

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER VIEWS

Hoven's Resolve Is Inspiring Example

AMERICAN NEWS, Aberdeen (Aug. 28): Newness surrounds Hoven.

A May 25 fire forced change for our friends and neighbors in the small Potter County community. However, they stepped up to the challenge, embraced it and set a shining example for the rest of us to follow as they started the new school year.

Hoven lost its high school, but found a rallying cry within the ashes.

While it waits for its new junior and senior high school to be built over the next two years, Hoven High School's 57 students will call what used to be Holy Infant Hospital home. And it is using South Dakota's architectural treasure, St. Anthony of Padua Church, as its cafeteria.

"It looked like an old, run-down hospital," new superintendent Pat Jones said of the hospital when he first visited. "Certainly, the rooms were there, but there was lots of equipment in the rooms that had not been used for a while and a lot of stuff just put in rooms to store. It really presented itself as a building with an unknown future and offered us a great opportunity, but also, a lot of work."

It was a community effort that was sure to have made Hoven Greyhounds alumni proud:

— The custodial staff and helpers cleaned rooms and set up furniture over the summer.

— Community members volunteered their time to bring the building up to code.

— Teachers and staff put in extra hours to transform their classrooms and work areas for Tuesday's start, and to order needed supplies to help rebuild their school.

— Students responded like champions. "I really couldn't be happier," Jones said. "Everything has gone as planned. The kids have been great. The staff has been great. It's really been a successful day."

Jones has been receiving his own high marks in leadership at his new school.

"I'm very impressed with Dr. Jones," parent and substitute teacher Lori Sautner said. "He's worried about making sure that the kids have a stable environment and they move forward in school before he jumped into building plans."

"In small town South Dakota, if your school goes away, your town goes away," Jones said.

Hoven is not going anywhere anytime soon.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks 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 to views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, September 2, the 245th day of 2014. There are 120 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On September 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered in ceremonies aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, ending World War II.

On this date: In 1666, the Great Fire of London broke out.

In 1789, the United States Treasury Department was established.

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Gen. William T. Sherman's forces occupied Atlanta.

In 1901, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt offered the advice, "Speak softly and carry a big stick" in a speech at the Minnesota State Fair.

In 1924, the Rudolf Friml operetta "Rose Marie" opened on Broadway.

In 1935, a Labor Day hurricane slammed into the Florida Keys, claiming more than 400 lives.

In 1944, during World War II, Navy pilot Lt. (jg) George Herbert Walker Bush was shot down by Japanese forces as he completed a bombing run over the Bonin Islands. (Bush was rescued by the crew of the submarine USS Finback; his two crew members, however, died.)

In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent republic. (Ho died on this date in 1969.)

In 1964, one of America's most decorated military heroes of World War I, Medal of Honor recipient Alvin C. York, died in Nashville at age 76.

In 1972, Dave Wottle of the United States won the men's 800-meter race at the Munich Summer Olympics.

In 1986, a judge in Los Angeles sentenced Cathy Evelyn Smith to three years in prison for involuntary manslaughter for her role in the 1982 drug overdose death of comedian John Belushi. (Smith served 18 months.)

In 1998, a Swissair MD-11 jetliner crashed off Nova Scotia, killing all 229 people aboard.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush summoned the nation toward victory over terrorism and economic security at home as he accepted his party's nomination for a second term at the Republican National Convention in New York. A military jury at Camp Pendleton, California, convicted Marine Sgt. Gary Pittman of dereliction of duty and abuse of prisoners at a makeshift detention camp in Iraq; Pittman was sentenced to 60 days of hard labor and demoted to private. A jury at Fort Lewis, Washington, convicted a National Guardsman of trying to help al-Qaida; Specialist Ryan G. Anderson was sentenced to life in prison.

Five years ago: Pfizer agreed to pay a record \$2.3 billion settlement for illegal drug promotion. A Taliban suicide bomber attacked officials leaving a mosque in Afghanistan, killing the country's deputy intelligence chief and 23 others. Gunmen killed 17 people at a drug rehabilitation center in Ciudad Jurez, Mexico. A magnitude-7.0 earthquake rocked Indonesia, killing dozens of people.

One year ago: France released an intelligence report alleging chemical weapons use by Syria that dovetailed with similar U.S. claims, as President Bashar Assad warned that any military strike against his country would spark an uncontrollable regional war. On her fifth try, U.S. endurance swimmer Diana Nyad became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida without the help of a shark cage.

Today's Birthdays: Dancer-actress Marge Champion is 95. Former Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., is 83. Actor-comedian Chuck McCann is 80. Former United States Olympic Committee Chairman Peter Ueberroth is 77. Actor Derek Fowlds (TV: "Yes, Minister") is 77. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sam Gooden (The Impressions) is 75. Singer Jimmy Clanton is 74. Rhythm-and-blues singer Rosalind Ashford (Martha & the Vandellas) is 71. Singer Joe Simon is 71. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Terry Bradshaw is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Nate Archibald is 66. Actor Mark Harmon is 63. Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., is 63. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jimmy Connors is 62. Actress Linda Purl is 59. Rock musician Jerry Augustyniak (10,000 Maniacs) is 56. Country musician Paul Deakin (The Mavericks) is 55. Pro Football Hall of Famer Eric Dickerson is 54. Actor Keanu Reeves is 50. International Boxing Hall of Famer Lennox Lewis is 49. Actress Salma Hayek is 48. Actor Tuc Watkins is 48. Actress Kristen Cloke is 46. Actress Cynthia Watros is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer K-Ci is 45. Actor-comedian Katt Williams is 41. Actor Michael Lombardi is 40. Actress Tiffany Hines is 37. Rock musician Sam Rivers (Limp Bizkit) is 37. Actor Jonathan Kite is 35. Actress Allison Miller is 29. Rock musician Spencer Smith (Panicle at the Disco) is 27. Electronic music DJ/producer Zedd is 25.

Thought for Today: "If I accept you as you are, I will make you worse; however if I treat you as though you are what you are capable of becoming, I help you become that." — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe German poet, dramatist and author (1749-1832).

FROM THE BIBLE

[Peter] saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. Luke 24:12. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Capitol Notebook

A Dead Man Doesn't Give An Interview

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The Pew research center distributed results this summer showing South Dakota has the smallest corps of news reporters assigned to covering the statehouse.

There are two of us. The other reporter works for the Associated Press and is temporarily assigned to Pierre, while AP looks to make a permanent hire. Chet Brokaw retired earlier this year.

Officially I work for the *Aberdeen American News*. But my stories and columns are shared simultaneously among seven daily papers at Aberdeen, Watertown, Mitchell, Yankton, Pierre, Rapid City and Spearfish.

Six papers pay Aberdeen. It is an efficient system. A news item that would be of interest to one or more of the seven often comes up while looking into another. Travel expenses are spread.

But there are many days I can't get to every state meeting in Pierre or elsewhere across South Dakota.

During legislative session, there frequently are four or more committee meetings in the same two-hour block each morning, followed by another two-hour block of the same.

Consequently I juggle. If AP is at a meeting, I decide whether I need to be there too, because of some topic of direct interest to one of the seven papers I serve. If there is another meeting of direct interest, I frequently go to that other meeting.

The other morning there were three meetings at the same time.

I chose the Transportation Commission meeting and picked up two stories immediately, with another one in my notes and background for a fourth one later.

From there, I headed to the South Dakota



Bob MERCER

High School Activities Association offices where the board of directors including four new members gathered.

The SDHSAA directors worked through lunch, taking a short break to get sub sandwiches from the back counter of the meeting room.

The meeting I didn't attend was of directors for the South Dakota Development Corporation.

SDDC was one link then-Gov. Mike Rounds used to get state Future Fund grants to Northern Beef at Aberdeen.

State Attorney General Marty Jackley determined several Future Fund grants were increased to SDDC in December 2010. Northern Beef received an extra \$550,000 from SDDC.

Northern Beef meanwhile diverted \$550,000 from a different \$1 million grant approved by Rounds in December 2010.

The \$550,000 went to an escrow account for SDRC Inc.

Joop Bollen of Aberdeen operated SDRC and under a 2009 contract ran the EB-5 immigrant-investor visa program for state government.

SDRC raised tens of millions of dollars for projects such as Northern Beef and profited by charging fees to EB-5 investors and borrowers.

In the center was Richard Benda, secretary of tourism and state development for Rounds. Benda and Bollen signed the 2009 contract.

Benda went to work at SDRC in 2011 as loan monitor for Northern Beef. The \$550,000 paid Benda for two years and covered other costs.

Jackley prepared last October to arrest Benda. But Benda died Oct. 20 from a shotgun wound to his abdomen described as suicide.

I wish someone tipped off a reporter in 2010. A dead man is hard to interview.

A 9-Year-Old With An Uzi ...

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Content Agency

Sometimes you read a sentence and you think to yourself: only here, only us.

Here's one such sentence.

"A 9-year-old girl from New Jersey accidentally shot and killed her instructor with an Uzi submachine gun while he stood to her left side, trying to guide her."

That's from a *New York Times* account of the death of 39-year-old Charles Vacca, who worked for the Last Stop shooting range in White Hills, Ariz. He died Monday when his preteen student lost control of the Uzi. Apparently, the gun was in "repeat fire" mode, the recoil lifted the muzzle, the little girl couldn't master it and Vacca was struck in the head.

The child and her family, who have not been identified, were vacationing last week in nearby Las Vegas and had signed up for a package deal offered by the gun range. It included a tour of Hoover Dam, a hamburger lunch, an optional helicopter flight over the Grand Canyon and the chance to fire a range of powerful weapons, including sniper rifles, grenade launchers and machine guns. Everything was going fine until, as the *Times* put it, the "adventure went horribly wrong."

For the record, some of us would argue that "horribly wrong" began, not when the child lost control of the gun, but when "adults" first placed this powerful piece of military hardware into her small hands. That act raises questions that are as blunt and indecorous as they are necessary and unavoidable:

What kind of shooting range allows a prepubescent girl to fire an Uzi? What kind of instructor does not guard against recoil when a child is handling such a powerful weapon? What kind of parents think it's a good idea to put a submachine gun in their 9-year-old's hands? And what kind of idiot country does not prohibit such things by law?

It is the last question that should most concern us. There's not much you can do about individual lack of judgment. Some people will always be idiots. Some companies will always be idiots. But a country and its laws should be



Leonard PITTS

an expression of a people's collective wisdom. So for a country to be idiotic says something sweeping about national character.

And where gun laws are concerned, the United States of America is — individual dissenting voices duly noted and exempted from the following descriptive — dumber than a bag of bullets. This, after all, is the country where you can take a gun into a bar. Where you can erect a shooting range in your own backyard. Where a blind person can get a gun permit. You think it's insane that Arizona allows a 9-year-old to shoot at a firing range? ABC News reports that one in Texas allows them to do so at age 6.

Six. God bless America. We legislate against sharia law in places where there are no Muslims, much less an inclination toward sharia. We pass laws to curtail election fraud despite the fact that election fraud, as a practical matter, does not exist. Yet we endure a yearly toll of gun carnage that makes civilized people in civilized places shake their heads in wonder and our only action is inaction.

We should mourn for this little girl who will have to live the rest of her life with the memory of what she inadvertently did. But let us also mourn for a country where what she did now barely qualifies as news.

We speak often and with pride of America's exceptionalism — by which we mean our rights, our freedoms, our values. And they are, make no mistake, among the finest in the world.

But there are days when the bullets fly and the blood flows and no one can give you a good reason why this had to happen, and it occurs to you that we are also exceptional in the sheer, stubborn stupidity of which we are all too often capable. Last week brought another such day. A man was killed by a 9-year-old wielding a sub-machine gun.

Only here, only us.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for *The Miami Herald*, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miami-herald.com.

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YOUR LETTERS

A Tale From Iowa

Sally Welter, Yankton

As you are a newspaper, you might want to print this interesting news item.

Our neighboring state of Iowa, had a plane land in Des Moines with 124 teens aboard (13 to 19). The governor was called and he drove to the airport and chartered a United plane from Chicago Within 8 hours the teens were loaded on

and, got food and drink. The plane flew non-stop to Honduras where the plane was unloaded and 4 social workers from Iowa made sure that all got to the terminal and told the Honduras officials, "Here are your teens who have no papers and yet you let them come to America. Iowa refuses to take them. Iowa has its own laws; no minors without adults." I found this to a most interesting, unusual action and it is right next door to us. Newsworthy.