

### Western music lovers from Kansas start chapter

In the room there was a DJ, a farmer-stockman, a bunch of western music fans, some cowboys, an extension agent, an amateur historian, some poets, and numerous guitar players. What did this eclectic group have in common? They were part of creating a new group with a focus on western cowboy music and entertainment. In fact, they created a brand-new Kansas Chapter of the Western Music Association.

Ray Amerine and Roger Ringer are president and vice-president of the new Kansas Chapter of the Western Music Association. Both are leaders and long-time advocates for western music.

"My dad and grandpa had a ranch out by Syracuse and that's where I spent lots of my growing up years," Ray said. He went on to be a working cowboy all over the United States, from Montana to West Virginia. In 1980, he came to Kansas and bought ranch land near the rural community of Toronto, which has been his home ever since. Toronto is a town of 307 people. Now, that's rural.

Ray is a lifelong fan of western music.

"Most western music depicts my way of life," he said. "It's meaningful. So I like to promote cowboy western music, poets, and cowgirls. I do a lot of promotional work for Western Music Association and the Academy of Western Artists."

Of course, there are a number of western performers and members of the Western Music Association in Kansas. Ray had the idea of getting them together at the state level. He contacted Johnny Western, a famous western music performer and country music disc jockey in Wichita.

On Aug. 5, 2009, they convened a group of people interested in creating a Kansas Chapter of Western Music Association. The group enthusiastically agreed to move forward, so dues were paid and officers were elected. Ray Amerine became the president. Vice-president was Roger Ringer, a western performer from Medicine Lodge.

Unfortunately, Ray suffered some injuries and his health would not allow him to make many meetings.

"Roger's doing a great job for me," Ray said.

"When I got put up for vice president, I thought that wouldn't be so bad because the vice president doesn't generally have to do anything. Oops, was I wrong," Roger said with a smile.

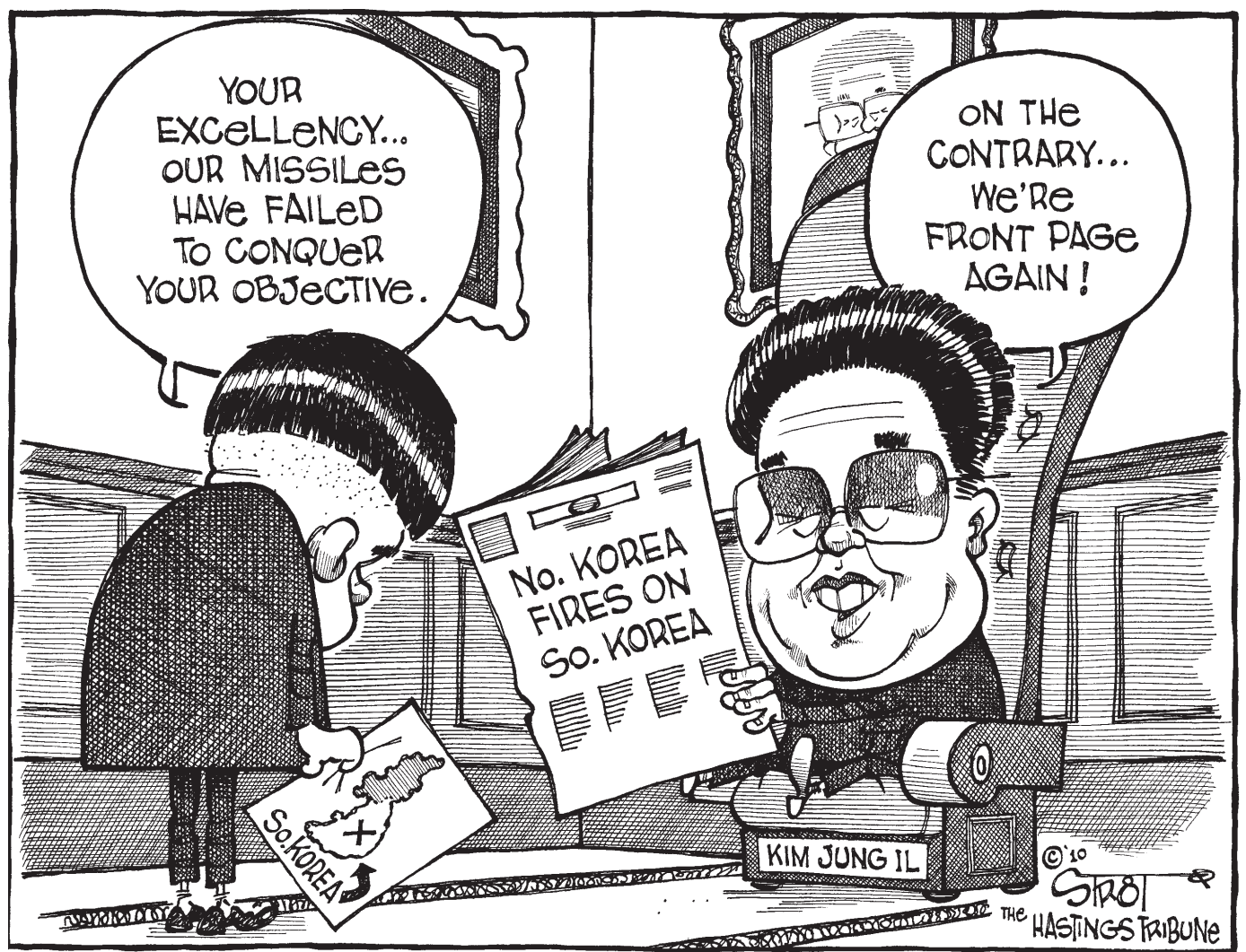
With Ray temporarily out of commission, Roger and the officers are moving forward with plans, including a special show in 2011 for the Kansas sesquicentennial, plus sponsorships, mentorships, an artists-in-the-schools program, and more. A delegation from Kansas will go to the national meeting of the Western Music Association in Albuquerque. We'll learn more about the Kansas sesquicentennial show in the future.

"We have great talent in our group," Roger said. "We want to help the artists, but we want to raise the environment for the fans also. The enthusiasm of the fans is infectious."

"The strength of our genre is family," he added. "We provide the kinds of shows that grandpa and the grandkids can both enjoy and not get offended by it. We want to retain that family atmosphere. Almost all of us have been told, 'we had to drag our teenagers to this show kicking and screaming, and now they really enjoy it.'"

A few months later, western music fans converged on Albuquerque for the national WMA meeting. When it was time to recognize the winner of the prestigious Bill Wiley Award, the name that was announced was none other than Ray Amerine of rural Toronto, Kansas. Congratulations, cowboy.

Ron Wilson, Director of Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development



### Are we paying more for less now a days

A few years back, they told me the country was short on electric power, so I used to read in the dark, by candlelight or the light of the silvery moon.

It wasn't long after that they raised my electricity rates because consumption decreased. Seems I wasn't the only one conserving - people all across the country were also reading in the dark.

A couple years later, they told me there was a water shortage. I could no longer water my grass or shrubs or wash my car. I flushed the toilet only when I was absolutely sincere. Then they raised my water rates because consumption was down.

Next, they told me there was an oil shortage so I stopped using my car and bought a French racing bike. Unfortunately, the price of gasoline continued to go up and stayed up.

I'm still riding my bike, but now I do it for fitness. I'm considering selling my car or buying a horse.

Every U.S. president I can remember has told us we could receive a tax break if we insulated our homes and outfitted

#### Insight

John Schlageck

them with the latest energy-saving windows. I'd already built my home that way nearly 20 years ago, so I lost out on that tax break too.

How come every time I try to do the patriotic thing, wrap myself in the red, white and blue and save the good old United States of America some green, I wind up with egg on my face?

Where is it written in our constitution or tablets of stone that each time there is a shortage or surplus, I must pay more for less?

I've decided to fight back. I'm going to stand my ground. After all, I'm a veteran. I served my country. I've paid into Social Security and income taxes for more than 40 years. I'm going to take my country back. If the tea baggers can do it, so can I.

The next time my electricity or heating bill goes up, I'm going to send a letter along with my next payment. My letter will read:

Dear Madam/Sirs & Bandits, Due to the worldwide shortages of money, except in the hands of the big banks that primarily benefited from the last government big-buck giveaways, I am unable and willing to meet all my expenses at this time.

Fortunately for you I have increased my consumption of electricity as you can plainly see by this horrendous bill you sent me. Because you are selling so much more electricity and there are millions of additional users at this time, I am certain you will see your way clear to lower the rates you charge me.

Accordingly, I am sending you exactly half of the amount you asked for. If you do not accept this payment within the next 10 days, I will be forced to turn off all my lights.

Sincerely, John L. Schlageck.

### From Thanksgiving to wedding vows

We've managed to make Thanksgiving leftovers last through the weekend. Except for tacos one night, I haven't had to cook a meal since then. You know what I'm thankful for? I'm thankful Jim loves cold turkey sandwiches. And, that he doesn't hesitate to make one anytime he's hungry.

-ob-

It's good I didn't have to cook meals because we had a wedding to get ready for. Yes, a wedding.

Son James and his fiance, Charlotte, made some changes to their wedding plans to allow them an extra day for a honeymoon. The change? Move the wedding day ahead two weeks.

So, we flowed directly from Thanksgiving into wedding mode. I've always contended that weddings take on a life of their own. And, as simple as they wanted it, the wedding still kind of "grew". We did a lot of things ourselves and used accent pieces we already had.

James wanted to decorate the cake himself so with very little help from me, he did a great job. I baked the cake using borrowed cake pans from my sister-in-law, Donna. After assembling the cake,

#### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



each other; caress each other; comfort each other. A wonderful message for couples no matter how long they've been married.

After the wedding, we went to a local restaurant where the reception was set up. When I walked in the manager whispered in my ear that the cake had fallen over. Well, not the whole cake, just the topper. But, the manager and her staff had repaired it so nicely, that no one, except James and I, even knew there had been a mishap. At this point, it was just funny and a memory of James and Charlotte's special day.

The day after the wedding, Jim and I realized we are grandparents, again. It's a 150 pound bouncing, baby boy named, Sean. He is Charlotte's 23-year old son and we couldn't be more pleased. We told him that he could call us Grandpa and Grandpa. Or, if that didn't feel right, Jim and Carolyn would do.

-ob-

The first real snow of the season has come and gone. Blown away by really cold winds. Winter is definitely here. Stay in and stay warm.



Dear Editor,

I really don't understand why the commissioners decided to stop putting lights on the courthouse. This has been a tradition for MANY years. As a child, I remember driving to Norton from Colby and being excited when we would get to what is now the bridge across the lake and could see the courthouse lights the rest of the way to Norton. I can understand why we can't have the lights draping from the top to the ground because of the trees. I can't understand why all of a sudden the trucks are too heavy for the cement. My real concern is what are the commissioners going to take away from Norton County next?

Rosalie Schulze

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Thumbs up to Heaven and Steve for taking special care with my newspaper. Called in.

Thanks to Robert Wyatt for putting lights up at the courthouse. It made Santa's arrival much more festive. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to Robert Wyatt for making sure there are Christmas lights up at the courthouse. Called in.

To render a Thumbs Up write:

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- nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

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