

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Good news prevails out in rural U.S.A.

If the news from Wall Street has you feeling blue, try turning your attention to places where the bulls have horns and the market is where you buy fresh produce.

In the agricultural economy, things don't seem quite so dire.

Crop prices are high.

There's been plenty of rainfall during the growing season, meaning big yields should be just around the corner.

Farm implement sales are strong, so much so that the price of used equipment is up because new stock is selling so quickly.

Plenty of community banks opted not to follow investment banks such as Lehman Brothers in the subprime loan craze and, therefore, are on secure footing.

The rural economy is a bright spot in an otherwise stormy global financial picture. ...

The credit crisis that threw Wall Street into a tailspin and prompted lawmakers to start fashioning the bailout plan might seem like it's happening in another dimension compared to the farm economy, where loan money is available.

As such, cash is flowing in the agriculture sector as farmers upgrade equipment and buy land. ...

The U.S. Department of Agriculture projected that the Consumer Price Index for food would rise 5 percent to 6 percent this year and at least another 4 percent next year as retailers continue to pass along high commodity and energy costs to consumers.

Still, it's encouraging to see the farm economy on an upswing, especially for those Kansans who remember the ag bust of the 1980s.

With so much bad economic news pouring in from around the world, it's comforting to know that there are good things happening closer to home.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*

Where to write, call

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

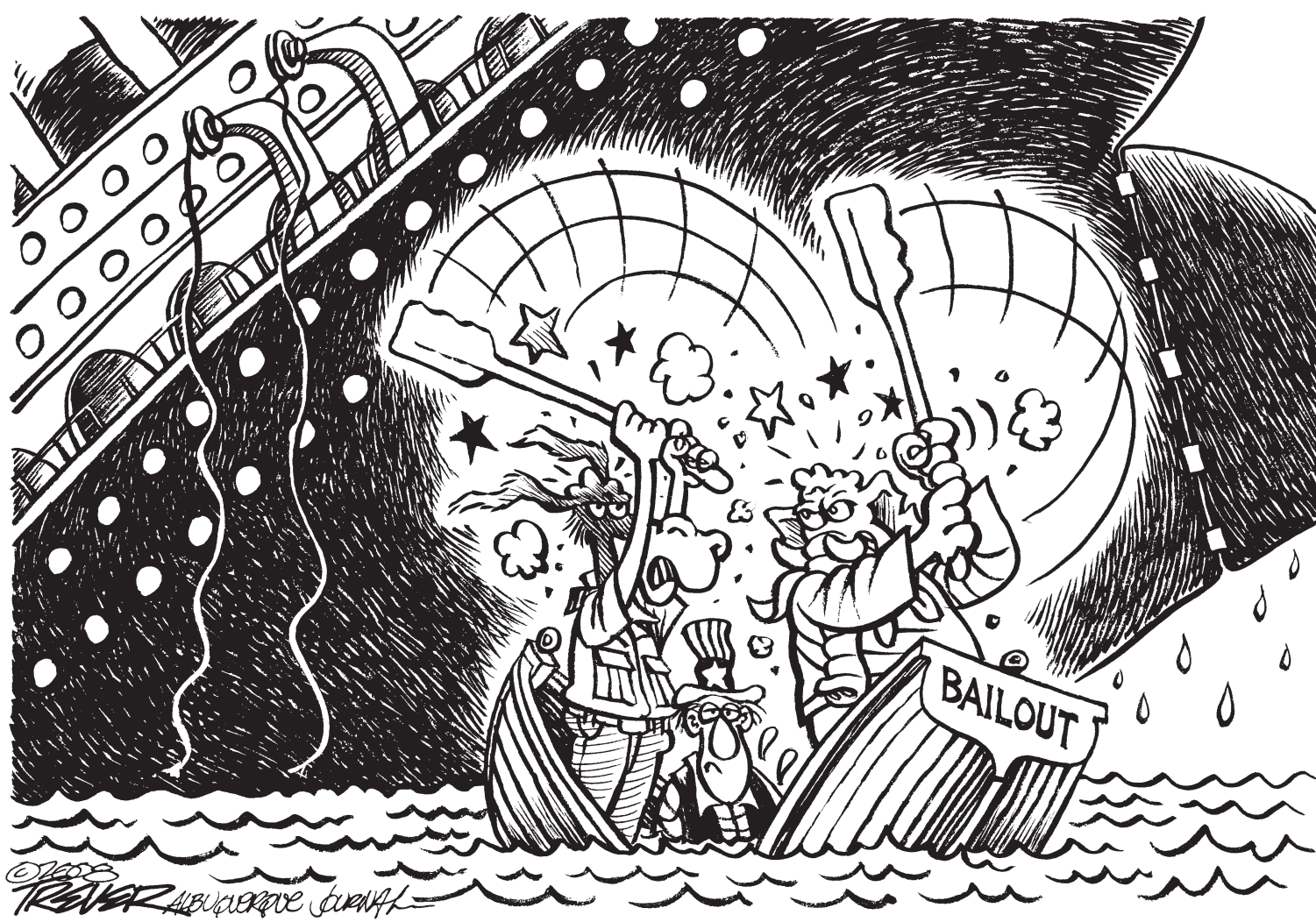
U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715, Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Roses ride home – with a little help

Steve ended his year as president of the National Newspaper Association on Saturday in fine fashion.

The convention in St. Paul was a success in terms of speakers, presentations and teaching sessions. Almost everyone seemed to have a good time and Steve shook so many hands he caught a cold.

I ended up with an overweight suitcase and six long-stemmed red roses.

After handing over the gavel to the new president, Steve got a plaque and a handshake. I got a half dozen American Beauties with greenery. Each rose had a little test tube of water attached to its stem so they would stay beautiful even without a vase.

We had flown to St. Paul with two pieces of carry-on luggage and one checked bag each — the maximum allowed without paying an extra \$50 to the airline.

But we collected books, plaques, just plain stuff and of course, six long-stemmed American Beauty red roses.

At the Frontier counter, I noted that our big checked bags weighed 55 pounds, but since the girls at the desk were admiring my roses, I hoped they wouldn't notice.

The one doing our tickets didn't, but her friend finally did.

Steve and I sat on the floor and dug stuff out of the big bag to put in a the smaller checked piece — shoes, a bottle of barbecue sauce (hey, I told you we got stuff) and some dirty clothes. There wasn't much we could do about



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

the weight of the suits and sports coats, but we gave 'er another try and both suitcases passed muster, barely.

With a silent prayer for the sauce in the wrong suitcase, we picked up our carry-ons and the roses and headed down the concourse.

I had a long, white flower box for the roses, but I left the lid off as I walked along. The eyes of every woman who saw them would light up. Steve was amazed at the response they got.

At the loading area, we walked on board without a murmur from anyone — two carry-ons each and that illegal box of roses.

We closed the box, and the flowers rode comfortably in the overhead bin on top of someone else's clothes.

At Denver, we deplaned and headed for the rest rooms. I was left to watch the luggage while Steve went. I set the roses on a nearby bench and pulled my purse from a carry-on.

Then we were off down the concourse. I read the sign at the end — No reentry without a boarding pass and going through security — and just as I stepped over the line of no return, it hit me.

I didn't have my roses. They were still on the bench way back on the other side of the airport.

The security man was sympathetic but firm. No meant no, none, nyet, nada.

However, Jim Campbell, a Frontier customer service scout, came to my rescue. He offered to go see if the flowers were still where I had left them.

In about 15 minutes, he was back with a smile and a box of long-stemmed red American Beauties.

He wouldn't take a tip, saying it was against the rules. The scouts, at least on weekends, are mostly teachers, he said. They push wheelchairs, help people with baggage and answer questions.

I mulled that over and at baggage claim asked another similarly dressed man what that meant.

I was told that people like the baggage claim man and Mr. Campbell work part time on weekends and holidays to help passengers at the airport. While Mr. Campbell's day job is a teacher, my friend in baggage was a middle school principal.

The roses, barbecue sauce and I all got home safely, thanks to my friends at the airport.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Real terrorists attack economy

We are faced by terrorists! Not only the Muslim and the hate-America ilk, but also the war hawks, greedy free-market economists and corporate structure.

The old story about the frog sitting in cold water with a fire under it quite aptly describes our present situation.

As recently as only a couple weeks ago, Sen. John McCain was still comfortable and thought our economy was basically sound and stable. The movers and shakers in the Bush administration, apparently, were also comfortable. They had been in control of the knob that controlled the burner, or so they thought.

They and their base were sitting quite comfortable, oblivious to the boiling water that was erupting in the financial markets and mortgage companies. They were, apparently, unaware that such a huge number of financed houses were in arrears on their payments. They were, apparently, unaware that health costs for a significant number of families had exhausted the family resources.

They were, apparently, unaware that when companies had to cut back on insurance benefits, it left many people without adequate insurance coverage.

Do you pay the medical bills or make payment on something that is beyond reconciliation with your present income available? You can survive repossession of material things, but you may not survive failure to take medicine.

They were, apparently, unaware that the "trickle-down theory" was not reaching the side streets. They were, apparently, unaware that applications for unemployment benefits



Ken Polland

• Ken's World

had skewed the actual unemployment figures. Many workers had used up their eligibility, therefore they didn't show up in the statistics.

They were, apparently, unaware that a great number of higher paying jobs had been exported to nations with cheaper wages, leaving lower paying service jobs as the only alternative for those who were left behind.

The quest for world domination through military action and threat has bankrupted our economy. Belligerence and greed were a greater threat to our nation as a whole than the 9-11 event. That fateful day provided the excuse for those who were itching to expand their economic interests in the oil-rich Mideast. It stirred the passions of the religionists who think God has appointed them to protect His nation of Israel from the pagan world that surrounds them.

Don't get me wrong! I think the 9-11 event was a dastardly act that required swift and just punishment for those who were behind it and who inflamed the actual perpetrators of the act to commit suicide in hopes of a great reward in the afterlife.

Al-Qaida and Ossama bin Laden were the driving force that influenced 9-11. We abandoned, or so it seems, our relentless efforts to

find bin Laden and directed all our resources and military prowess at Iraq. We have poured billions of dollars down the proverbial rat hole, and haven't any real evidence of lasting success.

We have a presidential candidate who thinks his opponent just doesn't understand! His running mate thinks she has insight into dealing with Russia because she can see across the Bering Strait and look right at them!

It is apparent to me that John McCain must not have understood the realities of the Main Streets and the side streets of America. Apparently, Sarah Palin doesn't realize that their isn't a whole lot of negotiating going on in the remote part of Russia that she can gaze upon.

If we survive till the election, perhaps we need to unseat the war hawks, free-market economists and corporate lobbyists. Even if we can do that, don't expect miracles.

We can't just hire a back hoe to dig us out from under the debris of the deregulation, deficit spending and power grabbing of the last eight years. Ignoring safety regulations requires emergency action, but emergency actions seldom address the cause of the accident.

It will take time to heal the deep wounds of this financial crisis. It will take time to make corrective adjustments to prevent another collapse.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
j.stewart@nwkansas.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

Steifon Matthews - Graphic Design
smatthews@nwkansas.com

Jessica Estes - Classified Ad Desk
jestes@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Elizabeth Brock

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