

The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861
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Warm Thoughts



THUMBS UP to the melting of the heavy snow that the Yankton area received in the last 10 days of November. This appears to be a byproduct of the El Nino phenomenon in the Pacific. Yankton received nearly a foot of snow on Nov. 20, then saw at least 6 inches this past Monday and Tuesday. But the temperatures have remained relatively balmy, and the blanket of white that we might have figured would have covered the ground for a few months was already dwindling by the end of this week. And with temperatures expected to be in the 40s well into next week, it wouldn't be a surprise if the bulk of this snow was just a memory (and some scattered piles and finger drifts) in a few days. In fact, the AccuWeather service is forecasting generally mild conditions to prevail in the central and eastern U.S. into January. El Nino could throw a few curves at us this winter, and so far, other than a few inconveniences, we can't complain too much.

Groundhog Day



A weary **THUMBS DOWN** to yet another shooting, another round of chest-thumping and another inevitable lack of action. The scene is San Bernardino, the death toll is 14, the motive is going to be no better than what prompted mass shootings at Columbine, the University of Texas clock tower, Tiananmen Square or any other past massacre one can bring to mind, and the reality is all of the firearms were purchased by the book, again. People offered "thoughts and prayers" as they have each time one of these tragedies has happened. The gun lobby is urging us to forget that the firearms were legally purchased and instead focus on mental health, the religion of the shooters and whatever else it takes to make people forget that the weapons of war are readily available to people with less than appropriate intentions. Unless something drastic happens, this mass shooting will be treated like all the others that have preceded it and it will fade from sight by Christmas — or the next mass shooting. Whichever comes first.

Labeling



Meanwhile, **THUMBS DOWN** to law enforcement officials and media who struggled mightily to determine whether Wednesday's mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, should be labeled "terrorism." Two people opened fire in a social services facility, killing 14 people and wounding 17. But the hesitancy to label this act as terrorism seemed dependent on whether the two suspects, who were Muslim, were acting as jihadists or were acting with a personal grudge. The bloody consequences were the same; the fear — the terror, if you will — was just as real. It would seem we need to define what precisely "terrorism" is and what it isn't. Even though we have waged a "war on terror," we still struggle with the application of the term. It's not relative to someone's faith or skin color or whatever else. It is what it is. And it's also a tragedy. This parsing of terms does not bode well.

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 it's a mistake to leave U.S. troops in Afghanistan?
No.....49%
Yes.....41%
Not sure.....10%
TOTAL VOTES CAST: 212

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:

How closely are you following the U.N. climate conference in Paris?
To cast your vote in the **PRESS & DAKOTAN'S** Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 4, the 338th day of 2015. There are 27 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 4, 1965, the United States launched Gemini 7 with Air Force Lt. Col. Frank Borman and Navy Cmdr. James A. Lovell aboard on a two-week mission. (While Gemini 7 was in orbit, its sister ship, Gemini 6A, was launched on Dec. 15 on a one-day mission; the two spacecraft were able to rendezvous within a foot of each other.)

On this date: In 1214, Alexander II became King of Scots at age 16 upon the death of his father, William the Lion.

In 1619, a group of settlers from Bristol, England, arrived at Berkeley Hundred in present-day Charles City County, Virginia, where they held a service thanking God for their safe arrival.

In 1783, Gen. George Washington bade farewell to his Continental Army officers at Fraunces Tavern in New York.

In 1816, James Monroe of Virginia was elected the fifth president of the United States.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson left Washington on a trip to France to attend the Versailles Peace Conference.

In 1945, the Senate approved U.S. participation in the United Nations by a vote of 65-7.

In 1954, the first Burger King stand was opened in Miami by James McLamore and David Edgerton.

In 1977, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, ruler of the Central African Empire, crowned himself emperor in a lavish ceremony. (Bokassa was deposed in 1979; he died in 1996 at age 75.)

In 1978, San Francisco got its first female mayor as City Supervisor Dianne Feinstein as named to replace the assassinated George Moscone.

In 1984, a five-day hijack drama began as four armed men seized a Kuwaiti airliner en route to Pakistan and forced it to land in Tehran, where the hijackers killed American passenger Charles Hegana. (A second American, William Stanford, also was killed during the siege.)

In 1991, Associated Press correspondent Terry Anderson, the longest held of the Western hostages in Lebanon, was released after nearly seven years in captivity.

In 1996, the Mars Pathfinder lifted off from Cape Canaveral and began speeding toward the red planet on a \$10 million odyssey. (It arrived on Mars in July 1997.)

Ten years ago: Members of the former Sept. 11 commission, appearing on the Sunday talk shows, said the U.S. was at great risk for more terrorist attacks because Congress and the White House had failed to enact several strong security measures. Show business legends Robert Redford, Tina Turner, Tony Bennett, Julie Harris and ballerina Suzanne Farrell headlined the annual Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, D.C. Croatia won its first Davis Cup title.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama praised a newly sealed trade deal with South Korea as a landmark agreement that promised to boost the domestic auto industry and support tens of thousands of American jobs.

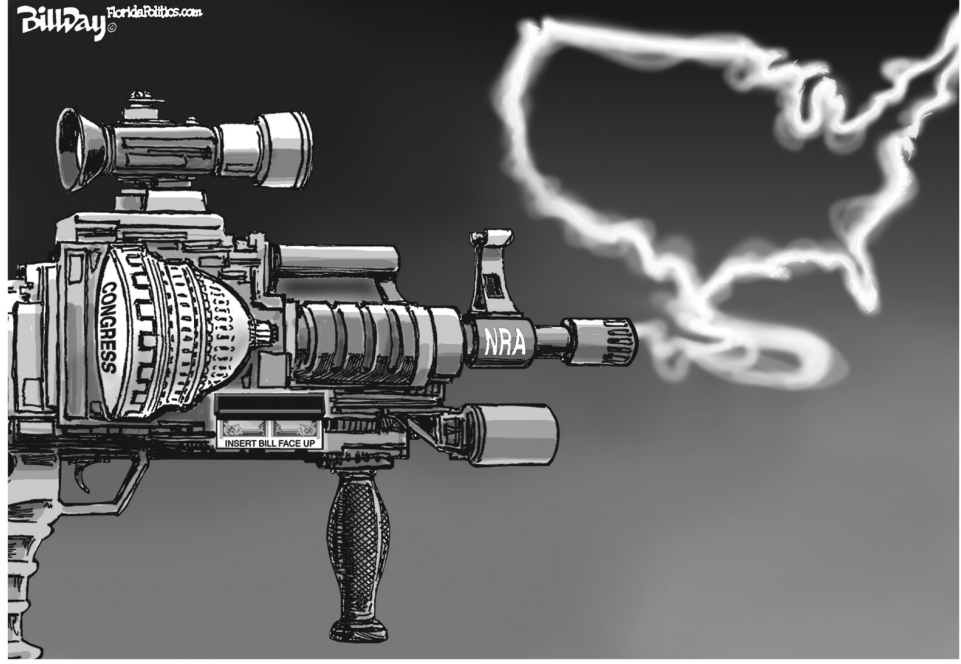
One year ago: The Obama administration acknowledged that many people covered under the Affordable Care Act would face higher premiums the next year. Police waged hours-long gun battles with Islamic militants who attacked Chechnya's capital of Grozny, leaving at least 20 people dead. Jeremy Thorpe, an influential British politician who'd helped revive the Liberal Party before his career was cut short by scandal, died in London at age 85.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Ronnie Corbett (TV: "The Two Ronnies") is 85. Game show host Wink Martindale is 82. Pop singer Freddy Cannon is 79. Actor-producer Max Baer Jr. is 78. Actress Gamma Jones is 73. Rock musician Bob Mosley (Moby Grape) is 73. Singer-musician Chris Hillman is 71. Musician Terry Woods (The Pogues) is 68. Rock singer Southside Johnny Lyon is 67. Actor Jeff Bridges is 66. Rock musician Gary Rossington (Lynyrd Skynyrd; the Rossington Collins Band) is 64. Actress Patricia Wettig is 64. Actor Tony Todd is 61. Jazz singer Cassandra Wilson is 60. Country musician Brian Prout (Diamond Rio) is 60. Rock musician Bob Griffin (The BoDeans) is 56. Rock singer Vinnie Dombroski (Sponge) is 53. Actress Marisa Tomei is 51. Actress Chelsea Noble is 51. Actor-comedian Fred Armisen is 49. Rapper Jay-Z is 46. Actor Kevin Sussman is 45. Actress-model Tyra Banks is 42. Country singer Lila McCann is 34. Actress Lindsay Felton is 31. Actor Orlando Brown is 28.

Thought for Today: "People who have what they want are fond of telling people who haven't what they want that they really don't want it." —Ogden Nash, American humorist and poet (1902-1972).

FROM THE BIBLE

"I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. *Matthew 9:13.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



A Dark Moment And A Shining Light

BY KELLY HERTZ
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Kelly
HERTZ

I'm fairly certain I was sleeping 10 years ago today at 4 a.m. I was probably lost in some pointless dream, wrapped up warmly in bed while, outside, the lingering wake of a late autumn blizzard still smothered us in frozen darkness.

But I do vividly remember the darkness I saw and felt when I heard some news many hours later while at the *Press & Dakotan* office.

At approximately 1 p.m. local time in Baghdad, Iraq, on Dec. 4, 2005 — about 4 a.m. here — two members of Yankton's National Guard unit, SFC Rich Schild and SSG Daniel Cuka, were killed by a roadside explosive. Another Charlie Battery soldier, Sgt. Allen Kokesh Jr., died a couple months later from the wounds suffered in this incident. Others were injured. With that, our view of a war on the other side of the world changed in the most intimately painful terms possible. (A fourth member of the unit, SSG Greg Wagner, would be killed the following spring.)

In a way, it's stunning to realize that 10 years have whisked by since that awful day. Then again, it also feels like it was a lifetime ago, especially when you consider all the twists and turns the world has thrown at us since.

That attack in Baghdad changed Yankton. In fact, Charlie Battery's entire one-year mission altered this community in profound ways.

It didn't really start that way, or so it seemed. When the unit was mobilized, the soldiers left armed with our best wishes and our prayers that they would come back well and whole. Best wishes and prayers were all we knew in that blank slate of a moment.

But then the hard facts of a hard war intervened. A trap had been laid; a plan had been detonated. Soldiers who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time became grim statistics. But for people here, these weren't faceless numbers.

I remember my own shock on the night of Dec. 4 — a black, bleak Sunday — when we learned at the newspaper that something terrible had happened on the mission. But the details were still sketchy, and nothing could be released to us until the official word was given.

I paced around the building a lot that night, pondering the story we were facing. I floated through areas where the lights in those departments were off and a nervous gloom squirmed in what was left. Because of the recent blizzard, most people hadn't put out their Christmas lighting or other decorations,

so whenever I peeked outside, I saw thick, snowbound shadows with no spark of life or hope in them whatsoever.

When that official word came the next day, those who weren't aware by then that something had gone horribly wrong were shocked. We had lost two of our own. People we knew. Soldiers we prayed for. This was what war is really about, and you never embrace that fact as tightly as when you have to pay a monstrous price to know it and then bear the consequences of it.

Yankton was wounded. (So, too, was Tabor, where Schild lived. So, too, was every town that had a tie to the Charlie Battery troops.)

But then Yankton responded in a way I hadn't envisioned. That's not to say I had doubts about how the people here would react; instead, I simply didn't know what to expect in such an extraordinary moment.

Ten long years later, I know now. This community and this area rallied behind their soldiers with everything they had — more so than we would have otherwise, I suspect.

The people turned out in massive numbers for a memorial service held here less than two weeks after the Baghdad disaster. They offered their support and their grief. They stood as a defiant wall against the Westboro Baptist Church protesters who brought their circus to town to make their idiotic point.

Nine months later, when Charlie Battery came home from Iraq, an estimated 30,000 people — a number far exceeding Yankton's population — lined these streets to welcome the soldiers home. Yellow ribbons were draped everywhere. Cheers sang out. Tears flowed. Hearts soared. A vibrant pride glowed like a sun on that soft September day.

A decade ago, something amazing took root here. Maybe it was a deeper connection between the people and their soldiers. Forget the politics and semantics of the war; it was the call to duty that mattered, and it was the sacrifice that still stands out. The courage still resonates. Just as importantly, the appreciation still endures.

Ten years later, we have emerged from the darkness, but it has never left us. Yankton is a different place now because of what happened, and maybe it's a stronger place. We lost a lot, but we gained a lot. Certainly, we would dearly give anything to undo what happened. But from the terrible dream that was Dec. 4, 2005, it might be argued that what followed was perhaps Yankton's finest and brightest hour.

Follow @kelly_hertz on Twitter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remember Them

Lucy Stredde, Loveland, Colo.
Dec. 4 probably doesn't mean a lot to some people ... just another day ... maybe you have a Christmas party ... maybe it's another day to get ready for the holidays.

But to several Yankton families, it is the day their lives changed irrevocably.

Dec. 4, 2005, will forever be carved into the minds and hearts of those families affected by the loss of two of our own and the life-threatening injuries of another in Iraq. This year will be the 10th anniversary of the loss and injury of these young men.

As you go about your lives this Friday, I ask you to please take a minute and be thankful to these men for their ultimate sacrifice so you can enjoy the freedoms you have today. I ask

you to remember Rich Schild and Dan Cuka, who lost their lives this day, and Corey Briest, whose life was irreversibly changed on this day. Please remember their wives, their children and their families who will never forget them; their children need to know that their dads' sacrifices will never be forgotten and will always be appreciated.

Sometimes, it is so easy to get caught up in our own realities and the holiday season can be stressful for so many reasons. Please take the time this holiday season to stop, step back and truly take in how lucky you are ... and remember those who sacrificed so much so you can live your lives as you know them.

Rest in peace, Rich and Dan. Happy Alive Day, Corey. We will never forget!

P&D LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." — **The FIRST AMENDMENT to the U.S. Constitution**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It's Your Right To Know!