

Remembering that freedom is not free

Since the Civil War, Americans have gathered each year on Memorial Day to remember those courageous souls who answered the call to serve our country. We gather together to express our gratitude for their service. And we gather together to remind our children and grandchildren that because of their sacrifice, we have the opportunity to live in the strongest, freest and greatest nation in the world.

Capitol Views

Sen. Jerry Moran



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War - and on Memorial Day, we remember those thousands of servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice and never returned home. Their names are etched into the walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial - and forever etched into the memories of those who never had the chance to say goodbye. On this day, we remember that freedom is not free.

At the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., stands a Freedom Wall adorned with 4,000 gold stars to commemorate the more than 400,000 Americans who lost their lives in the Second World War. Many Kansans are represented by those stars - including one brave Marine who went above and beyond the call of duty in service to his country.

Sergeant Grant Timmerman was born in Americus, Kansas in 1919, and at the age of 18, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. As a tank commander, Sgt. Timmerman was assigned to the Second Marine Division in the Pacific Theater. On June 15, 1944 - known as D-Day in the Pacific - Sgt. Timmerman landed on the sands of Saipan, under heavy attack from the Japanese. Three weeks later - on July 8th - Sgt. Timmerman was engaged in a fierce fire fight with the enemy when his tank's progress was halted by a series of Japanese pillboxes and trenches.

Immediately, Sgt. Timmerman began preparations to fire the 75 mm gun mounted on the tank, but mindful of the danger from the muzzle blast to his comrades, he fearlessly stood up in the exposed turret and ordered the infantry to hit the deck. As a grenade hurled by the Japanese was about to drop into the open turret hatch, Sgt. Timmerman threw himself on top of the grenade, taking the blunt of the explosion, and saving the lives of his crew. For his selfless action and heroism, his country bestowed upon this brave man its highest honor - the Medal of Honor.

At moments like this, we are reminded of the cost of freedom. There is no group of people I hold in higher regard than our nation's veterans, who have dedicated their lives to serving our country.

Earlier this year, Senator Roberts and I introduced legislation in the U.S. Senate to award another Kansas war hero the Medal of Honor for his acts of valor in the Korean War. Father Emil Kaupan was born in Pilsen, Kansas in 1916, and served as a chaplain for the 8th Cavalry Regiment of the First Army Division. His courageous actions in the Korean battlefields saved countless lives, as he ran under enemy fire to rescue wounded soldiers. When Father Kaupan was taken as a prisoner in 1950, he continued to live out the Army Chaplain motto - "for God and Country." In the bitter cold of winter, Father Kaupan carried injured comrades on his back during forced marches through the snow and ice, gave away his meager food rations and cared for the sick who were suffering alongside him in the prison camp. When all else looked hopeless, the Father rallied his comrades to persevere - until his own death as a prisoner in 1951. This good man distinguished himself by laying down his life for the sake of others.

Today, our nation's young men and women are still risking their lives for the sake of others. In Iraq, Afghanistan and across the globe, our service members are fighting for those principles we hold most dear - freedom and justice. During the Easter holiday, I traveled to Afghanistan to meet with Kansas troops and thank them for their service. Their unyielding efforts overseas are protecting American lives here at home.

We thank God for giving us these heroes, and we stand committed to preserving this nation for the sake of the next generation - so they too can pursue the American dream with freedom and liberty. We are indebted to our veterans to do nothing less.

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran is a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Proud to be American!
Thank you Veterans!

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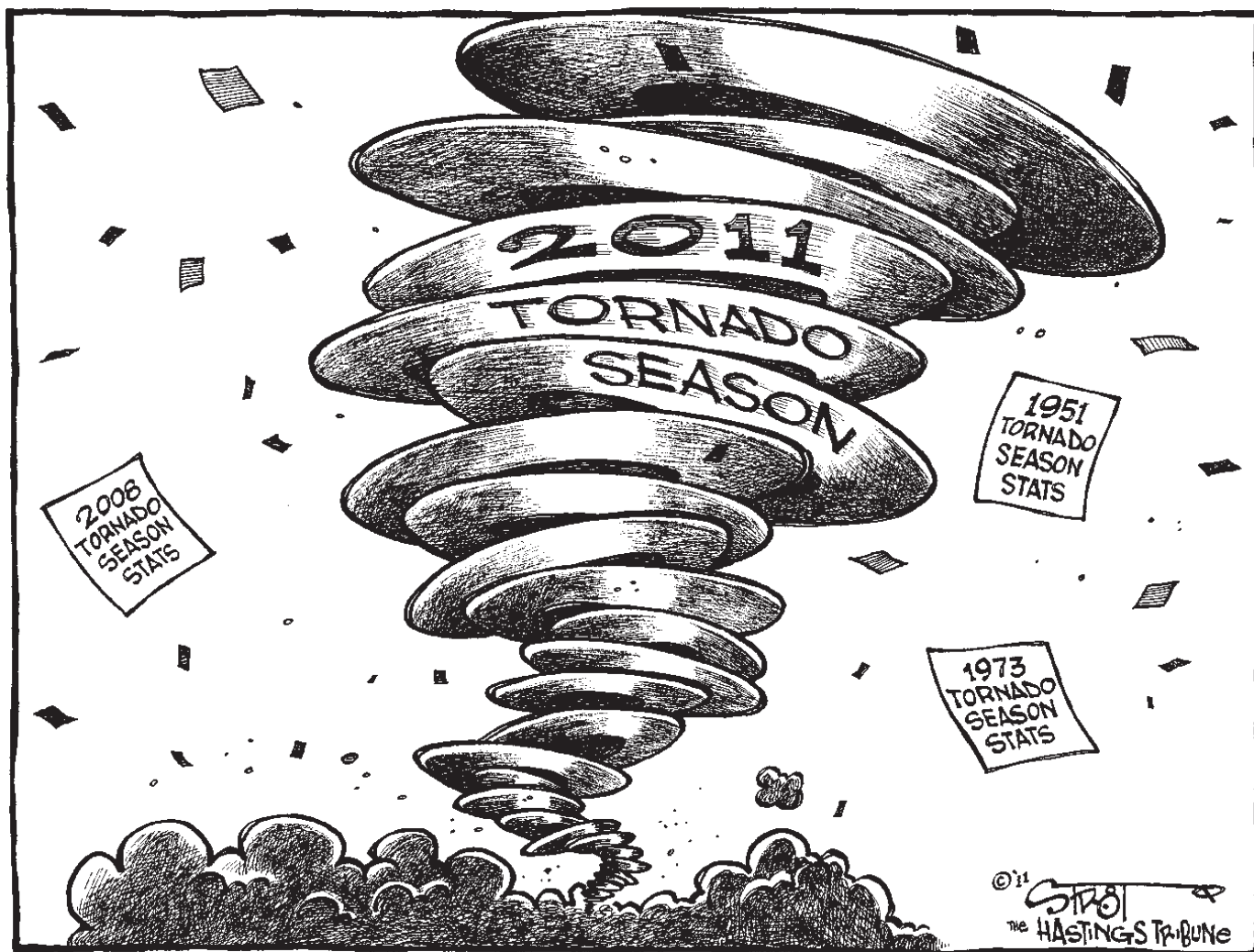
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Too much to do and not enough time

If I were vying for the Martha Stewart "Hostess of The Year" award, I would place dead-last.

My brother, Bob, came out for Alumni Banquet/Memorial Day weekend and I didn't see him more than an hour or two. It's a good deal he doesn't need much to entertain himself. Give him a book, a bright light; the remote control and he's good.

I warned him we wouldn't be home when he arrived Friday evening and said, "Go on in and make yourself at home." Which he did. However, we didn't get home until about 10 p.m. and, by then, it was time to go to bed knowing what a big day Saturday would be with Jim's 50th high school reunion on tap.

We were out the door before Bob got up; he had already left for the banquet before we got home to change our clothes for the evening; and he was asleep before we got home after the banquet.

I was on the radio Sunday morning so I didn't see anyone before I left. After the show I headed straight for the little country cemetery where Memorial Day services were planned with a potluck dinner following. That's where I actu-

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



ally had a chance to visit with Bob a little. But, then, it was over and he needed to head home. So, 'til next time....

-ob-

Our little town is about to "bust its buttons" with pride over one of our own. Brand new West Point graduate, Aaron Helm, spoke at two local Memorial Day services. He reminded us of how much we have to be proud of as Americans. He leaves for active duty soon and we salute him.

-ob-

Jim's class had a great reunion. And, I knew enough of them to have a great time, too. They started early Saturday morning with breakfast; took a short break before they gathered again for lunch; talked late into the afternoon; broke up with only

enough time to change clothes before dinner; and then met later at a classmate's home for more talking.

If we weren't talking we were eating so you know we had a good time. When I was a new graduate I thought those 50-year classes were old people and wondered why they acted so silly. Now, "I are one" and I think we look pretty good. As for the silly part I say, "just wait".

-ob-

The pin's holding Jim's thumb immobile was removed last week and his recovery is picking up speed. He can move his thumb, albeit stiffly, and he has feeling. The swelling is going down and the incision is barely visible. He starts occupational therapy this week and I know that will help, too.

Right now, he's just thrilled that he can play the guitar again.

-ob-

Perhaps it's just because they live far away now and will read anything from "back home" but, I was surprised by the number of people who took time to tell me they enjoy reading this column. To them I say, "Thank you."

Making money is the American way of life

Insight

John Schlageck

Food packaging today is really about marketing and making money - lots of it. Food producers care about competing for shelf space and selling their product. They're in the business of selling their packaged products to consumers. Can't blame them. It's the American way.

Environmental consequences, consumer satisfaction and selling a product at a fair and equitable price doesn't rank at the top of the list of priorities for food producers.

It's estimated the global food packaging industry is worth approximately \$115-billion-a-year and growing 10-15 percent each year. Anything between 10 percent and 50 percent of the price of food today can be attributed to packaging.

As the amount of packaging increases, so does waste and environmental costs not to mention the added costs to consumers. The plastic bottle containing your favorite soda or the aluminum can that holds your favorite brew costs more than the cola or beer.

On average, a beer can or bottle costs five, six, seven maybe 10 times the cost of the beverage. The same is true for sodas. It depends on the company and the product.

Don't get me wrong, I understand the need for packaging that provides a protective coating between the food product we may wish to eat and our environment thus keeping the contents safe and ensuring hygiene.

Some packaging prolongs the food life while other packaging is necessary for safe and efficient transportation. And lastly, God bless their souls, other pack-

aging is used to provide consumers with information and instructions for which there are some legal requirements. You know like the small, rectangular preservative pack inside a bag of beef jerky with the instructions, "Do not eat."

However all of this convenience, marketing and profit comes with a price - additional waste for this nation's landfills and the rest of the globe. In this country and other wealthy nations, a decrease in the size of households has resulted in more people purchasing smaller portions of food and that means more packaging.

A higher living standard around the globe has also resulted in the desire to acquire "exotic" foods from other lands and eat them. Transportation of such food and the ability to keep it fresh also costs more in packaging.

Another contributing factor is the desire for convenience food. You know processed, tasteless food you can pop out of your freezer, microwave and eat in a jiffy. So how much waste has this galloping packaging industry produced?

It's difficult finding information like this in our country. Seems like our folks in the food, beverage and packaging companies would rather talk about their proposed plans to eliminate waste in the future, never mind the past.

According to figures by the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the food,

beverage and packaging companies intend to eliminate an additional 2.5 billion pounds of packaging waste in the United States by 2020. These companies already have avoided creating 1.5 billion pounds of packaging waste since 2005, the trade group says. All told, the expected 4 billion pound decrease from 2005 to 2020 "represents a 19 percent reduction of reporting companies' total average U.S. packaging weight," the association reports.

On the other side of the coin, the volume of plastic products' waste and packaging amounts to approximately 75 billion pounds per year, according to the Butte Environmental Council, an education, advocacy and recycling organization in northern California. This BEC report was released nearly eight years ago.

To achieve a change toward more sustainable packaging, it's not just the packaging that requires alterations but also our lifestyles and habits of consumption.

While it's only a start, as consumers we can buy more local product that is better tasting, has less of an impact on the environment through reduced transportation costs and supports our local economies.

Support companies that use packaging most efficiently. Avoid buying disposable items, such as non-refillable razors, alkaline batteries, etc. Recycle. Buy in bulk. Reuse shopping bags and buy only recycled products.

Change comes with personal responsibility and the ability to look in the mirror and say, "It's up to me."



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