

A watch needs to be kept so our freedom isn't taken

Independence Day gives us a chance, as individuals and as a nation, to "advertise" our stance on freedom. We hear dialog about other countries lack of freedoms and our own democracy. The greatest threat to our freedom in today's world is not from foreign terrorists but from within. Our fear of the "what ifs" threatens the very foundation of our democracy. The Patriot Act highlights the need for vigilance. The very idea of government having the right to view our library history or the receipts of our book buying should send up red flags. Finding terrorists must not become a witch-hunt and it must not come by way of compromising the very value system we have embraced for over two centuries. The amount of time and money spent on reviewing library history to yield a "person of interest" could be staggering. All of this is claimed as necessary because of 9/11. However, if the existing laws had been enforced the majority of the 9/11 perpetrators wouldn't have even been in the country. So how will more laws help when we can't even manage to enforce the ones we have?

Last week the Supreme Court upheld a previous court's ruling on allowing cities the authority to force the sale of private land for commercial enterprise.

The government has always had the right to force the sale of land for things deemed for the good of society like roads and schools.

But now the family home can be seized for big business. This could be a windfall for stores such as Wal-Mart, Target and others, but for the local small property owner it can be devastating, both financially and emotionally and it smacks of a rapidly evolving class system.

We may feel we have little to fear in middle America, but that which effects one will eventually effect all.

And now we have the issue of the flag burning amendment. "Ask the men and women who stood on top of the Trade Center," said Rep. Randy (Duke) Cunningham, of California, a supporter of this time-consuming proposal. "Ask them and they will tell you: pass this amendment."

And I ask you, in what way does this strengthen our country? This amendment would not and will not protect us from further terrorist acts. Once again more laws do not insure a more lawful society.

The way to raise respect for the government isn't about laws to protect an object; but rather laws which respect all people and promote compromise and diversity.

When we narrow the scope of what is acceptable we narrow the freedoms we so value.

To be sure, today's rulings may not effect me as an individual but they chip away at the freedoms so heroically obtained.

In commemoration of the Fourth of July may we all pay tribute to freedom for all.

— MaryKay Woodyard



It was a skunky kind of problem

What do you do when you find a skunk paddling around in your swimming pool?

We're not talking one of those kiddie pools you buy for the dog. This was an in-ground home swimming pool at a friend's home just outside of Blair, Neb.

The husband said he tried to rig a raft of sorts so that the critter could crawl up over the side and depart the pool and yard.

It sounded like a good idea to me, but he said, the skunk just kept swimming in circles, occasionally bumping into the contraption and not getting the idea.

The couple watched the little stinker as it swam slower and slower and finally went under in a flurry of bubbles.

At that point the husband got the dip net to remove the body and dispose of it. But, as every doctor knows, when death overtakes anything, all bodily fluids held in check are released.

One dead skunk equaled hundreds of gallons of fouled, smelly water.

After taking the dead skunk into the woods, the husband returned the dip net to the garage and started the process of draining the pool.

Even after the pool was drained, cleaned and refilled, it was two weeks before anyone would get near it, let alone in it, the wife said.

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



And the dip net was contaminated. The garage smelled like it had been freshly sprayed, and the net had to be destroyed.

We were in a bar in Kearney, Neb., trading animal stories during a break at the Nebraska Press Association meeting last week.

I really thought the skunk story topped the list.

The man who swore his cat brought a dead raccoon into the kitchen through a basement animal door, came in second.

The cat, he said, always liked to show off its kills, and he and his wife would frequently find dead mice, birds and rabbits in the kitchen. The raccoon, however, was incredible because, not only was it bigger than the cat, the feline in question brought it in twice.

After finding the treasure the first time, he said, he had removed it to a ditch across the road from his rural home.

The cat must not have felt that it got

enough praise for its work, because it went and retrieved the dead, headless raccoon and dragged it back into the basement and up the stairs a second time.

Well, that sure beat my dead rabbit story.

I did have a big snake story, however. As Steve and I were walking along a jogging path a few hours before, I heard a hissing sound and yelled. A big snake was holding its head up and moving as if to strike about 18 inches from Steve's leg.

We both jumped out of the way and turned to investigate.

"You're not a rattlesnake," Steve said.

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Sure," Steve replied. See, his head isn't triangular and he's making that sound with his mouth, not his tail. He has no rattles."

Sure enough, Mr. Bull snake was weaving back and forth making a rattling sound and trying to flatten his head.

"I'm a big, bad rattlesnake," he seemed to be saying.

Well, we didn't exactly pat him on the head and say, "Isn't that cute," but we did smile and go on our way.

He wasn't there when we returned.

It's OK to run a bluff, but it's a good idea to disappear as soon as you can. The guy you fooled might be going for a hoe.

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361

Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Cynthia Haynes editor and publisher
Veronica Monier staff reporter
Dick Boyd Blue Jay sports
Carolyn Plotts society editor
Sherry Hickman circulation
Rich Meyers advertising representative
Vicki Henderson computer production
Susie Marble computer production
Sonya Montgomery bookkeeping

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, Norton, Kan. 67654. Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



On the Prairie Dog

Steve Haynes



they could, then turn belly up and sink to the bottom.

And Lindsay, ever the biologist, was out there on her breaks, saving the frogs.

Not on her lunch hour, though: "Daddy, I might get salmonella."

This is the girl who used to play with baby snakes while watching television. She drew the line at insects in those days, especially spiders.

If she saw a spider, she'd scream and leave the room.

When she was teaching, though, her classroom was full of creepy-crawlies,

everything from hamsters to spiders to tarantulas to scorpions. She said the kids really got into her live lessons.

Now she has a boyfriend who hates anything that crawls or squirms, though, and we're not sure how she'll square that with her penchant for collecting creatures.

For now, at least, she's dedicated herself to saving the campus frogs, hundreds of them.

She said she caught and freed dozens from the pool the first day. She put them at a spot beside the library where leaking sprinklers create a little wetland.

"They did OK except for the ones that hopped out onto the brick walk," she said. "At 85 degrees, they don't last too long there."

Her mother asked today if she was still saving frogs.

"Of course," she replied. "If I don't, who else will?"

Good question.

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

★ Governor Kathleen Sebelius, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ State Sen. Ralph Ostmyer, State Capitol Building, Room 128-S, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ State Rep. John Faber, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500