

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Let's celebrate our Bill of Rights

Monday, Dec. 15, is the 217th anniversary of an important date in American history. Do you know what it is?

I know, you've got a lot on your mind today with the economy tanking, Christmas just around the corner and the pressure mounting to come up with a New Year's Resolution or two.

But if you can find a few minutes in your busy schedule during the next week, you might want to give a "hip, hip, hooray" to the memory of George Mason. For it was Mason who made sure that the Bill of Rights became the law of the land in the fledgling United States of America on Dec. 15, 1791.

Mason, a Virginian, insisted upon the inclusion of individual rights as part of the U.S. Constitution. He had written the Virginia Declaration of Rights that was adopted along with the Virginia Constitution and refused to sign the new national constitution because it lacked such a listing of individual freedoms. He went home from the constitutional convention disillusioned and as an outspoken opponent of ratification.

Fortunately for us, his stubbornness paid off, the Bill of Rights was adopted and we continue today to enjoy the individual freedoms spelled out for every citizen in those first 10 amendments to the Constitution.

Freedom of speech. Freedom of religion. Freedom of the press. The right against self-incrimination. The right to a speedy and public trial. The right to bear arms. The right to a trial by jury. Protection against unreasonable search and seizure.

Those and other rights remain some of our most cherished freedoms more than two centuries later.

These rights have stood the test of time and guarantee every citizen — even those who hold views the rest of us might find abhorrent — the right to speak out, the right to be represented in court by counsel, the right to practice any religion or no religion and the right to be safe from unwarranted intrusions into their homes and lives.

The Bill of Rights may not have been on the front burner when our Founding Fathers debated the new Constitution, but George Mason made sure that the country did not move forward without those guiding principles spelled out.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to those who chose not to remain silent, who refused to be intimidated and who stood firm until our nation's foundation was laid properly.

George Mason indeed earned his title of "Father of the Bill of Rights."

Join me today in a "hip, hip, hooray."

— Doug Anstaett

Doug Anstaett is executive director of the Kansas Press Association in Topeka, and formerly a prize-winning editorial writer at the Newton Kansan and The Topeka Capital-Journal.

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Free Press, its staff or the owners.

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Husband takes off for the city

He left me. The dirty dog left me with all the Christmas stuff to do, a daily paper to put out and the menagerie to feed.

Mind you, this isn't the first time Steve has taken off and left me behind to cope with the daily problems of home and businesses. And this time at least, he isn't off to some exotic locale while I toil away here at home.

Last time he took off it was to China — Taiwan to be exact. Before that, he's left me for trips to the United Arab Emirates, Nicaragua and Tunisia.

This latest exciting adventure is taking him to Concordia, Emporia, Lawrence, Kansas City and Columbia, Mo., so I'm not too bent out of shape this time.

Actually, the trip was supposed to be just to Columbia for a National Newspaper Association meeting and then on to Kansas City for an Associated Press meeting. But since he was headed that way anyway, he said he'd stop by and see my mother in Concordia. Since he was going that way, I decided he should stop by to see his sister and brother in Emporia and take some food I had to our son in Lawrence.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

I went with him on this trip last year. Same itinerary — Concordia to see Mom, Emporia to see in-laws and Lawrence to see son then on to Columbia.

Since I'm not on the board of the newspaper association, I didn't have to attend their meeting. Instead I got to spend the day in exciting downtown Columbia. It was snowing lightly and the temperature was about 10 degrees.

I spend the entire day in a coffee shop addressing and signing Christmas cards. I downed two lattes and a giant chocolate brownie. I upgraded my table twice as I moved away from the front door, which let in freezing air every time someone came in.

So, this year we decided that maybe I could stay here and take over the job of putting out the Colby paper for a week.

Hey, no sweat. I've been publishing weekly newspapers since 1980. I figured I could handle one small daily for a week.

But, I figured without all the hoopla over Christmas and our animals.

The cats had vet appointments. The dog had an eye infection and had to have antibiotics twice a day — and I didn't get my Christmas cards addressed.

I did get the outside lights put on the bushes out front and even decorated the little cedar tree in the back yard, but that's another story.

You'd think I'd have lost weight with all the running I've been doing this last week. Nope, I gained three pounds.

Meanwhile, I'm waiting for Steve to reappear. 'Cause he left me and the dog and the cats and all that work.

And we know who's doing the work. Ain't the dog.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of NorWest Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Food safety is about kitchen, farm

With the holiday season upon us, ensuring our families eat the safest, tastiest and most nutritious meals may be the most important consideration during this special time together.

So, where do the most significant food safety problems occur — on the farm or in the kitchen?

If you guessed the kitchen, you're probably one of those wise consumers who may already be well on your way to a wholesome, healthy eating lifestyle. On the other hand, if you guessed the farm, chances are your kitchen may be a place where food is mishandled or poorly prepared.

There is unnecessary anxiety about food safety in our country today that is diverting attention from this nation's leading public health problems including cigarette smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, AIDS and failure to use life-saving technology such as seat belts, smoke detectors and screening techniques to detect disease at early, treatable stages.

Today, consumers can be confused about the food they eat. And why shouldn't they be?

Americans are continually bombarded with information about what they should and should not eat. These mixed messages about our food supply can be frustrating. Many health professionals will tell you too much time, energy and resources are spent worrying about minute or nonexistent pesticide residues on foods such as fruits and vegetables. They believe such en-



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

ergy could be better directed at making sure each individual family and the public eats a variety of foods in moderation.

There is little doubt pesticides in significant quantities may be toxic, but the U.S. government has in place a highly efficient system to ensure the levels of residues in foods remain extremely low — if they are there at all. The Environmental Protection Agency sets these tolerances and the Food and Drug Administration evaluates our produce to ensure tolerances are not exceeded.

Minute levels of pesticide residues detected in some U.S. produce have been found to pose no hazard to the health of children or adults, according to nutritionists.

Trace amounts of pesticides are so minuscule it's virtually inconceivable they can have any health affect. There is always that chance some individual may have a sensitivity to any kind of chemical — hair gel, tooth paste, pesticides — but these are generally isolated cases.

There has never been one documented case

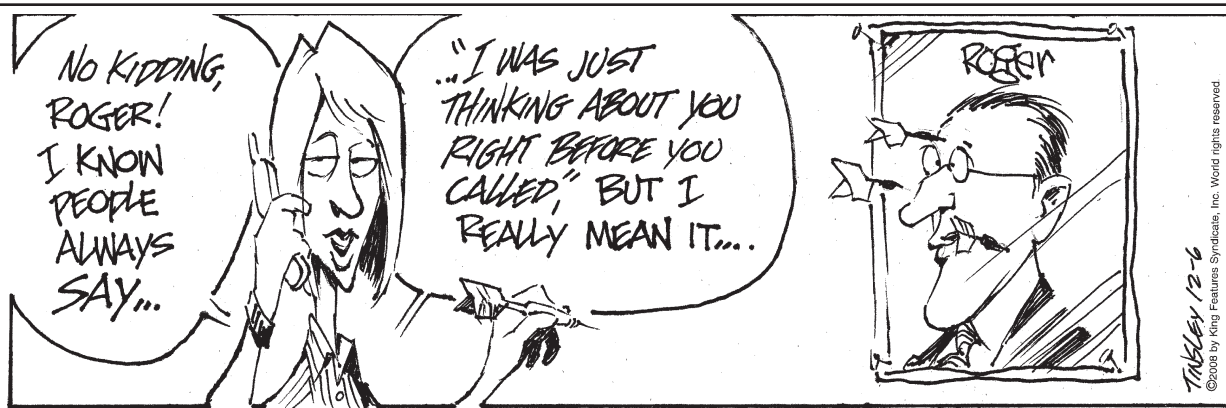
of ill health linked with the regulated and approved use of pesticides.

The claims these tiny residues cause cancer are irresponsible and unscientific. The only evidence against these agricultural chemicals is derived from laboratory studies where rodents exposed to large amounts of these substances manifest an increased rate of cancer. There is no relevance of this finding for the minute exposure to human beings.

While proponents of organically grown food like to tout their produce as safer because it contains no pesticide residues, today's shopper need only purchase their produce and other foods, wash them thoroughly and cook them properly.

Remember while you are preparing the many meals your family and friends will enjoy this holiday season that our country enjoys the safest, most wholesome food in the world. The safeguards are in place to ensure our food is protected. Making sure we safely prepare food for our loved ones is our responsibility.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley