

from our viewpoint...

Freedom Fest marks nation's big struggle

Bursts of fireworks filled the skies around Goodland and thousands of cities across the country as Americans gathered to have fun and celebrate the 234th birthday of the country.

The annual celebration for Americans is a chance to have family gatherings, enjoy outdoor cooking and great community shows and fireworks.

For Goodland the celebration is one of the five days the Kiwanis Flag project decorates the streets with American flags, and Sunday the Kiwanis volunteers put out 557 flags around town. July 4 is the third of the five days, and was a busy one for Kiwanis. In the evening the club was spread pretty thin picking up the flags, manning the Kiwanis carnival ride and keeping up with the lines of people who waited for those special hamburgers.

Hats off to Kiwanis who started the flag project three years ago hoping to get 100 people to participate. Some Kiwanis members think the numbers will reach 600 by the end of the year.

Those American flags flying throughout the city show a depth of patriotism, and reverence for our country held by those who live here.

The weekend was an opportunity to reflect on the struggles the early Americans faced as they battled to bring the country in existence and break from England.

The young country celebrated the Declaration of Independence – proclaimed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. That celebration was at the beginning of the revolution, and many times in the eight years of the Revolutionary War the American dream was tested and survived close calls with disaster.

The American leaders were tested on the battlefields and in political intrigue including treason and betrayal. General George Washington had to summarily dismiss one of his generals leading a battle and take charge himself to turn the tide for the Americans.

Those were not the last times Americans were tested over the past 234 years and the country has many scars to prove how hard it is to keep a large country moving in the same direction.

Today as a nation we are being tested in different ways such as the terrible tragedy of the leaking oil well in the Gulf of Mexico threatening our precious coastal lands and wildlife. Thousands of great ideas are coming forward from Americans and others around the world to help clean up the oil disaster. Nothing can really succeed until the well stops leaking.

The clean up could be take as long as the years of the revolution, but the clean up will be accomplished.

Across the ocean we have thousands of American troops facing hostile forces in foreign lands where the people have a different moral code. What we face in Iraq and Afghanistan are as much a challenge to our country as the years of war 234 years ago that gave birth to the new democracy.

The war in Afghanistan has drug on longer than the revolution and longer than any war American has been involved in with the exception of the Korean War that has not ended, but has been going through peace talks since 1954.

The July 4 holiday is over, but the challenges to the country continue. We pray for the men and women who fight for freedom, and pray we find a successful way to exit. We should renew our resolve – as Americans – that this country can and will face any challenge and find a way to come out on top. – Tom Betz



Rains help fill pond

I don't know if the new pond and wetlands out at Sappa Park will pass muster with the city, the state water engineer, the environmentalists or with Pheasants Forever, which has put so much into the project.

It looks pretty good to me, but I'm no expert.

What I do know is that it passed muster with Annie, our water-crazy Brittany spaniel.

We were out walking at the lake the other night, and when we got to the pond, she jumped right in, swam around, got out and shook herself off.

So I figure it passed the first inspection. It's Brittany-approved. But then, Annie would jump in a hog wallow if it was damp.

The pond was full last week, and it looked pretty at sunset.

Dave Bose probably didn't think so. He's the dirt contractor on the job, and he still has several feet of earth to move from the more shallow south side of the wetlands. Whenever it dries out.

The water in the main part by the outlet looked plenty deep, ready for fish stocking, though it may be awhile before anyone gets



steve haynes

• along the sappa

around to that. Insect life and frogs already seem to have settled in.

The berm trail is severed right now until Mr. Bose gets some dirt on top of a tube which will connect the two parts of the pond. You'd get wet and muddy if you tried to cross today.

Most of the other trails were high and dry despite the rains last week and this, showing the wisdom of raising them out of the flood plain near the pond.

The water is receding, and in a week or two – barring another deluge – Mr. Bose ought to be able to get to the dirt again. He'll need at least a couple of weeks to finish, but the pond and wetlands should be ready to go by fall.

The water backs up beyond the shelterhouse to the south, and quite a ways up the creek to the west. The deep channel, shaded by trees here and there, should provide some good fishing

holes as time goes by. It also might attract some wood ducks.

The area around the dam will see the most fishing activity. Rick Pauls with Pheasants Forever says he wants to sink some trees in the deep parts to provide "structure" to shelter fish. It'll make a nice addition to the park's recreation portfolio.

The pond project seems to be working out nicely. Raising the trails provided a good use for dirt removed from the pond and wetlands. And whoever figured out how to use the original outlet tower to limit the water level by cutting holes in the concrete, that was elegant engineering.

The park itself continues to draw more users. We hadn't been out for a couple of weeks, so we did a couple of tours over the weekend. The only drawback was that with all the rain, the ticks seem to be hanging on into the summer and the trail mowing is behind in places.

I had to pick four off of me the other night, though Cynthia had not a one. And I wondered why she was letting me lead the way.

High drama



Insight this week

• john schlageck

During the last year the entertainment industry has stepped up its portrayal of agriculture in a negative light. So many of these attacks are based on unsubstantiated information and emotional pleas.

No doubt you've seen some of these television episodes, like the couple who dined at a fashionable bistro and died – one from a fast-moving E. coli infection and the other from botulism.

The show's detectives determined E. coli originated in a water supply on a cattle ranch and ended up in the woman's salad. Her dining companion contracted botulism from genetically engineered corn.

Plenty of other anti-agriculture episodes have aired along with talk-show programs that also target farmers and ranchers, especially on their care and handling of livestock.

One particularly outrageous television show featured a character who tried to convince her friends to help her save a pig from becoming bacon.

Laughable? Hardly. And when another character refused to participate, she was accused of ignoring the "alleged" ugliness of animal production.

What's going on here is "high drama" in the entertainment business. Unfortunately, viewers watch this programming and ratings are high. Hollywood has taken irresponsible liberties with the truth and turned farmers and ranchers into villains.

It is a travesty that Hollywood celebrities and activists are given time or have the money to promote their anti-agriculture agendas

with little or no regard, or understanding, of what occurs on farms and ranches across this country.

The real shocker is that so many viewers know little or nothing about farming and ranching. They've never been to a farm and never learned about the care and feeding of livestock.

Farming and ranching are a family's livelihood and way of life. When the entertainment industry airs falsehoods about the food supply, this negatively impacts the entire community.

Raising livestock on today's farm or ranch is a dynamic, specialized profession that has proven one of the most successful in the world. Only in the United States can less than 2 percent of the population feed 100 percent of our population – and other people around the world – as efficiently as we do.

Today's animal husbandry is no accident. Because our livestock are the best cared for, we can provide such efficiency.

Farmers and ranchers work hard, long hours to care for and nurture their livestock. They are neither cruel nor naive. A farmer/stockman would compromise his or her own welfare if animals were mistreated.

Livestock producers will tell you they love

their animals. They spend their lives producing healthy animals that will one day feed others.

These animal caretakers understand the cattle, swine, sheep, chickens and other livestock are living creatures. They understand and take seriously their obligation to care for each and every animal's welfare.

Farm animals are generally housed in barns or other buildings with the exception of beef cattle. This is to protect the health and welfare of the animal. Housing protects livestock from predators, disease and bad weather or extreme climate. Housing also makes breeding and birthing less stressful, protects young animals and makes it easier for farmers to care for both healthy and sick animals.

Modern animal housing is well ventilated, warm, well lit, clean and scientifically designed for the specific needs of the animal. Inside these facilities, livestock receive plenty of fresh water and nutritionally balanced feed.

As U.S. livestock production grows and changes, farmers' methods for ensuring welfare of their cattle, hogs, sheep and other animals also progresses. Farmers and ranchers are dedicated to providing the highest quality and safest food in the world – their livelihood, and that of their family, depends on it.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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Member: Kansas Press Association
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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
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Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 247W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address – jmorrison@ink.org

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address – ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

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