms of zoning, expansion or lawsuits. The situation with the workers' union seems to be running relatively smoothly, the swimming pool issue is on the back burner (if not actually deep in the freezer) and no one seems likely to get recalled anytime soon. Sure it's boring, although it probably beats a lot of the alternatives. I suspect my judgments on this matter are sometimes clouded by recent history, when we've had city, county and school issues that have exerted a lot of emotional



Kelly HERTZ

gravity on the proceedings and on our work here. For instance, while we've been having a run of dreadfully routine city meetings, the school board meetings have proven to be highly watched and are drawing their biggest crowds I can ever recall seeing. But there's a reason for that, as you may have heard. The city doesn't have that reason working for it. There was also the city recall issue a few years ago that made those commission meetings tense and compelling. But again, that wasn't necessarily good in the scheme of things. The same goes for when the city dealt with the swimming pool issue a few years ago. There was this perplexing sight of commissioners spending considerable chunks of several meetings talking about floaties and other pool accouterments that really should have been discussed at some lower committee level. It was all certainly watched — there was a public vote on the issue at one point — but to me, this seemed like the low point in my experience in watching a city government conduct business. The County Commission has also had its share of issues that stirred a lot of commotion. There have been building projects and zoning matters that have sparked many debates, but they were also issues that left people unhappy and bitter. So, while the City Commission meetings seem listless these days, perhaps I shouldn't grumble too much. There will certainly be matters that will arise again that will force commissioners into tough territory; there always are. But not right now. Instead, it's a government body that is staying in the background, which may well be what we want our lawmakers to do whenever possible. Remember the old Chinese curse about living in interesting times. With that in mind, perhaps we should count our blessings in this smooth, uneventful stream of city business.

CHRISTMAS SOUNDS: The holiday season is upon us, and holiday music is filling the air. It's as much a part of the season as Christmas trees and Nativity scenes. This is an immense canon of sound, and it's added to every year by an astonishingly wide array of artists. I'm curious about what you think are the best and worst Christmas songs you've ever heard. Let me know your thoughts on both, by title and by artist. Drop me an email at kelly.hertz@yankton.net or go to the *Press & Dakotan's* Facebook page.

A Teen Beats Back Little Minds

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

Let's talk about the smallness first. Yes, the bullying is troubling, the thin-skinned aversion to criticism vexing. But in the end, it is the piddling, picayune pettiness, the sheer, Lilliputian smallness of the behavior that I can't quite get past. We are talking about Emma Sullivan's tweet — and the governor's response. For those who haven't heard, it seems Sullivan, an 18-year-old senior at a high school just south of Kansas City, Kan., heard Gov. Sam Brownback speak last week at a "Youth in Government" program in Topeka. Afterward, Sullivan, no fan of the governor, sent the following tweet to her Twitter followers, who numbered perhaps 60: "Just made mean comments at gov brownback and told him he sucked, in person /heblowsalot." She had not in fact met Brownback, much less said mean things to him. It was a joke, spelled j-o-k-e, among friends and it would have come and gone in her normal run of tweets about Justin Bieber and the "Twilight" movies, except the governor's office happened upon it while patrolling the 'Net for mentions of his name. Next thing you know, a Brownback aide contacts Youth in Government, which contacts Sullivan's principal. Rather than defending her right to free expression and telling both Youth in Government and the governor's office to take a flying leap, the principal calls Sullivan to his office and berates her for "embarrassing" the school. He orders her to apologize. Sullivan has refused. On Monday she was vindicated, as Brownback apologized to her, saying his staff "overreacted." Geez, ya think? It is astonishing that an aide to the state's highest official would have the time or the interest necessary to monitor — and seek to punish —



Leonard PITTS

what is said about him by a teenager to an audience of fewer than 100 people. Apparently, Kansas is a paradise where all the serious problems have been solved. This episode seems par for the Zeitgeist, an era wherein our politics frequently feel shrunken and faintly absurd and elected officials often seem more concerned about manipulating and controlling the perception of their leadership than with providing leadership. Think Florida Gov. Rick Scott, making up a form letter for his supporters to send to newspaper editors praising his bang-up stewardship of a banded-up state. Think Mike Winder, a small town mayor in Utah who posed as a so-called "citizen journalist" and anonymously wrote articles quoting himself. Think President George W. Bush, whose administration paid newspaper columnists to write favorably about his policies. It is not just the smallness, the ethical poverty of those tactics, that stands out. One is also taken by the contempt they suggest for the intelligence of the American electorate. The nation's symbol is, as you know, the bald eagle, prized for its fierceness and proud bearing. But if we are what some politicians seem to think we are, perhaps that symbol ought instead to be the cow — a docile beast, easily herded. I repeat: if. Emma Sullivan, for one, is not yet bovine. And she did not "embarrass" her school — her principal did. No, her only "sin" was that she expressed an opinion, albeit rudely. She refused to be herded. She got out of line. Good for her. That's what Americans do.

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YOUR LETTERS

Support The Airport

Roger Huntley, Yankton
I started flying at Yankton's Chan Gurney Airport in 1963. During the almost 50 years, I have seen good airport management, poor management and no management. However, it has never been as good as it is now. Carlson Aviation is doing an outstanding job. Gary runs the airport with the safety of pilots foremost in his mind. Strict rules are not always popular but in this day and age, especially since 9/11, they are absolutely necessary. Katie, on the other hand, is the hostess, she is always there to welcome everyone with coffee, snacks and see to those arriving from distant places have everything they need, whether it is a

motel room, transportation, dinner or any other things they might require. I am sure many of the businesses in Yankton can vouch for the referrals they have received from Katie. Every year they promote Yankton during the Oshkosh Fly Inn where they encourage pilots from all over the U.S. to stop in Yankton to refuel and overnight. The city of Yankton also profits from the increased fuel sales. I would encourage the city commissioners to renew Carlson Aviation's Contract without delay. We cannot afford to lose this vital business in Yankton. You do not have to take my word for the outstanding work they do, since the fact that they have won the Airport of the Year Award two years in a row speaks for itself.

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OPINION | WE SAY

Dry Spell



THUMBS DOWN to one of the driest autumns on record. The National Weather Service in Sioux Falls announced Thursday that the meteorological autumn (September-November) of 2011 will end up being one of the driest ever for many locations across southeastern South Dakota, northeastern Nebraska, northwestern Iowa, and southwestern Minnesota. The preliminary September-November 2011 precipitation totals for numerous locations will end up ranking in the top 5 driest. In this region, Newcastle, Neb., recorded 1.04 inches, second driest on record; Menno had 1.17 inches, second driest; Pickstown had 1.34 inches, third driest; and Marion, 1.43 inches, third driest.

The Longest Bridge



THUMBS UP to Yankton now being home to the longest pedestrian bridge in the country that connects two states over a major river. Unfortunately, we can't take the credit for deducing this cool fact. That honor must go to our studious friends at *South Dakota Magazine*. They report that the Newport Bridge, which connects Kentucky and Cincinnati, was formerly the longest at 2,670 feet long. The Meridian Bridge, meanwhile, is 3,013 feet. And there is no doubt that many feet and more have already walked or bicycled across the bridge since it opened last week. What a treasure we now have for community recreation.

Bet On It



THUMBS UP to a great football wager last week between Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle and Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan. With Nebraska and Iowa commencing a new annual college football rivalry, the mayors of the two border cities decided to engage in a friendly bet on the game. This is something public officials often do to add an amiable touch to a sports rivalry, and it usually involves gambling with products that are vital to the local markets such as, for instance, Omaha Steaks. But after Nebraska beat Iowa 20-7 last Friday, Hanafan agreed to pay off on his wager: Hanafan, his staff and Habitat for Humanity in Council Bluffs agreed to build a house in Omaha. If the Hawkeye had won, Suttle, his staff and the Omaha organization would have built a house in Council Bluffs. We love this kind of gesture, and we hope it becomes an annual stake in what should be a hot rivalry.

Call To Doodie



This is a request from a number of employees here: **THUMBS DOWN** to a rocky situation that exists behind the *Press & Dakotan* plant in the downtown area. Between the alley behind the *P&D* and the parking lot, there is a strip of ground that is landscaped entirely in rocks. This provided for easy maintenance. People who are out walking their dogs sometimes tend to let their pets "do their business" (or do-do their business, if you will) on these rocks, then don't pick it up after the mission is accomplished. The problem is, a lot of people — and not just *P&D* employees — walk through this area from the parking lot, and this has become a minefield of sorts. (This actually sounds quite amusing — until you almost [but not quite] step in one of these little landmines; then the problem becomes quite clear.) It would be appreciated if pet owners could refrain from letting their dogs do their duty in this area. This plea probably won't help, but it at least lets us get it off our chests, if not off the rocks.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Do you think USD did the right thing in dismissing football coach Ed Meierkorf?
Not sure/don't care 40%
Yes 31%
No 29%
TOTAL VOTES CAST 416
The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you have a positive or negative view of the "Occupy Wall Street" movement?
To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Friday, Dec. 2, the 336th day of 2011. There are 29 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 2, 1961, Cuban leader Fidel Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist who would eventually lead Cuba to Communism in a nationally broadcast speech that began around midnight and ended five hours later. **On this date:** In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of the French. In 1823, President James Monroe outlined his doctrine opposing European expansion in the Western Hemisphere. In 1859, militant abolitionist John Brown was hanged for his raid on Harpers Ferry the previous October. Artist Georges-Pierre Seurat was born in Paris. In 1927, Ford Motor Co. unveiled its Model A automobile that replaced its Model T. In 1939, New York Municipal Airport-LaGuardia Field (later LaGuardia Airport) went into operation as an airliner from Chicago landed at one minute past midnight. In 1942, an artificially created, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was demonstrated for the first time, at the University of Chicago. In 1954, the Senate voted to condemn Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., for conduct that "tends to bring the Senate into disrepute." In 1970, the newly created Environmental Protection Agency opened its doors. (Its first director was William D. Ruckelshaus.) In 1980, four American churchwomen were raped and murdered outside San Salvador. (Five El Salvador national guardsmen were later convicted of murdering nuns Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and Dorothy Kazel, and lay worker Jean Donovan.) In 1991, American hostage Joseph Cicippio, held captive in Lebanon for more than five years, was released. **Ten years ago:** In one of the largest corporate bankruptcies in U.S. history, Enron filed for Chapter 11 protection. A bomb went off aboard a bus in Haifa, killing 15 Israelis, a day after two suicide bombers killed 11 bystanders in Jerusalem. Nicolas Escude gave France its ninth Davis Cup, defeating Australian Wayne Arthurs 7-6 (3), 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-3 in the deciding fifth match. **Five years ago:** Fidel Castro failed to

attend a military parade marking the 50th anniversary of the formation of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, raising questions about his ability to return to power. A triple car bombing in a predominantly Shiite district of Baghdad killed dozens of people. A sport utility vehicle driven by actor Lane Garrison hit a tree in Beverly Hills, killing a 17-year-old passenger; Garrison was later sentenced to three years and four months in prison for drunken driving (he was paroled in April 2009). **One year ago:** The House voted, 333-79, to censure Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., for financial and fundraising misconduct; it was only the 23rd time that the House had invoked its most serious punishment short of expulsion. LeBron James scored 38 points to lead the Miami Heat to a 118-90 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers; it was James' first game back in the city where he had played for seven years before leaving via free agency. The tiny desert nation of Qatar beat out the United States as the 2022 World Cup host, bringing soccer's showcase event for the first time to the Middle East. **Today's Birthdays:** Actress Julie Harris is 86. Former Attorney General Edwin Meese III is 80. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., is 72. Actress Cathy Lee Crosby is 67. Movie director Penelope Spheeris is 66. Actor Ron Raines is 62. Country singer John Wesley Ryles is 61. Actor Keith Szarabajka is 59. Actor Dan Butler is 57. Broadcast journalist Stone Phillips is 57. Actor Dennis Christopher is 56. Actor Steven Bauer is 55. Country singer Joe Henry is 51. Rock musician Rick Savage (Def Leppard) is 51. Rock musician Nate Mendel (Foo Fighters) is 43. Actress Rena Sofer is 43. Rock singer Jimi HaHa (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 43. Actress Lucy Liu is 43. Rapper Treach (Naughty By Nature) is 41. Tennis player Monica Seles is 38. Singer Nelly Furtado is 33. Pop singer Britney Spears is 30. Actress-singer Jana Kramer (TV: "One Tree Hill") is 28. Actress Daniela Ruah (TV: "NCIS: Los Angeles") is 28. Actor Alfie Enoch (Film: "Harry Potter" films) is 23. Actresses Daniella and Deanna Canterman are 19. **Thought for Today:** "When your work speaks for itself, don't interrupt." — Henry J. Kaiser, American industrialist (1882-1967).

FROM THE BIBLE

But I am poor and needy; haste to me, O God! You are my help, and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay! Psalm 70:5. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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