

# Useful Thinking: North Dakota the Beautiful

I grew up on a farm in Wells County. My dad, James Patrie, loved poetry and I learned his philosophy through the poems he liked. I like those poems myself because they can express complicated thoughts through simple feelings.

My dad believed there was no higher virtue than loving your fellow man. Dad didn't believe in the death penalty because he thought killing an innocent person was worse than letting a guilty person go free. Dad thought killing someone as a punishment for a crime, even after a legal conviction, would preclude the opportunity to recognize mistakes in the trial that might have proven innocence.

I have been thinking about Dad's philosophy and the poetry he



Patrie

loved. I wonder what he would say about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, about the US military killing people on board ships without even a trial, about demolishing the East wing of the Whitehouse, about creating a call center to receive up to 6,000 calls per day identifying the location of up to 450,000 unaccompanied minors living in the United States without authorization from US Customs and

Immigration Services. Dad didn't like Senator Joseph McCarthy and his accusations that people were communists. I think he would have been against accusing children of illegally being in the United States.

Dad loved public speaking and entered speech contests. He lived in a time (1910-2000) when poets and public speakers were celebrities and drew crowds. If Dad could have observed the speeches of Donald Trump and the actions of his administration toward immigrants, I am pretty sure he would have said those speeches and actions are ugly. There is no poetry or beauty in ICE raids, or name calling, or irrational tariffs, or flaunting of wealth or sexuality.

I don't know for sure what my dad might

have thought beautiful. My guess would be his first response was Katherine, his wife and my mother. He also really liked horses and appreciated the beauty of a well-matched team.

Growing up with this man, I didn't talk about what I thought was beautiful with him. I wish I could have and, in his memory, here is what I thought was beautiful as a farm boy in Wells County. Make your own list, here is mine:

A flax field in bloom.  
Clean cattle after a rain in green grass.

Mrs. Peterson, my fifth-grade teacher at Fessenden.

1963 Chevy Impala.  
The poetry of Bob Dylan.

The "I have a dream speech" by Dr. Martin Luther King.

The Declaration of Independence.

The Gettysburg

Address by Abraham Lincoln.

Bright gold straw bales.

Healthy calves playing.

Our Case 400 tractor, pulling an International Plow Chief 3 bottom plow, with a Minneapolis packer and pony drill.

Blue-winged Teal landing on the slough.

"Counting flowers on the Wall," by the Statler Brothers.

The warming sun coming through the east window of the Patrie Farm house.

And the most beautiful thing I remember was the kindness of my mother. Other kids liked my mom also.

Across North Dakota there are beautiful communities many young people have never heard of or been to. There are singers and poets, athletes and kind and honest

people.

North Dakota has been distracted by the national politics of the ugliness of fear, racism, vulgarity, greed and deceit. We have almost forgotten what is beautiful about the Peace Garden State, our flower the Wild Prairie Rose, and the pledge of our media to shine the light of truth so this democracy can guide its own destiny. In the ugliness of today, let's choose beauty again.

*Bill Patrie is a retired planner and economic developer having worked in regional and statewide positions. He is the author of "Creating Co-op Fever" printed by USDA as a service bulletin, and "100 Stories of Hope" a book about his interviews with 100 people in poverty.*

# Most of Devils Lake unaware of same-day flag proclamation for slain Guard member

Mark C. Robinson, DLJ Managing Editor

BISMARCK, N.D. – A proclamation was issued by President Donald Trump to fly United States flags at half-mast on Thursday, Dec. 4 to honor West Virginia Army National Guard Spc. Sarah Beckstrom who died after a shooting in Washington, D.C. a week earlier. However, the proclamation caught most of Devils Lake unaware as it was issued on the same day and only until sunset.

Communications Director Mike Nowatzki of Gov. Kelly Armstrong's office received the notice at 10:45 a.m. Thursday and in accordance with the proclamation, all government agencies in the state of North Dakota were directed to fly the United States and North Dakota flags at half-mast until sunset on Dec. 4, and North Dakotans were also encouraged to do the same at their homes and businesses, as a mark of respect for the slain National Guard member. "We sent it out as soon as I saw it," he said. "Our policy is that we follow presidential proclamations when it comes to flag directives."

Nowatzki said he has several email lists of

people and organizations across the state who are to be notified when a flag directive has been issued, and the notices are also posted on the governor's Facebook page. He acknowledged that the proclamation seemed last-minute. "It is unusual for a flag directive to be only on the day on which it is issued," he said. "It's probably the first time I've seen it done like that."

The late notice seemed to affect the response of most agencies and businesses in Devils Lake. A visual check of local government agencies during the day on Dec. 4., such as the U.S. Post Office, Devils Lake City Hall and the Lake Region Law Enforcement Center, as well as local businesses and clubs with flagpoles, showed most flags at full mast. The only public institution seen by this reporter to have observed the proclamation was Central Middle School.

By contrast, when Charlie Kirk was killed in a targeted attack on Sept. 10 at Utah Valley University, a proclamation was posted on the official White House website the same day for U.S. flags to be flown at half-mast until sunset on Sept 14. Kirk was co-founder of the conservative youth orga-

nization Turning Point USA who was a close ally of Trump.

Beckstrom, age 20, died from injuries sustained in a shooting attack Nov. 26 in Washington, D.C., that also seriously wounded a second National Guard member.

The proclamation posted on the White House website Dec. 4 reads, "As a mark of respect for the memory of (Spc.) Sarah Beckstrom ... by the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until sunset, Dec. 4, 2025."

The proclamation also directed that the flag be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all U.S. embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.



Central Middle School was the one of the few, if not the only, public institution in Devils Lake seen flying flags at half-mast to honor West Virginia Army National Guard Spc. Sarah Beckstrom who died of wounds sustained in a shooting in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 26. (Photo by Mark C. Robinson)

# Opinion submissions policy at the Devils Lake Journal

Devils Lake Journal Opinion Policy:

The Devils Lake Journal welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns (preferably on issues of interest to our readers, like local concerns). The writer's

full name, signature, home address and telephone number must be included with the submission so we can verify it. Letters with multiple signatures are discouraged. Address and telephone numbers are not

published in the paper. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for potentially libelous content, good taste, grammar, punctuation, length and spelling. Please, no more than one submission per

month! We have limited space in our print edition. Due to space limitations, we request letters to be 300 words or less and guest columns 800 words or less. Submissions should be sent to the Devils Lake

Journal by e-mail to loleson@cmpapers.com or mrobinson@cmpapers.com

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