

from our viewpoint...

Birthday celebration community effort

The weather was warm and the sky clear Friday as people gathered at the Sherman County fairgrounds for the annual Freedom Fest celebrating the nation's 232nd birthday.

A crowd of more than 1,000 were on hand to enjoy the carnival, bands, food and fireworks that have become a draw for people from around the area.

Thanks to the generous people and organizations the money for the entertainment and the fireworks was taken care of with a cushion in the fireworks fund to begin getting ready for next year.

Brad Schields, Freedom Fest committee chair, and Aaron Duell, committee member did a bang up job of keeping people informed about how the plans and money were coming along. Duell put together a special web site for the Freedom Fest with a schedule and information for people who wanted to help pay for the program.

New rides at the carnival were a big draw, but the other rides that were painted and worked on over the past year shined as well. The Tilt-a-Whirl chairs were refurbished and painted and community businesses and people stepped up to sponsor a chair, and those people are recognized with their names on the chairs.

The repainted carousel sparkled as kids and adults lined up to ride on the horses, many of which have been repainted by local groups over the past few years.

The carnival is celebrating its 10th year of operation, and is one of the largest and best equipped in northwest Kansas. The work crews are pleased with the building built last year, and Brad Schick said the work building allowed the workers to continue rebuilding the rides over the winter.

A record number of more than 900 people purchased the one-price wristbands on Friday, and the rides were all busy.

Joe Diaz's fantastic fireworks show brought a great cheer from the crowd gathered in front of and in the grandstand as well as cheers and honking horns heard from the surrounding parking areas where more people had gathered to see the show.

The annual Freedom Fest is becoming a wonderful family event and truly a community birthday celebration of the nation's birthday bringing people out to remember Independence Day.

The day before we took a trip to Granada, Colo. and talked to people who found themselves ripped out of their homes and taken by train to a dusty camp a mile southwest of that small town. The camp was Amache and the people were more than 7,500 Japanese Americans from the west coast who spent the years from 1942 to 1945 behind wire fences and surrounded by guard towers.

That was a dark time, but over the past 30 years an effort has been made to preserve and restore parts of that camp — one of 10 scattered around the country — to remind us about what happened and make sure it doesn't happen again.

One of those who lived in the camp when he was young, Gary Ono of Los Angeles, and his 16 year old grandson spent Independence Day camping on the old foundation of the barracks where Ono spent most of three years. He felt it was sort of ironic to camp out in a concentration camp when the country was celebrating its 232nd day of the Declaration of Independence.

We are proud to have helped a little in the restoration when it got started 30 years ago, and were impressed with the tremendous efforts a Granada High School history class and teacher have done in the past 11 years to preserve and research this historic landmark.

That camp and the community spirit of our Freedom Fest really brought the importance of being an American home to us especially this year. — Tom Betz



Association manager not a job I want

There are many jobs I wouldn't care to have. Being an association manager is one of them.

While some organizations call them executive directors, they are at the beck and call of every member of the group, whether it's a bunch of dentists, publishers, lawyers, teachers or sanitation engineers.

Last month, we got to see how a new manager handled his first convention.

Layne Bruce took over the head job at the Mississippi Press Association from a long-time manager last year. He worked for the association for a year before being handed the reins, and the members I talked to said he was doing very well.

But then the true test is the first convention, when many of the members get together to find out how things are going, learn about the latest in the industry, cuss and discuss the world in general and their profession in particular — and party.

The Mississippi Press Association holds two conventions each year. One is in the winter, at the state capital of Jackson. The other was in June at the Beau Rivage Casino in Biloxi, on the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast.

The group always has one convention on the coast. It's when many of the members get their annual vacation — a chance to relax, enjoy the company of their peers and get a little business done. When you're an owner/operator, sometimes a working vacation is the only kind you ever get.

So besides working with his board on association business, the manager gets to make



cynthia haynes

• open season

sure everything is good with the hotel, meals, guests, entertainment, side trips, programs, visiting dignitaries and on and on and on.

The first rumble of trouble was rain for the opening reception, a picnic in the park. They set up a couple of tents, and some hotel shuttles got everyone to the event in good humor — and only a little damp.

The next problem came when it was discovered that the contest-winners newspaper had not been printed. The contest bulletin, a 60-page full-size newspaper which contained the names of all the annual award winners, had not arrived at the printers in time because the young lady putting it together hadn't gotten it together in time.

The printer had no other time to do the paper and, although there were a dozen convention goers with presses available, most did not have one big enough to handle the project.

I could appreciate that. Our press would need five runs to do the section, with manual stuffing to put the parts together. I would not have volunteered to take it on; the crew would have shot me.

Layne had 24 hours to find a press and get that baby printed and back to Biloxi. He made it. It looked great.

Media gives Obama easy treatment

Members of the media, by a 4-to-1 ratio, self-identify as political liberals. This does not fully explain why Sen. Barack Obama received preferential treatment in his campaign against Hillary Clinton. However, it could explain why they are ignoring his flaws and untruths.

The term "mainstream media" is really a misnomer. It is unfair to call the news media "mainstream" when you compare them to America. Only 6 percent of journalists identify themselves as conservative compared to over one-third (36 percent) of the public classifying themselves as such. Only 19 percent of the public consider themselves liberal according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008 "State of the Media" report.

Obama is not going through the intense vetting process which candidates usually have experienced by this stage of a national campaign. Consciously or not, the national media are neglecting to shine the spotlight on him when it comes to blunders and mistakes.

His mistakes range from the laughable to the seriously critical.

This week during an 11-minute impromptu statement to the media, he stumbled and said "uh..." 144 times. When off the TelePrompTer, he clearly is not the golden orator we have been sold.

Little was mentioned outside the blogs when Obama said that he has traveled all 57 states. Dan Quayle must be envious.

When arguing that our military's Arabic translators are needed in Afghanistan, he did not know that Afghans do not speak Arabic. George Bush would have been crucified for such an error.

His campaign lied when asked if he was born a Muslim. The media took him at his word and did not research enough to find out that Islam is patrilineal. This example of cultural ignorance had the Israeli media buzzing.



floyd, mary brown

• commentary

Obama told a crowd that Iran does not "pose a serious threat to us" because "tiny countries" having small defense budgets are not a threat to America. The following day, after a little homework, he was correcting himself: "I've made it clear for years that the threat from Iran is grave."

During his Senate race, Obama admitted using drugs beginning in high school and into college. To many a left-wing journalist, use of marijuana and cocaine are no big deal, so why should they bring attention to Obama's past use? Allegations of later drug use have been ignored.

While overlooking Obama's cocaine usage, recent displays of lack of knowledge and campaign mistakes, the media are committing a great disservice to America. They are essentially abandoning their historical role as a watchdog over government and politics.

The media do not want to recognize his problems. There is no pressing of Obama as we have seen with Hillary Clinton over her Bosnia story or John McCain over lobbyists in his campaign. Softball questions are the order of the day when he meets with the media. They want him to succeed so badly they are willing to accept his shortcomings and faults. However, most Americans are not aware of this media bias and believe the information they are being told is objective.

Bernard Goldberg, a correspondent at CBS News for 28 years, is author of, "Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News." When the book was released, he had trouble finding anyone from network televi-

Of course, it didn't help when all the lights went out during the awards program. The whole hotel was blacked out for a few minutes. In an inside room with no windows, that can be pretty scary.

Later, someone said that they thought maybe a plane had hit the hotel. However, there was no panic or undue excitement, the lights came back on and the winners got their awards.

Things were almost over and Layne was sliding toward the finish only a little bruised.

Then on Saturday, everyone was scheduled for a schooner ride. We headed for the boat to find the captain scanning the skies. Weather was coming in, he said, and he wasn't taking off until he was sure it was safe.

Layne ferried beer, pop and chips to us as we sat on the boat watching the skies. As the first raindrops started to fall, we all repaired to shelter on the dock. Layne, however, was stuck pulling a huge beer cooler in. He arrived at the shelter amid cheers, looking like a drowned cat.

It had been a long, tough trial by missing papers, blackouts and rain, but the new executive director came through it with flying colors.

"He's either going to make a good executive director," someone said, "or we're never gonna see him again."

We both enjoyed our visit to the Magnolia State, our opportunity to meet old and new friends and our chance to see how a professional manager works under fire.

Which brings me back to my first statement — better him than me.

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