

from our viewpoint...

Alumni reunion part of triple-play

For the 10th time in 50 years alumni from Goodland, Kanorado and Edson gathered to renew friendships and remember their days together in high school.

More than 1,200 attended the All-School Reunion and attended the open house for past and present teachers, class parties all over town and evening gatherings at the Sherman County fairgrounds.

Our hats off to the Alumni Association and President Linda Rumpel for putting together a great weekend. For those who are not from Goodland or did not go to school here this event every five years brings more people back and focuses attention on the good things about the schools and the community.

Many of the alumni who have been coming back for the reunions remarked that they were glad to see the city cleanup efforts and felt the town looked much better than it had when they were here last five years ago.

The All-School Reunion is the middle piece of a three event celebration for the city this month.

The first part of the celebration was the great Northwest Kansas District Free Fair held the first week.

Aaron Duell said the carnival and midway set a new record for wristband night on Tuesday and broke that again on Friday. He said despite the loss of Thursday due to rain the total week was a new total record for the 14 years the carnival has been running.

The fair was a great success with good crowds for the Western Plains Chute-Out, the Texaco talent show that had to relocate inside because of the rain, and the Truck and Tractor pull.

When the rain hit on Thursday it appeared the talent show might be over, but the fair board and volunteers helped wipe everything down and set up a temporary stage area in the south of the Ag Building to allow the show to go on.

As one person said the quick actions showed the ability of the fair volunteers to adapt and handle any problem that might surface.

The one unfortunate thing over the week was the accident on the swing ride on Wednesday where one of the cables apparently came loose sending a swing flying. Fortunately no one was severely injured as the ride was just starting up. Carnival workers are always checking the rides for safety, and while some minor mechanical problems may show up the volunteers are quickly on scene and handle the situation.

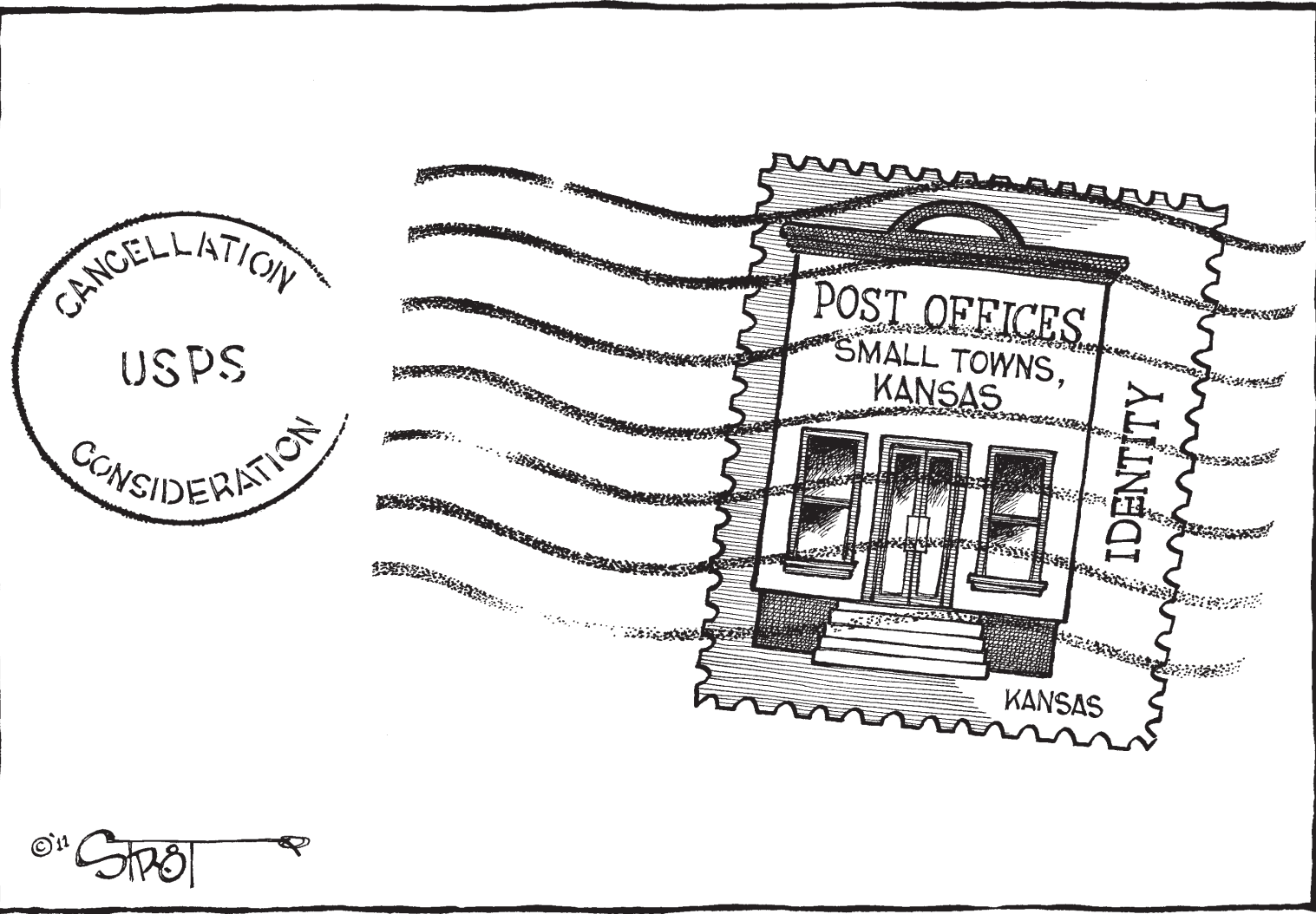
The home owned carnival is a great asset to the fair and the community, and we are sure they will keep improving. Anyone who might be interested, the carnival workers meet nearly every Wednesday evening to work on the rides and will be getting ready for next year.

The third piece is the open house the city will hold from 6 to 9 p.m. on Wednesday to show off the completed water improvement project and the water treatment plant on Kansas Ave.

This was a \$6 million project to reduce the level of nitrates in the city water supply. The city had been planning such a project when the federal stimulus program was announced and the city was able to get \$2 million to help finance the project.

Citizens can feel good the city had reserves to pay off the project and save an additional \$1 million in interest.

The next thing for the community is the opening of school on Monday. Summer may be over, but it was certainly a great first half of August to celebrate. — Tom Betz



Summer 'hopping' along

As July turns into August, summer just seems to be hopping along out back.

I mean really hopping.

Two of the toads I've found this spring have taken up posts on each side of our big double garage door.

Each night, we leave the yard lights on until 11 or so, and the toads have found great pickings under the big lights.

The biggest one — I call him Toadaly — has staked out the south end near a patch of grassy irises.

When we first saw him, Hoppy, the smaller toad, was also on the south end of the garage. He soon moved to the north end, where he has refuge in the onion patch that grows next to the spirea bushes along the alley.

At nightfall, the lights come on and almost on cue the toads come out to feast on the myriad of insects they draw in.

The other night, Steve came in laughing. He had been watching Toadaly chase a cricket. The cricket would hop. Toadaly would hop after him. The cricket would hop. Toadaly would hop. Steve finally had to give up watching this odd ballet because he had other things to do, so we never found out if the cricket outhopped the toad or if someone doesn't have a conscience anymore.



cynthia haynes

• open season

There was more hopping going on out at the park as we took the dog for a walk on Saturday.

The warm, wet weather seems to be perfect for grasshoppers, and all the tall grass out at Sappa Park, a prairie area with walking trails.

The grasshoppers drive both me and the dog nuts.

I hate the feel of them. You don't feel most insects that land on you. They come. They go. And, unless the bite, you don't notice them.

Grasshoppers, however, have claws. They cling, and it feels like a burr has jumped on you.

I don't dislike grasshoppers — not like ticks, yuck — but, I jump every time one lands on me. When I walk in an area with hundreds of them, I'm as jumpy as a cat in a roomful of rocking chairs.

The dog, on the other hand, loves grasshop-

pers. She thinks them a tasty, fun snack. For her, catching grasshoppers is sort of like eating popping popcorn.

She jumps. She hops. She whirls. She bites the air. She snaps. She turns her head so fast she should have whiplash.

Walking here in the park now is sort of like taking a small tornado out for stroll, and jumping every time you get hit by the debris, which is all the time.

In short, it's more exercise than your usual "walk in the park."

For anyone who's interested, our cat Molly is doing well on her insulin injections. The once-a-day-feedings haven't been as popular or successful, but we're still working on that.

I put out three small yellow bowls. Each morning, I put about half a cup of food in each and stand back as three cats attack the food. When they are done, I put them outside and get Jezebel. She's so skittish, she would starve rather than try to eat with the others. After she's eaten, I let everyone back in for another round of scarfing.

I'm still working on how to test Molly's blood sugar. The vet says I can use a regular glucometer, but I still have to figure out how to prick her ear and get a drop of blood.

Mimicking mother nature

It's all about using the soil while saving it at the same time on the Lloyd Farms in southwestern Clay County. The Lloyds are doing so with no-till farming practices, crop rotation and cover crops.

No-tillage or zero tillage is a farming system in which the seeds are directly deposited into untilled soil which has retained the previous crop residues.

"You don't turn the soil or disturb the soil," says Steve Swaffar, director of Kansas Farm Bureau Natural Resources who helped organize the farm tour. "The only thing you do to the soil is insert the seed when you plant the crop in the ground."

More than 80 interested folks visited the farm on Aug. 9, while stepping into crops of corn, milo and soybeans — all no-till. This year marked the ninth year Kansas Farm Bureau has sponsored no-till workshops across Kansas.

Thirty-eight year old Josh Lloyd conducted the tour and presented the reasons he's a staunch disciple of no-till farming. He believes he is protecting the valuable resource that has been entrusted to him to grow crops. He understands that without keeping residue (residues are materials left in an agricultural field after the crop has been harvested. These residues include stalks and stubble, stems, leaves and seed pods) in place, wind and rain move soil from his land and into this state and country's water, compromising the water quality and silting in our reservoirs.

What drives Lloyd is the continual pursuit of excellence and finding the best way to farm. He's not interested in status quo.

"I'm always looking for a truly better way and soil science is very clear that tillage destroys soil productivity," Lloyd says. "So why would I want to do that?"

Here's what he's talking about. When you till the soil it temporarily breaks the soil loose and the residue on top is destroyed. This is the same residue that protects that precious soil and keeps it in place in the fields where it remains productive and can grow crops. Keeping the residue in place also restores the precious and most productive layers of topsoil.

The Clay County farmer insists no-till is not easy. Lloyd struggles with it all the time, but that's what makes him tick. He loves the challenge.

"It'd be easy to just sit in the tractor and till the soil the way we used to," Lloyd says. "Too many people let something difficult or failure



Insight this week

• john schlageck

to succeed right away detour them from their ultimate goal."

Digging a bit deeper into the reason for his no-till fervor, Lloyd says all one has to do is look around at the native environment.

"You don't see any tillage, you don't see terraces and you don't see erosion," he emphasizes. "What you see is Mother Nature always trying to grow something and different things."

Another example Lloyd uses are the Flint Hills. Those hills began as rock. It took thousands of years and living and dying of different plants and the gradual buildup of nutrients and other materials to create the fertile soil that today produces some of the best grass in the world, he says.

Yet one more example he suggested to the visitors on his Clay County farm are the fields that were put back to grass in the '40s, during the soil bank era and later in the '70s when CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) was implemented.

"This land was extremely eroded and damaged by the dust-bowl era and drought in the '50s," Lloyd says. "Just by planting grass — a natural cover crop — some of these grasslands have increased their organic matter."

Lloyd tries to put that same concept into

practice on his farm. That's what he attempted to demonstrate with the soil pits in his milo and corn fields.

He grows mainly dryland wheat, milo and soybeans on the family farm. He has been planting some corn and sunflowers. He mimics Mother Nature by planting cover crops in his no-till fields between harvesting so the soil is never really void of plant material. These cover crops include canola, peas, radishes and turnips.

Cover crops provide a natural canopy which helps keep weeds out of his fields while holding the soil together and in place on the field with little or no erosion. Without the crops the residue from no-till tends to bunch up with moving water and can break across terraces and create a mess, Lloyd says.

Lloyd has been in the business of no-till farming since 1998 when he returned to the farm after his father asked him if he was interested in coming back and helping.

Since that time he says he's learned something every day. And today, there's no place he'd rather be.

"We're making progress with our no-till practices," Lloyd says. "Sure, we've suffered some setbacks. Everybody does. But we're also taking steps forward. I'm certain we're headed in the right direction."

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.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News
1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

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