04 Vermillion Plain Talk

VIEWPOINTS

The sense of communitas

Things were going so well. Last week was a busy time in Vermillion, filled with lots of good news. Hard work by community leaders, who had teamed up with state government officials, educators at the University of South Dakota, and private industry, means a new employer is coming to town.

It's the stuff you want to shout from the rooftops, and indeed, the modern equivalent of that occurred. A press conference was held on the USD campus Wednesday, March 13. The news was so important that Gov. Dennis Daugaard took time from his busy schedule to participate.

The next day was sunny and mild in Vermillion, and it ended with our local citizens entering the Eagles Club with a bit of a spring in their steps to take part in the annual Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company's banquet.

This event rightfully tends to be a congratulatory, backslapping time. It's a time for a cross section of our city to gather, to enjoy each other's fellowship, to review and take stock of where we are and what has taken place in the past year.

It is a time to celebrate the successes that we, as a community, have been able to accomplish. It is a time where we may easily convince ourselves that, yes, we have the ability to control the world we live in.

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, who grew up in Vermillion, fired up the banquet crowd with energetic, humorous banter. His talk eventually took a serious tone, as he described how growing up in Vermillion was not easy. His father left town, seeking work, and decided never to come back, writing to his mother that he was divorcing her.

He told the story of how time and again, members of the Vermillion community came to his mother's aid as she struggled to keep a roof over her family's heads and food on the table. What could be described as a classic tale of neighbors helping neighbors is a true-life story for the Michels family and the people of Vermillion.

An acquaintance was working that evening at the banquet, taking photos of the festivities. It seemed a bit odd, in the middle of last Thursday's event, that he apparently left and was replaced with another local photographer.

While good food and boisterous revelry was being dished up at the Eagles Club, a tragedy was unfolding in Sioux Falls. Jay and Lara Wallace of Vermillion and their six children had traveled to Sioux Falls on this welcoming, mild day to enjoy the scenery of the Big Sioux River at Falls

the icy plunge and was able to scramble to an area where he could be plucked, unhurt from the river. Madison and Lyle perished in

their attempt to rescue the young boy. The absent photographer, I later learned, is a close friend of the Wallace family. He dropped everything so that he and his family could do what ever was humanly possible to help their friends.

One of the purposes of Michels' speech at the March 14 banquet was to drive home the sense that Vermillion truly is a city whose people choose to work together and in the meantime, care for one another. It's a spot on the prairie that strives to be a good place to

live, learn and **BETWEEN THE LINES** have fun.



DAVID LIAS

could not know, nor could any of us for that matter, that this sense of community, this communitas.

Michels

was beginning to play out in david.lias@plaintalkpoke.

Turns out we can't control what happens in the world. Certainly good things pop up in our lives all of the time. Yet, there are times when a multitude of bad things happen in a blink of an eye. The dust settles. We find our world is diminished in ways we can neither change nor understand.

I watched Tuesday night as the community said goodbye to Madison at her funeral. I left the church with no new insight as to why bad things happen to good people. I was, however, uplifted with the realization (and this certainly isn't a first for me, personally) that when really bad things happen, when your life gets tossed on its head, Vermillion is one of the best places to receive the support, the solidarity, the caring gestures small and large, to get back on your feet again.

The Wallace family, in turn, did its best to help our community try to get a sense of the happenings of the past week. Tuesday night they shared this quote from Jenkin Lloyd Jones during their daughter's service:

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed. The fact is that most putts don't drop, most beef is tough, most children grow up to be just like people, most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration, and most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. Life is just like an old time rail journey ... delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride."



dossier of intoxicating newness

Like any other writer, I had stories to tell this week - a party line of happenings, a parade of reminiscences, pleasant impressions, particular notions that ordinarily would take on complex examinations.

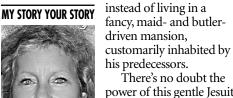
Not this time. No. Rising above all that nice noise, one story delivered a dossier of intoxicating newness. Two words: Pope Francis.

It doesn't matter how Catholic or non-Catholic a person is, Pope Francis stands to make even the most agnostic among us, believers in the power and potential of living simplistically and allowing our actions to resonate goodness and service.

What's not to like about this humble man, who just days ago went by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio and now has adopted the name of the most influential servant saint of all time: Saint Francis of Assisi.

Previously dwelling smack dab in the middle of the capitol of Argentina, Buenos Aires, the Argentine native of Italian heritage, was known to completely shun pomp and circumstance. Almost always blending in with the crowd, now Pope Francis once traded sailing through traffic in a lush leather-lined limousine for jostling along on the endlessly long, noisy, sometimes smelly stop-start cadence of public transit.

He chose to ride to and from work side-byside with single mothers, rowdy teenagers, downtrodden servants, crying children. Seated right there with the helpless and hopeless, he was and is a living, breathing incarnation of the Gospel. A man of the cloth in the truest sense, as Cardinal, he elected to cook his own food in a modest third-floor downtown apartment



power of this gentle Jesuit dwells with the powerless, rubs shoulders with the poor, wraps bear hugs around the diseased and homeless, further

testifying to the potential goodness in all of us. By the time of his first

public appearance as Pope just hours into his papacy, when he gave his inaugural greeting to more than 100,000 onlookers waiting in Saint Peter's Square from the central balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis had already begun to push status quo full tilt on its axis.

Quickly sending Vatican tradition into a tizzy, he opted to not wear the traditional ornate flashy gold crucifix, preferring the plain metal cross he had always worn. And again exchanging lavishness for simplicity, he shunned red vestments for humbler white vestments.

During his first full day on the job, Francis strongly urged the cardinals, who had gathered in Rome for the conclave, to resist complacency, as best expressed in his first address to them as the Holy Father. "Find new ways to bring evangelization to the ends of the Earth," he said, and then warned them against giving into negativity, describing it as "that bitterness that the devil offers us every day." Perhaps the closing of his inaugural

greeting gave us all of us a much-needed warm fuzzy, "Goodnight. Sleep well. We will see one another soon."

Like no other, something tells me that one day during his office, those of us dwelling here in the nation's breadbasket, way out here in the interior of the U.S. may see him sooner than later.

I, a fallen-away Catholic, will be in the crowd, waving in solidarity of hope, wiping tears of joy for affable Pope Francis, who even makes us laugh with his own brand of holy humor.

On March 13, 2013, when toasting the cardinals after his election had been announced, Francis simply said, "May God forgive you," which reportedly brought the house down. "In other words," Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, explained, "he was saying, 'I hope you don't regret this later."

Made me chuckle. Still does.

We have new Pope. Is he like no other? Only time will tell. But for now, he is a candle in the dark, an advocate for the poor and hopefully a clarion voice for victimized. God speed, Pope Francis.

2013 © Copyright Paula Damon. A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her vriting has won first-place in competitions of the Nationa Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009, 2010 and 2011 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contests, her columns have earned eight first-place awards. To contact Paula, email boscodamon.paula@gmail, follow her blog at my-story-your-story@blogspot.com and find her on FaceBook.

PAULA DAMON

paula.damon@iw.net

Park.

Their youngest son, Garrett, evidently while wandering near the water's edge, slipped into the icy river. His older sister, Madison, who we have learned in the last week often unselfishly thought of others, did what she had to do.

She went in after him. So did a bystander, Lyle Eagle Tail.

The young lad somehow survived

To that, all one can say is, "Amen."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Is jail the answer?

If a person goes into debt and can't pay his or her bills, he or she gets thrown into jail and he or she might lose their job!

The United States of America is in debt and can't pay their bills! So should the president go to jail or should the Congress and everyone between the president and the Congress go to jail!

The government gets paid more every year to keep us in debt.

The president's platform for his first term was for the government to take a cut in pay if they can't get us out of debt! It never happened and we voted him back in to be the president again!

William (Buddy) A. Brose Viborg

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Should Vermillion ban texting-while-driving now that the SD Legislature has rejected a statewide ban?

Yes, a ban should be implemented by the city council immediately (70%, 119 votes)

No, the same issues, such as ability to enforce the law, that have caused the idea to fail in Pierre make it unworkable in the city. (28%, 48 votes)

I'm undecided. (2%, 4 votes) Total Voters: 171

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net

SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

The Daily Republic, Mitchell: March 6 Corn Palace big enough for state tournaments

State tournaments were taken away from the Corn Palace in 2006 when the South Dakota High School Activities Association determined that the Mitchell landmark is too small to host such big events.

The decision has proven painful for Mitchell, a basketball town that suddenly found itself on the outside looking in as tournaments — and the lucrative tourism dollars that come with them — have headed elsewhere.

Meanwhile, attendance numbers at all of those tournaments over the past decade or so show that the Corn Palace could, indeed, have hosted at least a few.

It's time for the SDHSAA to come back to the table and once again explain to Mitchell why we have been left out of the rotation for state tournaments.

Last week, The Daily Republic outlined attendance figures at girls' tournaments since 2005. Out of the 180 total girls' basketball tournament sessions that have been held over the past decade — there are six sessions per tournament — only six have surpassed the seating capacity of the Corn Palace.

That means that only about 3 percent of the sessions held in the past 10 years would have been too big for the Palace. In the meantime, Mitchell has racked its brain trying to figure out ways to get back into the tournament rotation, including several proposals to build a new arena

or to enlarge the Corn Palace itself. Statistics show that the average per-session attendance figure ranges from 1,600 for Class AA and Class B to about 1,800 for Class A. Yet the Corn Palace has seating for 2,989 for basketball games.

Are we just not understanding the math?

This is maddening. We firmly believe Mitchell can host a state girls' basketball tournament, and we feel it's time for Mitchell officials to go back to the SDHSAA board and ask, once again, why we aren't.

American News, Aberdeen: March 9 Enjoy the good times, but also feel the burn

An agricultural economist recently planted in Aberdeen some seeds of advice for us all.

Hope, but don't believe, the good times will last forever.

"What the market gave you, it will take away," said Michael Swanson, a senior vice president for Wells Fargo. "If you look at farmers' balance

sheets, they are probably bigger than 80 percent of the small businesses in the United States," he said. "Almost all of the assets are land.'

Swanson said while he was optimistic about farming and corn, he was more pessimistic about land values.

Ag land is being pushed higher by low interest rates and high prices for crops. While both might continue in the short run, over the long run, it is unlikely they will continue at such high levels, he said.

none of Swanson's message, one thing

really rang true. In the middle of good times, map out a plan for the future when times might not be as good.

That holds true for farmers, business owners or your own family finances.

"There are good times and bad times in agriculture, and they don't last," Swanson said.

Assessing situations and anticipating risks is important in all businesses, including farming.

"Anticipating a risk is like an NFL quarterback reading a blitz and knowing what to do with the football," he said. "The good ones throw a short pass and throw it out of bounds so they don't take a loss. The Vikings quarterback takes a 15-yard sack. We don't want to be like the Vikings."

Rapid City Journal: March 6 Lawmakers fail driver safety test

The South Dakota House passed a bill on Monday that would prohibit drivers younger than 16 from using cellphones while driving after failing to pass the measure last week and rejecting another bill that would ban texting while driving for all drivers.

Let's see. It's not OK for young drivers to use a cellphone while learning to drive, but as soon as they turn 16, they can talk and text all they want.

Supporters of the bills argued that young drivers should not use cellphones and no one should text while driving because doing so increases the chances they will cause an accident. Opponents said there's no proof that banning cellphones

reduces crashes.

Common sense alone will tell you that talking on a cellphone or texting are dangerous distractions.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has studied the causal relationship of distracted driving and automobile crashes. A 2009 NHTSA study found that driver distraction was the cause in 26 percent of fatal accidents in 2008. The leading distractions were dialing a hand-held device, entering text or talking on a hand-held device (cellphone). The NHTSA website notes that drivers texting while driving are 23 times more likely to be involved in an accident.

That's plenty of proof for us. When the House Judiciary Committee rejected the texting ban, not one person testified against the bill, yet committee members were sufficiently convinced that texting while driving is not a problem.

Opponents said there are other ways to teach that texting is not acceptable. Why pass laws then, if lawmakers believe they're not effective in changing behavior?

It's irresponsible for legislators to reject a bill that prohibits a driver distraction that NHTSA studies have linked to an increase in accidents by claiming the behavior isn't hazardous.

The teen cellphone ban was the only recommendation from the teen driving task force to pass the Legislature - a disappointment to the task force members who devoted many hours and miles to improving teen driver safety only to have all but one of their solutions rejected.

This year, state lawmakers have failed their driver safety test.



Since 1884 • Official County, City and School District Newspaper

Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc. • Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069.

Subscription rates for the Plain Talk by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.

201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069 • Publication No. USPS 657-720 Publisher: Gary Wood • Editor: David Lias

Vermillion Plain Talk Staff

News Staff: Travis Gulbrandson. Advertising Director: Michele Schievelbein. Advertising Sales Rep: Carol Hohenthaner. Composing Staff: Kathy Larson, Rob Buckingham, Mathew Wienbar & Sally Whiting. Reception Office Manager: Brett Beyeler. Distribution & Circulation Manager: David Jeffcoat.

Whether you swallow all, some or