



Other Viewpoints

Nod to Sunflower defeat for clean air

A public agency and a private utility again have failed to protect the health of Kansas residents when it comes to building a large coal-fired power plant.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recently bowed to pressure from Sunflower Electric, endorsing the utility's request that it only meet older and weaker pollution rules when it builds a new facility in western Kansas.

That irresponsible decision comes from the state department charged with protecting the health of Kansans who live downwind of the plant. But it's sadly par for the course. Led by Robert Moser, it has looked like little more than puppets of Sunflower in recent months.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency must be prepared to step in and eventually ensure that the utility adhere to strict, new anti-pollution rules that took effect in early January.

Sunflower's plant – whose added electricity reportedly won't be needed to meet even out-of-state customer demands for another decade – presumably will operate long into this century. Given the delays in construction, the utility has plenty of time to agree on its own to use the most modern technology.

Unfortunately, the utility and its partners have strongly resisted endorsing cleaner air upgrades. It's even more disturbing for Kansans that their own Health and Environment Department has gone along with this charade, despite its clear duty to be a tougher watchdog.

— The Kansas City Star, 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 roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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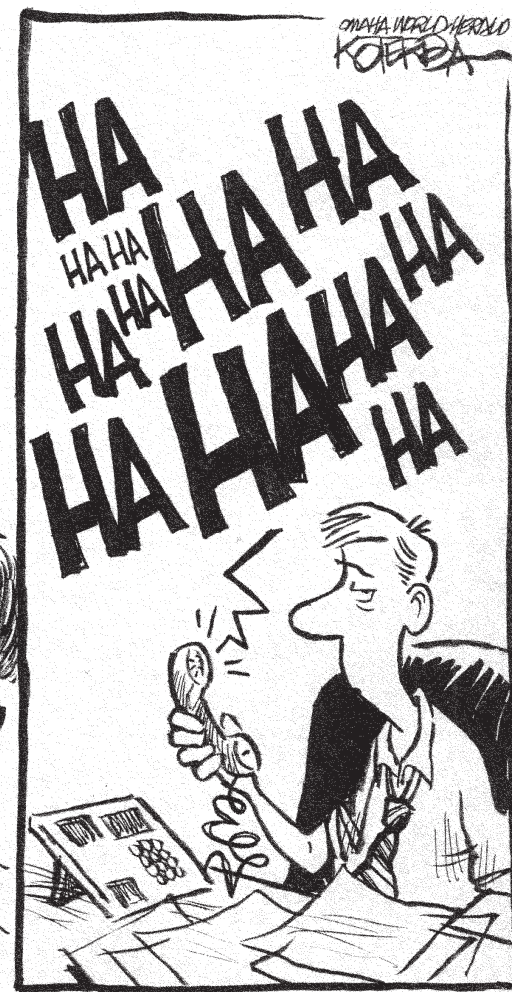
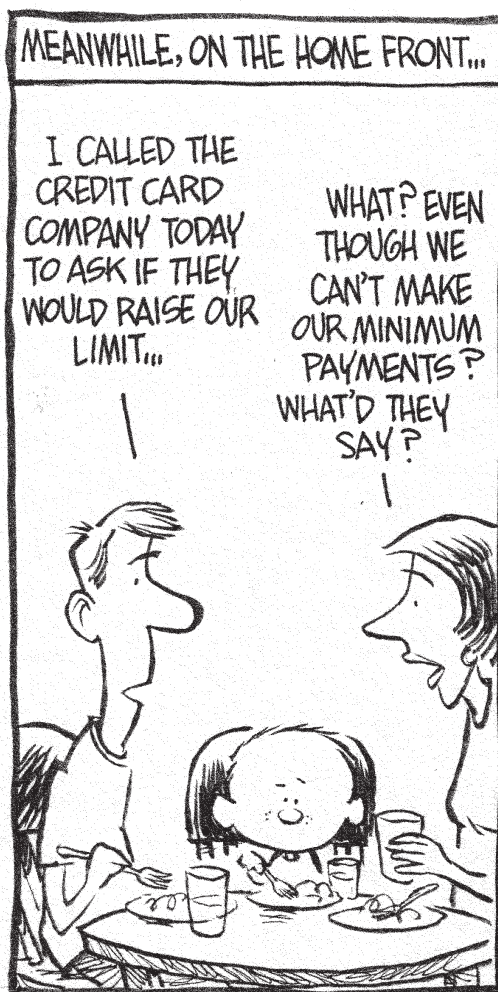
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County fair actually turns out to be fun

I find I enjoy covering the county fair.

I never went to a county fair before I graduated from college. I grew up in the city. Actually, we didn't think of Loveland, Colo., as a city in those days. It felt like a small town: you knew tons of people, your neighbors were friendly, there wasn't much traffic. There were only two streets between my house and the edge of town so it almost felt like I lived in the country.

In reality it was a growing part of the I-25 Metropolitan Area. These days it's a city of 60,000 that feels like a town of 160,000. Traffic is heavy everywhere, there's constant road construction and nobody seems to know their neighbors.

Still Loveland is the site of the Larimer County Fairgrounds. So it's not like I had to drive an hour to get there. I just wasn't interested in going. I didn't have animals, I wasn't in 4-H and didn't really have any friends who were.

The county fairgrounds were on the other side of town. I remember being in the fair parade at least once with either the Boy Scouts or the marching band, and though some of my friends went to the carnival at the fair, I never did.

My cousins lived out in the country and they participated in the fair. They trained dogs for the 4-H shows. But by that time I was going to school at Colorado State University and had little time to go see them compete. Besides, I wasn't an agriculture major – though my college used to be Colorado A&M – so what use was there in going?

Closest I came to a fair was probably Frontier Days in Cheyenne, although my family



Kevin Bottrell

Simple tricks and nonsense

mostly went for the air show since my uncle was in the Wyoming Air Guard.

Then I moved to a real small town. Right out of college I went to work as a reporter in Torrington, Wyo. For those who have never visited, it is a town of about 5,400 near the Nebraska border. It's not unlike Colby, except it has fewer retail stores, being closer to bigger cities like Scottsbluff, Neb., and Cheyenne, Wyo. Goshen County, of which Torrington is the seat, also has several smaller towns scattered around just like Thomas County.

That was where I attended my first county fair. The Goshen County Fair is just as big a deal as the Thomas County Fair. There were lead-in events like the 4-H dog show and fashion revue. The main attractions, of course, bring lots of people from all over the county, and the town practically shuts down for the fair parade.

Their fairgrounds, however, are a little different from Colby. For one thing, they have an indoor arena. That thing was a nightmare to shoot pictures in. It had terrible lighting and you had to wait until whatever you were shooting came to the fence. Then you had to use the flash and hope you weren't disrupting whatever was going on too much. I much prefer Colby's outdoor arena, even though it's much

easier to hold a rodeo when it's snowing if you have a roof.

In any case, covering a county fair was certainly an adjustment for me, having never gone to one before. I quickly learned to watch for kids wandering around the parking lots leading goats and to watch where I'm walking. I learned that washing stations are always good for a photo and to find the shady spots.

I also learned to endure the smell of so many animals in one place, though to the credit of the kids, the smell at this year's fair wasn't too bad.

What I learned most of all from that trip to the fair was the value of it. Not only does it provide the newspaper with a lot of great photos, but it is great for the kids who are participating. I can always tell when I go to the judging shows or walk around the 4-H exhibits how much work the kids have put into competing in the fair. Competition can sometimes bring out our best work, and though some kids don't do it for the ribbon, it's nice to see that hard work get recognized.

The fair also brings in out-of-towners for something other than to go to Walmart. The carnival, rodeo and races are a huge draw. Driving by on Friday and Saturday nights at this year's fair, there was hardly a parking space to be found.

So here's to another successful Thomas County Free Fair.

Kevin Bottrell, news editor of the *Colby Free Press*, is a Colorado State University graduate who believes that the middle road is often the high one. Contact him at kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Times change, rural theft a reality

In years past, most homes in rural Kansas were never locked. In fact, if there was a key around the house, few family members knew about it.

After living in a larger community for several years, I'd automatically lock my car without thinking whenever I used to visit my parents in rural Sheridan County.

The first few times my dad saw me do this he scolded me like I was still his boy of 12.

"What in the world are you doing?" Dad would ask. "Who in the devil do you think is going to drive away with that car of yours out here?"

Unfortunately, times change. Like their city cousins, farmers and rural homes are increasingly being burglarized.

In farm thefts and vandalism, mailboxes head the list as favorite targets of vandals and thieves. Cars, windows and signs are also frequently damaged or destroyed.

As in town and cities, stereos, televisions, computers, cameras, appliances and small objects such as jewelry, hand tools and guns are stolen in rural home burglaries. These items are readily converted to cash, and represent most sought after burglary items.

Farm machinery, automobiles and livestock aren't beyond the scope of thieves in rural Kansas today.

The following suggestions may help prevent theft in your home, whether rural or urban.

- Make a complete security check of your home.
- Always maintain a lived-in look by keep-



John Schlageck

Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

ing the lawn trimmed, leaves raked and the snow shoveled.

- Keep bushes and shrubs trimmed. Untrimmed shrubs make good hiding places for burglars.
- If the neighbors can see the back of your house, you'll enjoy less privacy but be safer.
- Keep doors and entryways well lit.

Replace burned out bulbs immediately. Burglars do not like lights.

- Whether you are at home or away, keep garage doors closed and locked.
- Check the locks on all doors. Replace inexpensive locks with the dead-bolt type.
- When you move into a house have the lock tumblers changed by a locksmith.
- Check all windows to make sure they are locked.

Secure all basement windows. In older homes, basement windows are easily forced.

- Place exterior lights in a strategic spot outside the house.
- Interior lighting is also important. Keep the living room and bathroom light on all the time whether you are home or not. Inexpensive timers are useful for turning various lights

on or off.

- Install a wide-angle viewer in your door to allow you to recognize all visitors.
- Mark all your possessions with an engraving or invisible marking pen.

Whenever you're going on a trip for more than a day or two, let your neighbors know about your plans. They'll be happy to swing by your home a couple times a day and they'll also know you're not there and call the police if they believe things aren't on the up and up.

Remember, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Don't be any easy target for thieves and burglars on your home, farm or ranch. Follow these time-tested methods for avoiding potential heartache.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowl- edge and passion.



Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

