

from our viewpoint...

U.S. finally gets Osama bin Laden

The U.S. finally tracks down Osama bin Laden after all these years.

Twenty years after he began targeting America. A decade after he brought down the twin towers of the World Trade Center in his second attempt.

What does it mean? Not the end of the war on terrorism. As Winston Churchill once said, "Now this is not the end. Not even the beginning of the end."

But it surely is a victory along the way. During the last decade, the U.S. has done much to cripple al Qaeda and the other terrorist organizations operating against it. Commando raids, covert action, Predator strikes, rockets, guided bombs, all have taken their toll on these groups. They are weakened, but they have not gone away.

The road ahead will be long and arduous. Unless the United States wants to abdicate its role as the leader of the Free World, we will have to continue to press the fight as best we can.

We should make it clear, as President Obama did Sunday night, that we are not at war against Islam. We have millions of friends among the nations of Islam. We claim millions more as our own, as Americans in every sense of the word.

We are at war, and must be at war, against the radical Islamist movement. These groups seek to enslave not just Muslims worldwide, but the entire world. They would put us all under a theocracy where no freedom of thought would be allowed, the slightest dissent punishable by death, the mention of any religion other than their own, twisted version of Islam forbidden.

The world cannot allow that. As we did 70 years ago, we need to stand together and fight for freedom.

The battle is more difficult today. Then, the enemy ruled nations that rose up to smite us. Our predecessors prevailed. Today we say, that truly was their finest hour.

Today, the enemy comprises a dozen shadowy groups, some living in caves, some hiding in cities, some no doubt within our own borders. It rules no great nation, has no great army. But its ambition is both boundless and evil.

It is hard to sustain a battle against this enemy you cannot see until it strikes.

And we must find more effective, less costly ways to fight. How long can we afford to spend \$2 billion a week to keep troops in Afghanistan? How long can our allies sustain their costs?

Still, the war will continue. We must win. We will win, as we did 65 years ago. As we did 30 years ago.

The future of civilization is at stake. The very concept of freedom is challenged. And as past generations did, we must respond. Through the grace of God, we will respond.

Osama was but one visible symbol of this movement. He is gone, but the war will continue. Eventually, freedom will prevail. — Steve Haynes



Carrots can be stored in the ground

I planted some carrots last year. As the season progressed and the vegetables started rolling in, I got more and more behind on weeding and picking.

It got so the garden was a time-consuming monster that spat vegetables at me every time I walked out the door.

Don't get me wrong. We loved the vegetables.

It's just that we suddenly had dozens of peppers, too many tomatoes and squash we couldn't even give away. Add to that the corn, green beans, broccoli and cucumbers and we had more than we could eat and almost more than we could give away.

Now, remember, I don't can. I'll cut up some of the peppers to freeze and stuff others for later use. I dried a few of the cherry tomatoes but still haven't figured out what to do with them.

I was just plain overwhelmed and it was time to dig the carrots.

Steve suggested I could just leave the ones I



cynthia haynes

• open season

didn't need in the ground. He had read you could leave some root vegetable like carrots in the ground until you were ready to use them.

Sounded ideal to me. (It also sounded like he had been reading the helpful hints in my women's magazines, but I let that pass.)

So I left them. And left them. Eventually, I ran out of carrots and decided to go dig a few up.

By then, however, it had frozen and the ground was like iron. I tried a hand digger, a shovel and a potato fork. I finally pried some out of the ground using a screwdriver and a hammer. Talk about your hard-to-get produce.

I figured the carrots that I had were what I was going to get and the rest would freeze in the ground and be mulch for next year.

Nope. When Steve was tilling the back of the garden, orange lumps started appearing.

Now, my carrots weren't what you find in the store. Most of them looked more like the "baby" variety.

But the carrots that came up with the tiller were in good shape, except of course for the ones that got sliced and diced in the process.

I went out and gathered up a basketful of carrots. They were tasty. Oh, about half had to be tossed out because they were too damaged to keep. The other half have gone into a couple of batches of homemade soup and some slaw.

I'm not sure if this is really the best way to store carrots, but it worked for me.

And this year, I'm sure I'll get to them before the freeze.

Letter Policy

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Legislators try to wrap up session

On Wednesday, April 27, the Legislature returned to Topeka to begin Veto Session, scheduled to go until May 11. Veto session is traditionally dedicated to addressing bills approved or vetoed by the Governor and working on the state budget.

In the short time we have left, many items remain on our to-do list including KPERS reform and finalizing the budget.

The Kansas Constitution requires the Legislature to produce a budget each year. Prior to adjourning for our annual break the House and Senate passed their respective budgets and a conference committee began meeting to negotiate the differences.

At the start of negotiations there were approximately 280 differences between the two bills. To further complicate the process, revenue estimates for Kansas were revised down by approximately \$20 million. Between the proposed budgets of Governor Sam Brownback, the Senate and the House, only the House budget remains in the black by an approximate \$48 million.

As I sit here in the Statehouse, the conference



rick billinger

• state rep.

committee continues to meet to hammer out the difference and the reality is we will not leave Topeka until an agreement is reached.

I will continue to closely watch how the budget negotiating process plays out. Reaching a compromise will be a challenging task requiring flexibility, patience and focus by all involved. When the budget passed out of House it was only by 6 votes. I look forward to working with my colleagues to assemble a responsible budget setting our state on a path toward economic recovery.

I enjoyed visiting with my constituents and attending numerous meetings in the district while I was home during our break. I met with several organizations including KLA, the Association of Counties and a TEA Party meeting.

I visited with the Association of Judges and Court Clerks, spoke with school superintendents and attend the Colby Community College Endowment auction and dinner, the Northwest Tech College Endowment auction and dinner and the Colby Chamber of Commerce Award Banquet.

We are working diligently to provide more funds for our school systems and will continue to do so.

Thank you to everyone who has returned the surveys to me. There has been a very good response. There is still time to complete additional surveys and send them back. I will tally them and publish the results. Thank you for your input on these matters and I appreciate hearing from you on these issues and any other issues.

It is my honor to represent the people of the 121st. District. If you have any input on any issues which will come before the Legislature please contact me at rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or call me at (785) 899-4700.

Robin looking for meal follows tiller

The robin is back. We're pretty sure it's the same one. He looks like the one who was harvesting all our meal worms, at least. He shows the same kinds of intelligence.

But how do we know? Well, you can't know. Robins don't wear name tags, and they all pretty much look alike, you know: orange breast, grey wings and head, skinny legs.

They do come in different sizes and shapes, and on that basis, this looks like the same robin to me.

The meal worms are gone, of course. Cynthia finally washed the ones the robin left into the grass where, I suppose, they either died, pupated or were eaten. That's nature's way.

This time he was following the rototiller as we turned over the garden, picking out the worms we exposed.

Since he seems to be able to adapt to whatever food circumstances confront him, we started calling him "Darwin" after the noted and sometimes controversial English biologist.

Picking worms off of deck chairs or out of the freshly tilled garden are not normal robin dining behavior, after all. Food usually is a lot harder to find.

But this guy seems to have figured out that,



steve haynes

• along the sappa

when presented with a target of opportunity, you need to respond. Maybe he carries a picnic kit around with him, complete with napkin and fork.

Anyway, I was plowing the south forty, musing around a big rototiller rented from (free plug) Stanley Hardware when I first noticed the bird behind me, pulling on a worm. He kept the garden in sight the rest of the afternoon.

I've seen hawks doing this, watching a field as a farmer moved through it with a mower, a disk, a plow or a combine, then jumping on the mice, rabbits or snakes driven out by the equipment. Hawks are pretty attuned to that kind of opportunity.

But I've never heard of a robin staking claim to a garden plot as it was tilled. That's a pretty smart robin, I'd say. Not your average bird brain.

Last seen, Darwin was on the fence, keeping an eye out for one more worm. And for the cats, who spend a lot of the time Sunday — when not

sleeping, lounging in the sun, or catnapping — out in the yard.

I could imagine the cats watching the bird watching for worms, sort of like those cartoons of a little fish being followed by a big fish, followed by an even bigger fish, and so on.

But as far as I know, Darwin made it through the afternoon. He's a pretty smart robin, after all.

Just as the swallows return to Capistrano each spring, the vultures return to Oberlin early each April. This year, the flock seems to have doubled. There's hardly space for all of them on the railing around the water tower. Especially when the wind blows them off one side or the other.

Still, they big birds seem to like it up there, even if some of them have to roost in the trees. Their arrival is punctual each spring.

Now, what I'd like to know is, when do the swallows come back to Oberlin? Anybody venture a guess?

(It's said they return to the mission of San Juan Capistrano on St. Joseph's Day, March 19, each year, but California is warmer. A lot warmer.)

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