

## Other Viewpoints

### Listeria points to larger problems

Listeria-tainted cantaloupe from Colorado have killed at least 28 people, making it the country's second-deadliest food-borne illness outbreak since the Centers for Disease Control began keeping records nearly 40 years ago.

Given unanswered questions and the need to avoid future outbreaks, officials in Washington and Colorado are right to scrutinize the episode.

Last week, Colorado Agriculture Secretary John Salazar told *The Denver Post's* Michael Booth that the state intended to assert stronger oversight over its cantaloupe industry.

Potential steps include a label identifying those melons whose growers meet certain safety criteria, including outside audits and pathogen testing prior to shipping.

As is increasingly the case, however, the state lacks the money to implement a certification program and instead would likely pass the cost on to growers.

That's an unfortunate but necessary step. The state's cantaloupe crop is reportedly an \$8 million annual business and it has no doubt taken a blow in the wake of listeria-tainted melons that were traced to Jensen Farms near Holly.

While there is no evidence that practices at Jensen Farms are widespread, the steps Salazar is recommending to ensure safety and to rehabilitate the industry's image strike us as good ones.

Meanwhile, the House Energy and Commerce committee sent a letter earlier this month to the farm's owners, asking them to come to Washington to brief the committee on the listeria outbreak.

Jensen Farms officials have been silent in the wake of reports that detailed the conditions that allowed for the spread of listeria at its packing facility, and it would be helpful to get a better handle on their operations.

A Food and Drug Administration report faulted the ways in which the facility sorted and cooled cantaloupe.

Further troubling, in our view, is a third-party audit shortly before the tainted melons were shipped. That audit noted the questionable methods used for cooling and sorting, but still delivered a 96 out of 100 score.

That begs the question of whether this review was an aberration or if the audit process needs overhauling.

The lab that oversaw the Jensen Farms audit has said future examinations will include swab tests for pathogens such as listeria.

In investigating the issue, Congress should consider making those tests mandatory.

But Congress also must take a closer look at the whether food safety rules are going far enough.

FDA officials acknowledge that under new rules passed in January, facilities like Jensen Farms are inspected only every five to seven years.

That makes a review of the auditing process — often paid for by farmers or grocers — and other safety measures intended to protect consumers all the more important.

— *The Denver Post, via the Associated Press*



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### Electronics celebrate 150 years

Imagine this: the age of electronic communication is just 150 years old.

In all of human time, maybe 8,000 years of recorded history, thousands of years of prehistoric civilization, perhaps millions of development, in all the eons since creation, men have been able to communicate instantly with the next county or state for only 150 years.

Oct. 24, 1861, marks the completion of the transcontinental telegraph line, linking the East Coast with California just months after the start of the Civil War. Most immediately, the line bound California and the West to the Union, but the implications were far greater.

An era had begun. Soon, the invention of the telephone, radio, the teletype and other electronic devices would snowball connectivity. Within a few years of each invention, a device would become commonplace, and the world would change. Again and again.

It's likely no one alive 150 years ago could have envisioned the impact of this revolution. Talking to someone across the continent, or in Europe, and hearing their voice might have seemed too much.

But the tide had begun to come in. Television and computers would push it higher. The Internet and satellites would bind the world as it had never before been connected. Instead of weeks to get a letter across the continent or across the sea, messages would fly in seconds.

The change is striking: Much of it has occurred in the 65 years since World War II, a watershed time for invention. Then, soldiers



Steve Haynes

#### • Along the Sappa

had to wait weeks or months for letters from home, despite the priority the military put on mail. Today, you can pick up a phone and call your friends or family on station in the war zone.

Things we accept as normal today, from joint replacement to cancer therapy, would have seemed impossible just a few decades ago. Men imagined space travel and intercity flight a century and a half ago, but these were mere dreams, science fiction.

In our lifetimes, my generation has seen these things come to pass. We remember a world without cell phones, computers, vaccines for childhood illnesses, easy, accessible travel, transistors and miniature electronics.

We can tell our grandchildren about phones with no dials, wired to the wall. Our good ol' days include two-lane roads and streamliners, propeller airliners and black-and-white television.

And, compared to all who went before, we grew up in a world of luxury and wealth, in a time of peace and prosperity unequalled in all of history.

Where is all this leading us? To wreck and ruin? Will we exhaust the Earth's resources, foul her air and water, overcrowd her continents and bring ourselves and society full cycle? Will poverty and decline become the norm?

Or will progress continue unabated, humanity solving our problems even as new ones appear?

Will we travel to other galaxies, or be bound to our terrestrial home? Will we imagine a great frontier and dominate the old one? Who's to say?

But history tells us the human condition has, in fact, improved throughout time. We are more civilized today, we have more, we have the ability to create more than ever before.

And, despite all evidence to the contrary, war and pestilence are fading away. Social scientists and statisticians find that we live in the most peaceable era in time. We certainly live with the most technology.

You have to believe that human ingenuity will keep us one step ahead of our mistakes, help us solve our problems and reach even higher. That's the curve of history, not even on linear, but always higher.

Just imagine what might be, 150 years from today.

*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.*

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### Postal service bonds scattered families

Now that Andy Rooney has retired from his perch as CBS News' "curmudgeon-at-large," I may volunteer for that role. Currently hospitalized, that 92-year old veteran managed to tickle viewers of "Sixty Minutes" for more than 30 years. I sure hope he rallies. Even though I rarely agreed with him, his long tenure alone invites respect. And it's a tribute to our free republic that you can make a career of getting in peoples' faces. Gaddy, Oscar the Grouch or Socrates, this doesn't happen in tyrannies.

I'd like to audition for the role of Curmudgeon with a gripe of my own. Too many of my friends are forever knocking the post office. Every time the cost of a First Class stamp goes up, howls of protest go up higher. Question: Is there any other country where you can put so much information in an envelope for so little?

Think of what the postal system has meant to American freedom. Go all the way back to Ben Franklin. He was a Royal Postmaster before we gained our independence. He used the mail to stoke the fires of freedom. So, masterfully, did Samuel Adams, inventor of the Committees of Correspondence.

More recently, in the 1970s, the mass media was monochromatically liberal. Without Rush, without the Internet, how could conservatives compete? How could we even survive?

The U.S. Mail, that's how. National Review and Human Events and direct mail appeals from conservative organizations used the mail to keep the flame of freedom burning.

I am forever being told to get with the 21st Century. Lots of my young friends want to be Linked In with me. I apologize to all of them, but I don't know how. Send me an e-mail. Better yet, send me a letter. Or even a post card.

I've been sending letters and post cards to family and friends for 40 years. I can get

### Other Opinions

#### • Robert Morrison Family Research Council

400 words on a post card. Pretty good for 29 cents.

Now, I'll admit that my good wife has a point when she complains about surly folks behind the counter at our local post offices. It is she who mails the packages and buys the stamps in our family. Remember, postal workers: you are civil servants; it helps to be civil.

But I've never had anything but good relations with our many letter carriers over the years. In forty years of letter writing, I've never had one go astray. That includes weekly letters to a friend in prison and letters to brave U.S. soldiers in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. I'm still astounded at how fast the mail goes through.

There's an eloquent tribute to the U.S. Mail inscribed on the National Postal Museum in Washington. It's part of the Smithsonian.

Messenger of Sympathy and Love  
Servant of Parted Friends  
Consoler of the Lonely  
Bond of the Scattered Family  
Enlarger of the Common Life  
Carrier of News and Knowledge  
Instrument of Trade and Industry  
Promoter of Mutual Acquaintance  
Of Peace and of Goodwill  
Among Men and Nations

(From "The Letter," by Dr. Charles W. Eliot,

former president of Harvard University, as revised by President Woodrow Wilson)

Bond of the scattered family. I like that line best. I get to see our grandson often, but not as often as I'd like. So I send him weekly postcards. He's only two and a half, but our daughter reads them to him. I wasn't sure what impact, if any, they were having.

Today she told us he takes the subscription cards from her magazines. They're the same size as my post cards. He "reads" them to her and ends each one with "Love, GrandDad."

I love to Skype. I love e-mail. I love blogs. And I'm going to learn to LinkIn, or whatever. But there's nothing quite like holding a letter that was handwritten by someone you love, a message from one heart to another.

That's why the Epistles of Paul will never grow old. God's loving Word was written to us by hand. And God's Word will stand forever.

Robert Morrison is senior fellow for policy studies at the Family Research Council. He earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia and served at the U.S. Department of Education under Secretary William Bennett.

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### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley



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