

## Dissidents can't hurt us by burning flags

As we celebrate our freedom after this Fourth of July, one of the things we ought to be thankful for is that Congress hasn't yet passed a constitutional amendment banning flag burning. Sure, it's disgusting to see anyone burning an American flag. We love our flag. We fly it proudly. It honors the thousands who have died in defense of our Liberty. But burning our flag *cannot* hurt this country. Our enemies burn our flag because they cannot defeat us. Our detractors burn our flag because they cannot match the strength of our ideas. Sometimes, Americans burn the flag because they, mistakenly, believe our government or our system is the enemy. But part of our treasured freedom, enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution, is the ability to think and act as we please.

And as a political act, burning an American Flag is part of that. We're not in favor of flag burning, mind you. It's disgusting to see, whether it's a crowd in some Asian nation stomping on Old Glory, or protesters in Seattle. But the act of burning the flag just shows how strong the ideas behind it are. No flag burner can desecrate the memory of our Revolution or undermine the freedoms protected by our Constitution. Only we can do that. And by focusing on a non-issue like flag burning, we might hasten the day when those liberties slip away. The First Amendment protects not just majority speech, not just popular speech, but everyone's speech, everyone's thoughts, everyone's ideas, everyone's religion. That, unfortunate as it might seem, includes someone who would desecrate the American Flag to make a political point. So what should we do about flag burners? Ignore them. Let them be. No one buys the line they are selling. The act itself is a political turnoff. Those who sink so low have no following, no leverage, no success. We don't need a constitutional amendment to deal with them. We don't need to worry about them *at all*. Our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, our Liberty are a lot stronger than that. For that, we should be thankful. This country has more important problems to deal with. Let's turn to them.

— Steve Haynes

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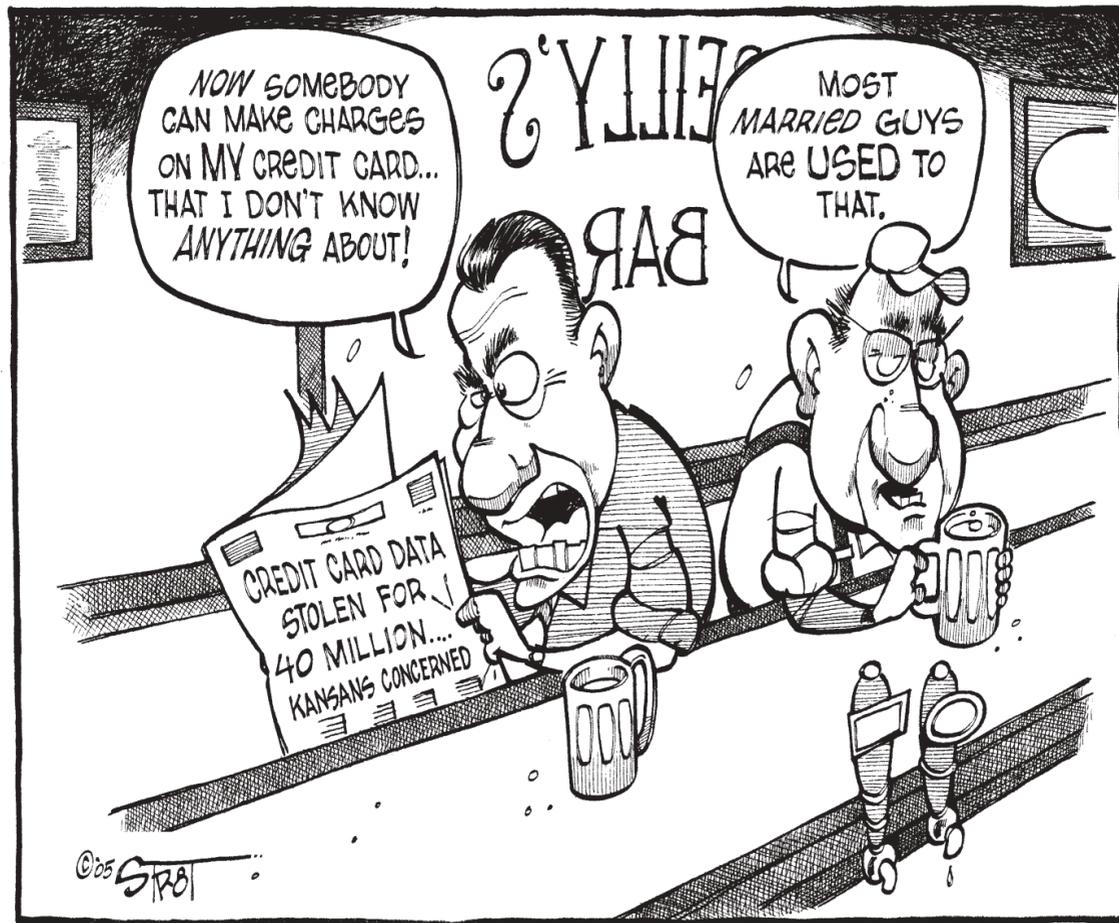


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## Happy birthday to brother, country

Oh, there are a few fields left, but harvest is, essentially, over. Farmers, hired hands, wives and kids, too, have all been pushing, pushing, pushing to get the crop in. It's an exciting time. But it can also be a tense time.

Perhaps, the rain over the weekend was just what was needed to give everyone a little breather so they can recoup before the final push.

Yields were better than expected in lots of cases, worse than predicted in others. But, all-in-all, harvest turned out to be OK.

The important thing, though, is that Jim got to play farmer for a week. Mostly, he drove a grain truck, but once, when Alan wasn't looking, he took the combine for a spin around the field, and managed to cut a bin full.

"It all came back to me," he said, "just like riding a bicycle."

Our friend is insisting on paying Jim for his help, but Jim had so much fun, I think we owe him.

Today is the Fourth of July; my brother Jim's birthday. It is the only brother's

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



birthday I am truly be sure of. Mom said when Jim was a little boy, he believed all the celebrating was just for him.

In 1976, during our country's Bicentennial, I organized a one-car parade to celebrate his birthday. The girls and I made posters that said, "Today is America's birthday...and Jim Kelley's, too," and "Happy Birthday Jim Kelley and the U.S.A." I recorded some rousing John Phillips Sousa marching music and enlisted the help of another sister-in-law to push "play" and her little girl, Cathy, to wave a flag.

A phone call to Jim's wife, Linda, made sure he would be outside at the designated moment. After all, it doesn't take long for one-car to pass in review. This had to be

synchronized.

We parked the car a block away from Jim and Linda's house to attach streamers and balloons, turn up the volume on the tape player and place ourselves on the hood. With horn honking, music blaring and a kid hanging out of every window waving a flag, we drove slowly by their house.

I think the entire spectacle had the desired effect. Jim Kelley was totally embarrassed and relieved when we turned everything off and came into the house and got out of sight. At least, it was a birthday he'll never forget.

Whether or not the Fourth was your birthday, I hope you had a good day. I also hope you took a moment to remember the soldiers of today, who are fighting for freedom on foreign soil. Their commitment is just as great as our ancestors who fought for this country's freedom almost 230 years ago.

My husband sings that Lee Greenwood song, "God Bless The U.S.A." And like the song says, "I'm proud to be an American."

## Fourth brings tears to her eyes

The Fourth of July, what a wonderful holiday. I have told people I don't like the fourth holiday, but it's only the noisy firecrackers I don't care for. The beautiful displays and the remembrance of what this day is, that I enjoy.

The holiday itself is so meaningful. I, for one, have tears in my eyes from joy whenever I see our wonderful flag. I even get teary sometimes when, at the piano, I play "America", "Star Spangled Banner", "Battle Hymn of the Republic", "God Bless America" and other patriot songs.

This Fourth of July I watched the movie George M., the story of the life of George M. Cohan, who wrote so many patriot songs and Broadway shows. That movie is so wonderful and flag waving.

When my son Alan was a student at Norton Community High School he was in the stage show George M. Brad Sterrett

### Memories

Sonya Montgomery



played George. I will not list the other stars for fear of leaving someone out, but it was a wonderful production, as I remember under the direction of Dave Stuewe and Rosetta McFarland, both still residents of Norton. The drama coach was Johanna Johnson.

Today, I re-read a poem by Thomas E. Wicks, Sr. In part it says, I am Your Flag. I was born on June 14, 1977. I am more than just cloth shaped into a design. The last of the poem is Keep alight the fires of patriotism, strive earnestly for the spirit

of democracy. Worship Eternal God and keep his commandments, and I shall remain the bulwark of peace and freedom for all mankind. I am Your Flag.

I also re-read parts of the Declaration of Independence which was signed July 4, 1776. The part we are most familiar with is "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The part that I feel some people misinterpret is the "pursuit" of Happiness. Some don't seem to want to pursue happiness, but expect others to furnish them with it.

Let us every day, not just on the Fourth of July support our soldiers, who fight abroad so we can have freedom here in this wonderful country, and keep our flag flying proud and high.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

### Church record tells story of pioneers

To The Editor:

A copy of the Church Record Book of the St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Long Island, has been placed in the Long Island Library.

This church was in existence from 1886-1950. The people were first served by a missionary pastor who traveled from Hastings, Neb., to Akron, Colo., along the railroad.

On his second visit in March, 1886, a congregation with charter members was organized in the Long Island Schoolhouse.

Funds were collected, the cornerstone

was laid in April, and the completed church was dedicated in September.

This is a story of pioneer people who had a strong faith and a great determination.

There were times of rejoicing and times of disappointments and struggles.

The church was closed in 1950.

If you were once a member or belong to a family who were members or if you are interested in Long Island history why not check it out?

Beth Ponstein  
librarian

## 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.