

commentary

from other pens...

Independence Day lives up to prediction

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — When Thomas Jefferson held the first Independence Day celebration at the White House 200 years ago this week, he underscored the fervent prediction made by John Adams in July 1776. Adams was convinced the day the U.S. declared independence would be remembered with celebrations and “illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward forever more.”

On the 225th anniversary, as rockets flash-freeze the Washington Monument in bolts of light, Adams’ prediction stands unchallenged.

The fact Jefferson, the declaration’s author, and Adams, its foremost advocate, both died on its 50th anniversary, July 4, 1826, cemented the date in the national mind. In 1831, former President Monroe, one of the last of the revolutionary generation, also died on the Fourth of July.

Over 225 years the day has been marked by fireworks, cannon salutes, the blasting of ship horns and the pealing of church bells, band concerts, parades, orations, political rallies and re-enactments of battles.

An extraordinary compilation of the events of the Fourth of July has been assembled by James R. Heintze, a librarian at American University. Posted on the university’s Web site, it includes an effort to document where presidents were and what they did on Independence Day.

On July 4, 1861, for example, President Lincoln reported to Congress on Confederate defiance of the government’s insistence on continuing the Union. He reviewed 29 Army regiments arrived from New York. And he raised the Stars and Stripes to the top of a 100-foot flagstaff.

Two years later, as news tumbled in of the decisive Union victory at Gettysburg and the fall of the Confederate fortress at Vicksburg, Miss., Lincoln postponed his Independence Day remarks until July 7.

On the Fourth of July, Lincoln said, “the enemies of the declaration that all men are created equal had to turn tail and run.”

The celebration was suspended through most of the South after the Civil War. Its gradual restoration over the next 40 years marked the growing reconciliation between the two formerly warring sections.

Daniel Webster, the future senator and secretary of state, delivered the first of many Fourth of July orations in 1800 as a student at Dartmouth College. He gave his last in 1851 at the laying of the cornerstone of an expanded U.S. Capitol, imploring his country not to abandon the Union.

President Polk presided in 1848 over the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument. Like so many American ceremonies marking new beginnings, it was held on the Fourth of July.

That was the date chosen in 1828 when John Quincy Adams turned the first shovel of earth for the building of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Adams was the first president to hear the Marine Band play “Hail to the Chief,” a musical salute that proved more enduring than the canal.

Fireworks were used to give Independence Day a bang and a roar. The intentions were good, but the consequences were often tragic.

Some 8,000 people were gathered on the South Lawn of the White House on the evening of July 4, 1845, when a stand of 12 rockets suddenly toppled. The exploding missiles went sideways, not up, and sliced through the spectators. Two people were killed.

In 1909, Washington and other cities declared their first “safe and sane” Fourth of July celebrations aimed at ending fireworks mayhem.

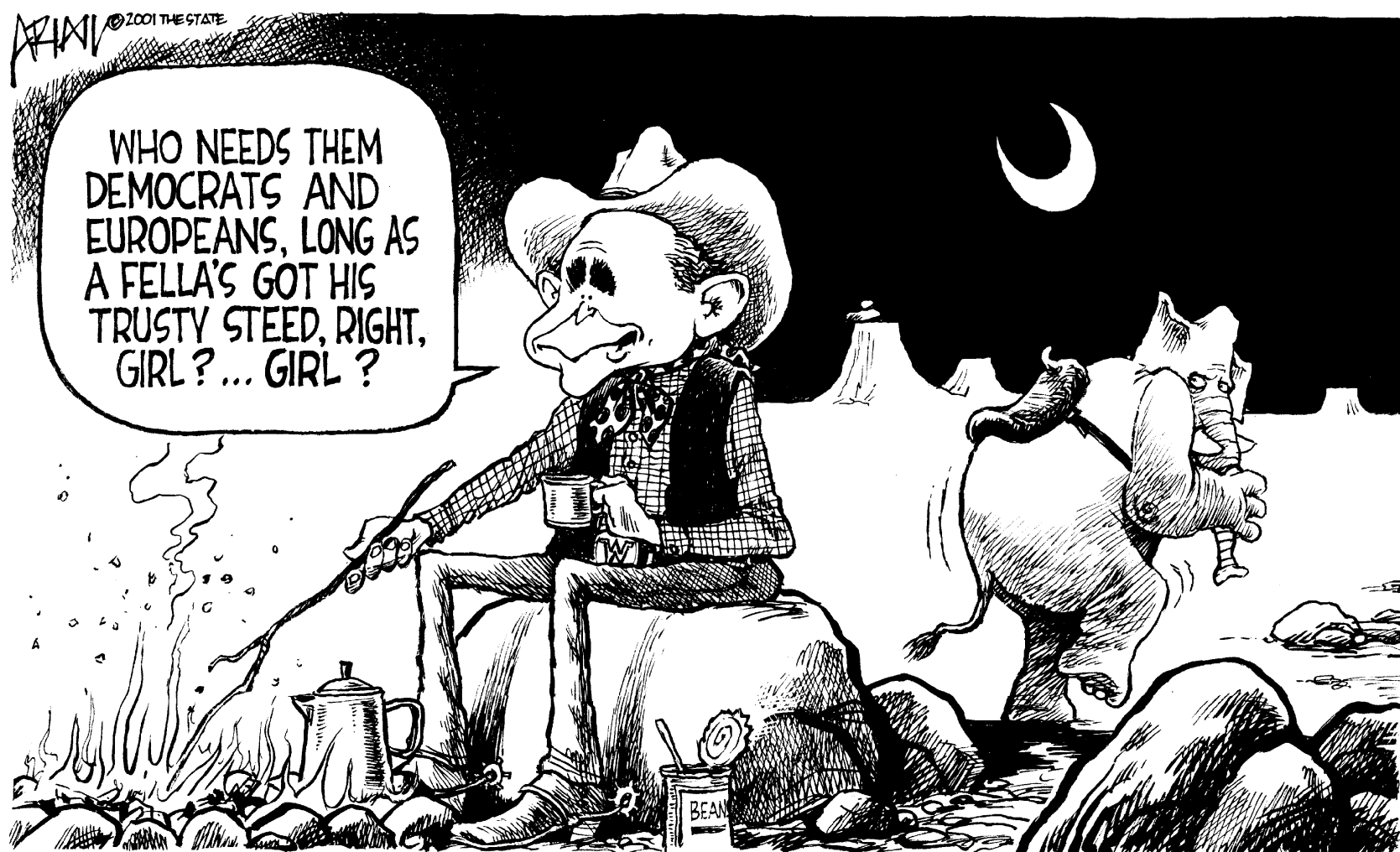
From the 1920s onward, the Washington Monument became the place where Americans by the hundreds of thousands celebrated the Fourth.

But on July 4, 1962, President Kennedy chose Philadelphia’s Independence Hall to muse on the spirit of liberty.

“The theory of independence is as old as man himself, and it was not invented in this hall,” Kennedy said.

“But it was in this hall that the theory became a practice; that the word went out to all, in Thomas Jefferson’s phrase, that ‘the God who gave us light gave us liberty at the same time.’”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington’s history for more than 30 years.



June is month for traditions — how was it?

I don’t know about you, but for all practical purposes, my June 2001 is about over.

I guess I do know about you; your June is about over too!

So how did yours go? Glad school’s out for the summer? Not glad? Are you celebrating an anniversary? Involved in a wedding? Dreading the summer? Just generally blasé about the whole thing?

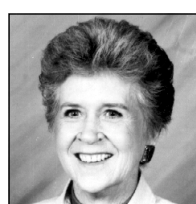
Well, hang on. Summer officially arrived in June, but it will be over before you know it, and then you can join the rest of us in griping about the cold winter!

June. The traditional month of weddings. When did that happen? Why is June so much more desirable for a wedding than any other month? Who knows?

So many traditions are kept for the sake of tradition and no other reason.

Well, I’ll follow along. Here are some quotes about love and weddings:

- 1) C.S. Lewis: “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Bolt it up safe in the casket or



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• commentary

coffin of your selfishness, but in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place outside heaven where you can be perfectly safe “from the dangers of love...is Hell.”

2) Unknown - “In matters of love, the beginning of the end often turns out to be but the end of the beginning.”

3) Josh McDowell: “Don’t marry someone you can live with; marry someone you can’t live without.”

4) Comic by Groginski shows couple at the altar. Minister asks, “Do you promise to give loving, honoring, and cherishing a darn good try?” Some couples don’t even commit to that much.

5) Dear God Kids cartoons - a. Kid picking at a daisy: “Dear God, You love me. You love me. You love me.” b. Kid hugging a puppy: “Dear God, thanks for thinking up love.”

6) Unknown: “Love makes a man think almost as much of a woman as he thinks of himself.” I think this might be true in reverse also.

How about these words to a Whitney Houston song? Interesting, if not completely theologically sound. It’s called The Greatest Love of All:

“I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride. To make it easier, let the children’s laughter remind us how we used to be.

“Everybody’s searching for a hero. People need someone to look up to. I never found anyone who fulfilled my needs. A lonely place to be and so I learned to depend on me.

“I decided long ago, never to walk in anyone’s shadow. If I fail, if I succeed, at least I’ll live as I believe. No matter what they take from me, they can’t take away my dignity. Because the greatest love of all is happening to me. I found the greatest love of all inside of me.

“The greatest love of all is easy to achieve. Learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all.”

And if by chance that special place, that you’ve been dreaming of, leads you to a lonely place. Find your strength in love.”

If you have any comments about my column, or ideas please e-mail me at lornagt@nwkansas.com.

Alaska: Small business as big as the state

Recently, I accomplished another long-term objective. Alaska was the only state in the U.S. I hadn’t visited. Now I’ve seen them all, and Alaska is a grand one.

Alaska is breathtaking. You soon run out of words to describe what you see. A friend may have come up with the best description of its native beauty. He said, “It’s a new postcard everywhere you look.”

It is beautiful. You can see rustic fishing villages dating back to the 1700s, crystal clear lakes, flowing glaciers, the tallest peak in North America and ancient totem poles. There is abundant wildlife in millions of acres of wilderness, tundra and forest.

It is big. There are 570,374 square miles of Alaska which means there is room within its borders for all of Texas, California and Montana, with space enough left over for all the burroughs of New York City.

It is bold. There are more than 100,000 glaciers, and numerous mountain ranges with thousands of snow-capped peaks. In the summer, day lasts all night, and in the winter, night lasts all day. In Fairbanks - the second largest city in the state - temperatures have varied from -66°F to 99°F.

There’s more. Bears, the 800-mile Trans Alaskan Pipeline, caribou, the Inside Passage, great salmon fishing, gold mines, challenging sled-dog races and baseball games at midnight. And there’s Barrow - the northern most settlement in the U.S. - where the sun doesn’t drop below the horizon for more than 80 days between May and August, spectacular water falls, whales, bald eagles, skiing, the brilliant northern lights and about 600,000 coura-



don taylor

• minding your own business

geous men and women.

Small Business is Big

While in Alaska, we worked with business owners in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Muldoon. It was easy to see that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in our 49th state. These hardy business owners are functioning in America’s last frontier.

I’m convinced that it takes a special breed of people to thrive in adverse climates and remote locations with limited numbers of customers and high costs. Yet many of these bold souls do just that.

What a joy it was to share information with them and to learn of their methods and ways. They are creative, resourceful, and adaptive. They endure the long winters and live with a passion during the long summer days. They find unique ways to make money and position their businesses.

They receive valuable assistance from the Alaska Small Business Development Center Network. These dedicated men and women provide free, confidential counseling and low-cost training programs.

I’ve met a few hundred SBDC personnel in the last decade and I’d rate this team at or near the top.

They were knowledgeable professionals with great attitudes and a genuine desire to promote and nurture Alaskan business.

A Word from a Friend

My family and I observed three general business weaknesses in the areas we visited. First, many owners were focused inwardly instead of on their customers. Many discussed their businesses, dreams and plans with us, and the word “customer” didn’t come up often. I still encourage all businesses to become customer motivated.

Second, customer service was marginal much of the time. There were a few exceptions, but for the most part service was below par. My advice would be hire attitude, train constantly and reward those who serve customers well.

Finally, keep your promises. Be there when you said you’d be there, be open the hours you posted and deliver what you promised. We experienced several broken promises in our 9-day stay.

In closing, I have one word for anyone who has not yet visited our biggest state. “GO.” You won’t be disappointed.

Don Taylor is the co-author of Up Against the Wal-Mart. You may write to him in care of Minding Your Own Business, PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.

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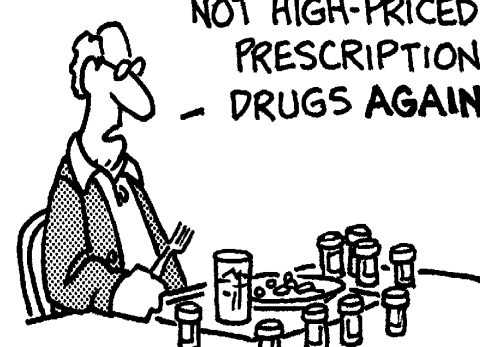
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