

from our viewpoint...

First Amendment celebrates 212 years

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances."

The first amendment to the Constitution, along with the rest of the Bill of Rights, was ratified Dec. 15, 1791 — 212 years ago — and people have been trying to figure it out ever since.

Northwest Kansas and Norton are no exception. The folks here have been trying to balance our Midwestern Bible-belt traditions against the expectations and needs of others. Probably 95 percent of the population of Northwest Kansas are Christians of one variety or another. There are undoubtedly a sprinkling of agnostics, a few atheists, some Jews and probably a few people who follow Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius or one of the other Eastern religions.

How much does the majority have to give up to not offend the minority?

If we lived in Saudi Arabia, where the state religion is Islam, we would keep a low profile.

In the United Kingdom, where our government if not most of our people, takes its heritage, the Church of England as the official religion. Folks with other religions are tolerated, but not encouraged.

When the Founding Fathers were drafting the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, these important, controversial and demanding documents, they fought a lot. They argued and bickered. They complained and rewrote. They had a hard time. Everyone wanted it his way, so they tried to put together a set of rules that gave the maximum freedom to everyone, even though they were highly suspicious of the Catholics and Jews and didn't even recognize that there were such things as non-Judeo-Christian religions.

Back in northwest Kansas 212 years later, we are fighting the same battles that raged in Philadelphia.

Is it right to have the children in a public school sing religious carols? Does the beauty and history of the music outweigh any religious scruple?

Should we quit calling the school holiday Christmas vacation and start calling it winter break?

What about nativity scenes in public parks and on city and court-house lawns? Are they examples of the establishment of religion or just symbols of the holiday season?

There's probably no right answer to any of these questions. We, like our forefathers, will be cussing and discussing the problem for the next 212 years.


At least we hope so, because that's what it's all about — this freedom of religion. The Buddhists, Islamics and atheists have the right to complain, to raise a fuss and to upset the comfortable Christian majority. And the majority has the right to point out that tradition and expectations are on their side.

And thanks to all those folks out there who are complaining about what happens in the schools or the way that city, county and state governments handle everyday religious issues. They keep the dialogue going.

And as long as we keep talking and arguing, we'll be a free people, not having to bow to Mecca or report to Rome or read the Bible or meditate or even pray. Freedom is never quiet. — Cynthia Haynes

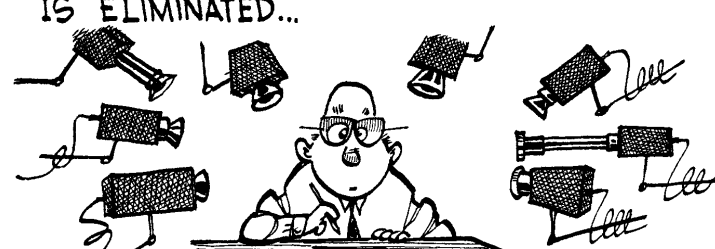
Kansas Predictions for 2004...

GOV. SEBELIUS SHOCKS G.O.P. LAWMAKERS AND AVOIDS A TAX INCREASE IN 2004...



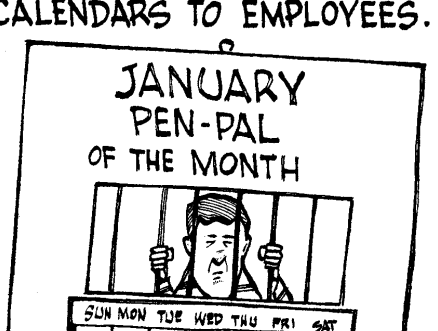
BY BORROWING AGAINST THE TAX INCREASE SHE'LL PROPOSE IN 2005.

THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER FINANCIAL SCANDAL IN THE KANSAS PRESS ASSOC. IS ELIMINATED...

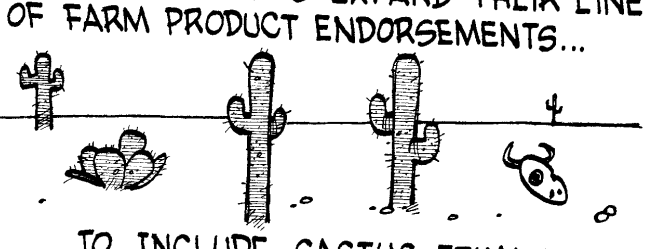


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TO PROMOTE COMPANY INTEGRITY, WESTAR ENERGY ISSUES NEW '04 CALENDARS TO EMPLOYEES.



DUE TO DROUGHT CONDITIONS, KANSAS FARMERS EXPAND THEIR LINE OF FARM PRODUCT ENDORSEMENTS...



TO INCLUDE CACTUS ETHANOL AND TEQUILA.

There doesn't seem to be time to relax

Life seems too fast these days. There's no time to relax, too many places to go, too many things to do.

And then the pace doubles for the holidays...

There's no time to stroll the streets and enjoy just living here. We managed that in October and the first half of November, though... six glorious weeks of staying home, walking in the country, lounging around the house, getting some work done.

And then the travel started. Thanksgiving in Lawrence and Concordia. Business meetings in Columbia, Mo., and Kansas City, with a side trip to Salina to send Cynthia home, and an overnight in Emporia with my brother and sister.

When I got home, I was beat, but there was still a meeting in Topeka and dinner in Kansas City the next day.

By the time I got back, my elbows were sore from the arm rests of my truck, and my exercise program was in denial.

The long ride home had me dreaming of the days when fast streamliners crossed the state day and night and a Pullman berth could be your ticket to civilized travel to the city — and beyond.

You can still travel by train, of course. Amtrak streamliners call at McCook and Holdrege in Nebraska, with berths for Lincoln, Omaha and Chicago east, and to Denver and the west. The Chief still stops at Garden City and Dodge, but it's a little far to drive.

Those trains are not much help in northwest Kansas, unless you happen to be going where



steve haynes

• along the sappa

they go, but once, you could travel the state in style on the Union Pacific.

Kansas City? Leaving Oakley at 10:42 p.m., the white-jacketed porter would show you to an old-fashioned open section berth. You'd wake up in time for breakfast on the domeliner City of St. Louis, unless you had to get off at Lawrence at 6:04 a.m. Kansas City arrival was 7 a.m. sharp, with the cars continuing on to St. Louis on the Wabash well into the 1960s.

The train didn't go to Columbia, by the way, but the stop in Centralia, at 10:08 a.m., was only 21 miles away, with connecting trains both ways.

Wherever you got off, you'd be refreshed, but you'd need a shower. You could check into a hotel on arrival.

Getting back, the domeliner left Kansas City Union Station at 9:40 p.m., but arrival in Oakley was 3:40 a.m., a little too middle-of-the-night for me.

Better to spend the night in the city — you already have the room — and take a coach seat on the 8:30 Portland Rose for the West. That allowed time for breakfast and lunch in the diner and a long, relaxing ride across the state. Have a beer, take a nap, relax a little before hitting Oakley at 2:20 p.m.

The Portland streamliner actually made the

trip 10 minutes faster than the City. And instead of sore elbows, you'd have read a book on the way home.

For the hardy, or the late, mail train No. 69 left Union Station at 11 p.m. and continued west of Salina as a mixed train, making all stops. It struggled into Oakley at 9:50 a.m., 10 hours, 50 minutes from Kansas City. The Rose made it in 5:50.

The exceptionally hardy might book passage on the Missouri Pacific train from Downs, which left at 12:45 p.m. and arrived in Kansas City at 11:55 p.m. that night. There was no food or sleeper, but the coach was comfortable and the mail got through.

The Rock Island ran its Rocky Mountain Rocket right through here — Norton, a flag stop at Colby, and Goodland — but the west-bound times were for the bats, and the train went to Omaha on the way to Chicago.

Westbound, the connection to Denver was a little better than the Burlington out of McCook, though. If you had a ride, you could go west on the Rocket and come back on the Zephyr. The Rock once had a connection to Kansas City, through Belleville and McFarland, but that was long gone by the 1950s and tenuous at best when it did run.

Those days are gone, and more's the pity. Today we have I-70 to contend with, with its trucks and snow and slush and white-knuckled gloom.

But there was a time when you could sit in a plush chair and watch the state go by while you relaxed your way across Kansas.

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Thank you for making a house call

To the Editor:
I got the flu Sunday night, Dec. 7, and Monday there was an article in the *Salina Journal* that flu had to run its course, but that night at the beginning of the blizzard I felt worse.

I called the emergency room at the hospital and said I was coming up. When I got there at 9 p.m., I couldn't find the emergency room door or buzzer because of visibility, so after 30 minutes I found my way back home at 507 Caldwell and called again.

Tom Hellerud, who was on duty as physician's assistant, called me and came to my home and gave me some medical help, and told me to call again if I needed help.

I went to sleep in a chair before I could get in bed, and when I woke up at midnight. I was worse, so I called in again. At 1:45 a.m. on Tuesday, Hellerud took me to the hospital to get help and stay.

I received excellent medical help from Dr. Travis Daise and staff. I was released Thursday morning and went to the high school basketball tournament for three days.

I am very thankful for the help I received and glad to be well again.
Lawrence Tedford
Goodland

To the Editor:
Don't wait until someone you know needs



from our readers

• to the editor

blood to begin giving.

Consider this — a single trauma patient can use 50 pints of blood very quickly, and it takes 48 hours to test and process blood. In emergency situations, it's the blood that has already been donated that comes to the rescue.

Of all the gifts you give each year, what better gift can you give than the gift of life?

Numerous events — adverse weather, natural disasters and even holidays — can lead to a significant drop in local blood donations. It is only together, the American Red Cross and citizens in Goodland, who can make sure blood is ready to help when someone needs it.

Only 5 percent of the eligible population donates blood. Hospital patients rely on these regular donors and need the other 95 percent to help them out.

Your single blood donation can help three people — an accident or bum victim, a cancer or leukemia patient, a premature baby and many others who depend on blood products. In fact every day, about 500 people need blood in Kansas and northern Oklahoma.

garfield

DO YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD BE FUN?

JON, PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION...

IF I DID, WOULD I BE STANDING HERE?

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