



Other Viewpoints

Kansas is due birthday party

When the 150th birthday of Kansas came and went Jan. 29, it seemed as if apathy and frugality were going to rule out any big public party during the year. So it was a wonderful surprise to learn about the Kansas 150 Festival planned for Oct. 8 in Wichita, and the civic activism and collaboration behind it.

The state has been saluting the milestone all year in fine and interesting ways, including the *Eagle* series "Kansas 150: Celebrating Who We Are" in print and online at Kansas.com.

But surely a sesquicentennial calls for a parade, and now the 34th state will have that – a Kansas Sunflower Parade along Douglas from Wichita East High School to Century II – and more. For Oct. 8 also call for a fair with food, art, vendors and historic re-enactors, and a "Home on the Range" concert featuring more than 60 musicians.

As Ted Ayres, vice president and general counsel of Wichita State University and one of the organizers, put it: "This is part of that can-do spirit. It's important for our history and it's important for our future that this milestone be acknowledged."

Indeed, how would it have looked to Kansans preparing to mark the state's 200th anniversary in 2061 to have found little mention of the sesquicentennial in archives from our time?

It would have looked as if Kansans, circa 2011, didn't care about their history or their state, didn't appreciate how its birth endorsed freedom and its people created an unrivaled place to grow wheat, build aircraft and chase dreams.

Thanks to the efforts of all involved, Kansas will now have a celebration worthy of the state and occasion – a "once-in-a-lifetime party that Kansans won't want to miss," as Gov. Sam Brownback said.

Brownback plans to be there, along with Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer. The Kansas Association of Counties and the League of Kansas Municipalities have endorsed the event. Old Cowtown Museum will help host. To find out more, visit www.ks150.org.

Now, the organizers will need communities, businesses, civic organizations, schools and individuals from around the state to get involved, by building floats or providing marching bands, or by helping cover costs estimated to exceed \$100,000.

That may sound like a lot of cash to raise in a matter of months, but consider that Wisconsin raised \$8.5 million for its sesquicentennial in 1998, Minnesota raised \$1 million for its own in 2008 – and Oklahoma spent more than \$30 million in state funding to mark its centennial in 2007 with a big concert, parades, fireworks and hundreds of projects across the state including a Capitol dome.

In its participation and attendance, the Kansas 150 Festival should not look like Wichita's party but reflect the breadth of the state's more than 82,000 square miles.

Maybe the outreach shouldn't stop at the border, either. Kansas is one of only 10 states President Obama hasn't visited since taking office, despite multiple invitations to fly in and school himself on Wichita's aviation-manufacturing sector. If the president came Oct. 8, he not only could see the city of his mother's birth but join the state's 150th birthday party.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



President by any other name is still boss

Language changes, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, but always, it changes.

Time was when the head of a company was called president. He might be outranked – and perhaps reported to and could be fired by, the chairman of the board – but day to day, the president was the boss.

This applied not just to corporations and big institutions, but many little firms as well. To be sure, some small business people were satisfied enough to be called "owner," while other groups had their own unique titles. Cooperatives were headed by general managers, hospitals by administrators, trade associations and charities by executive directors and so on.

But your bank had a president and so did General Motors.

Then, sometime around the 1980s, mushy language began to invade the field. Someone decided that it wasn't enough to be president and declared he was chief executive officer, and the term caught on, and pretty soon, every firm had one.

To make matters worse, at some, the chairman was the chief executive, and at others the president. Pretty soon the vice president of finance was the chief financial officer, and from



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

there, things took off.

Good or bad? It's hard to say. The terms are descriptive enough, if perhaps a little stuffy. But it wasn't enough to just change the terms. Someone noted how long a title "chief executive officer" was and began using the initials. Now the president was known by an acronym, and the terms CEO or CFO were bantered about with abandon.

Then people began just using the initials when they talked about executives. The president wasn't the president of the company, not even the chief executive; he was the CEO. Columnists started referring to the evils of "corporate CEOs." In effect, the initials lost track of the words. They became the word.

Even the leaders of smaller outfits started referring to themselves as CEOs. It became a status thing; if you didn't have initials, you

adopted some. And no one wanted to be just a president, an executive director, a general manager or a comptroller.

Some CEOs had only a few minions. Like a banana-republic dictator awash in gold braid or a small-town sheriff weighed down with the four stars of a full general, they affected the fancy title with glee.

Apologies to my CEO friends, but I'm not sure this has added to the clarity of the language. Of course a CEO with four followers is no more overblown than a president with three. The initials just seem more of an artifice.

It'd be interesting to stop a dozen people on the street and see how many of them could say what the acronym means. Not a majority, I'd guess.

I've been happy to not be a chief anything. I could be chief news officer, I suppose. But I'm editor and publisher, and if I need a corporate title, it's president. Someone has to take that job; it's the law.

I'll leave the initials to others.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

National science will be less science

Does knowing how to play chess help you solve a problem with your car? Or does knowing how your car works mean you can automatically solve a chess problem. To anyone with common sense, the answer is "no." You have to both know how to play chess and how a car works to solve those problems.

But the education school folks who control national education policy in this country do not believe that. And the "Next Generation" science core curriculum pushes less science, not more.

In June, the National Research Council review panel (with very few representatives from the science community) turned over their recommended "framework" to Achieve, Inc., one of two education reform organizations receiving the \$350 million from the U.S. Department of Education to develop assessments for the language and math Common Core.

Achieve will add details to this framework, but they are clear they do not intend to cover the ever-growing breadth of science concepts that are essential to being a good citizen, voter or patient.

The dead hand of education schools was obvious in the earlier 1996 National Science Education Standards also developed under the research council. Accusing American teachers of teaching science that is "a mile wide and an inch deep," the national science standards eliminated human anatomy and physiology, botany, zoology and microbiology from the secondary biology curriculum.

In 2005, during our last round of Kansas science education standards changes, some pesky evolution-doubting wording was taken out, but the Kansas Science Standards were also aligned with the national standards and eliminated that vital content as well.

Fortunately, science was not part of the No Child Left Behind high-stakes testing and most Kansas biology teachers could continue to teach the fuller concepts without the curriculum alignment forced on language and math teachers to make adequate yearly prog-



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

ress. University teacher training programs in Kansas have mostly kept their biology teacher course requirements in these fields. But if this "Next Generation" national curriculum continues down its announced track, and if the same pressures to teach-to-the-test are applied that we have endured for language and math, "less science, not more" will be enforced with a vengeance.

The new science framework is loaded with weasel words that attempt to cover its inadequacies. Students will "actively engage in science practices in order to deepen their understanding of core ideas in science over multiple years of school." They have a "new vision" centering around teaching only the "key ideas" with "anchor points" and "grade bands."

The framework clearly expresses the education school views that there is so much science that we might as well give up and look it up online: "The continuing expansion of scientific knowledge makes it impossible to teach all the ideas related to a given discipline in exhaustive detail during the K-12 years.... But given the cornucopia of information available today virtually at a touch – people live, after all, in an information age – an important role of science education is not to teach 'all the facts' but rather to prepare students with sufficient core knowledge so that they can later acquire additional information on their own."

Information is not knowledge for the same reason that librarians are not teachers. People cannot look up the solution to an automotive problem when they do not know anything about how a car works, nor understand the solution should they accidentally get it. Same for

human anatomy, animals, diseases, etc.

While the rest of the world is moving ahead teaching more science, not less, only the United States continues to look to the education schools rather than scientists and water down our inadequate science teaching even more.

The State Board of Education still has the option to take back control of Kansas science education and ditch this anemic national science curriculum. But the train is leaving the station with Kansas on board.

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