

from our viewpoint...

## 25th Flatlander great weekend treat

What a great weekend for the 25th Annual Flatlander Festival, and kudos to all who helped put on the many events throughout the three days.

The Flatlander Fall Classic car races at Sherman County Speedway drew great crowds, and a large number of cars to thrill the crowds with some great racing on Friday and again on Saturday.

The Brick Top Cruisers 25th Annual Flatlander Car Show drew nearly 200 cars, and many of the early car clubs from the past 50 years were represented including the first group the Goodland Dragons.

The cars filled main from halfway up the 1200 block all the way down to Fixsen's in the 1600 block. For the first time in many years the cars were parked in rows in the middle of Main in the 1300 block. The Brick Top Cruisers were celebrating the old car clubs with the new. The car owners had a great time showing off the many beautiful vehicles with some great antique cars and some really nice hot rods.

At the north end the 17th Northwest Kansas Bike Show had a great turnout, and had great fun at the bike games held Saturday afternoon. The motorcycles were the first group to parade on Main on Saturday nights, but in recent years the car show has joined the fun. The bikes start from the north end of main around Ninth and the cars start at the south end at 17th.

Main was lined on both sides on Saturday as the cars and bikes began their parade and crossed about 12th and Main. The crowds cheered and bikes and cars honked as they paraded. It was not quite like draggin' main as the youngsters did many years ago and do at times even today. The sheer number of cars and bikes created a bumper to bumper traffic jam after each group reached the opposite end and gathered for the return trip. Most of the bikers dropped out after making the return trip up Main, but many of the cars continued making the rounds for more than half an hour.

A couple of the drivers decided to test their tires and squealed enough to leave some black marks. Unfortunately for at least one they tried it once too often right in front of the police chief who was watching the parade.

The crowds were good for the Scruffy Dog Contest on Saturday and for the Talent Show. The weather was great for those who agreed to be targets for the dunk tank, and many people enjoyed the variety of food to be found all along the center of the street. The Goodland Fire Department was back this year with their treat for the kids to use a fire hose and push an aluminum keg down the line.

Sunday the crowd was great for the Picnic in the Park and the kids were really enjoying the new playground equipment the city got a grant to erect. The line was long, but kept moving along for the free hot dogs and hamburgers being cooked by Brent Wood and Lincoln Wilson.

Wood had said he was trying to organize some horseshoe pitching and a small group of people were using the horseshoe pits.

The talent show winners presented their performances for the crowd before the entertainment turned to other people followed by the Pieces of Eight band.

The city Take Charge Challenge ice cream social at the power plant drew a wonderful crowd, and will help the city win the \$100,000 in energy improvements.

The 25th Flatlander Festival is in the books, and we know people are already starting to think about the 26th Annual. We know the Flatlander Festival Committee needs help, and if you had a good time this weekend and you want to see it continue this is the time to put your name on the list to help make the next festival even bigger and better. — *Tom Betz*

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## Our weekend trip took a detour

You may have heard, our weekend trip to Lawrence and Emporia ended in Salina.

We were home by noon on Friday when we were supposed to be relaxing at the lake and getting ready for dinner with my brother and sister and their families.

It's not the first time we've had to abort a trip, though most go off without a hitch. While the cat seemed to be the culprit this time, we've decided to blame our son, Lacy, because he's usually the one who makes us change our plans.

The first time I can remember was the first time he broke his head. We lived in Colorado then, but down in the valley. We planned to spend some weekend time near our old home up in Creede.

It was a brilliant late summer afternoon, I remember. Lacy was about 6. I was fishing. Cynthia was reading her book. The kids were climbing around some rocks when Lacy fell and hit his head.

A helicopter ride to Denver and a week in the hospital later, we sort of forgot about that weekend.

I should say that I can't ever recall canceling a trip because of something the girls did. They had their trips to the emergency room, but stitches, bandages, stuff like that. Never even a broken bone. Lacy, on the other hand, was hard on his little body.

When he was in junior high, he went out for track. He was at practice one day while we were



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

at the state press convention in Overland Park. Lacy and his sister, who was in high school, were at home fending for themselves.

We were out for dinner with some other publishers and didn't get the message until we got back to the room about midnight. Lacy had fallen off the slide in City Park and broken his wrist. He was OK, but ... he fell off the slipper slide at age 14?

That's the night we found out just how long it took to drive from Kansas City to Oberlin without stopping — six hours flat. Lacy was home and doing well when we got back; Lindsay and Pat had done all the right things.

When Lacy was in high school, we were on the way to Kansas City to visit my sister and her baby at KU Medical Center. We were west of Salina when the sheriff's dispatcher from home called: "Lacy's been in a wreck. A deputy is on the way to check."

We did a U at the next exit. The dispatcher called back: "The deputy is there. He thinks Lacy's OK, but the ambulance crew is going to check him."

We slowed down to the speed limit. Later, we couldn't decide whether to hug him when

we got back, or kill him. We settled on grounding him.

Then when he was in college, we got a 3 a.m. call from a doctor in Harlingen, Texas, near Padre Island where Lacy had gone for spring break.

"Your son has fractured his skull," the doctor said.

"Oh, no," his mother moaned. "Not again."

The doctor laughed and assured her he was going to be all right.

We were scheduled to fly to Boston for a convention the next morning. Instead, Cynthia flew to Texas, where she met her mom — who lived just 50 miles away — at the hospital. I was to speak at the meeting, so I went on to Boston alone.

Since then, Lacy hasn't broken anything. He's in his 30s now and works in Lawrence, but I suppose if he did, his mother would want to be there for him.

The last time we had to abort a trip was Sept. 11, 2001. Can't blame the kid for that.

Then there was the trip that ended in Salina. I suggested that we really should blame the cat, but Cynthia said it was Lacy's fault. How? I asked.

She smiled and said, "Well, we were on the way to see him. It must be his fault. It's *always* his fault."

I wasn't sure I followed her logic, but you know how she feels about her cats.

## Market competition good for consumers

In June 2010, the U.S. government provided some simple clarifications to the law that governs the relationship between livestock producers and the meatpackers and processors who buy their animals. This proposed change, known as the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (or GIPSA) rule, would help to ensure fairness and bargaining rights for individual producers and restore competition to agricultural markets.

Predictably, it prompted immediate and vigorous backlash from meat processors.

What does the GIPSA rule, so demonized by packers and processors, actually do?

It protects the basic rights of family farmers. It ensures farmers are able to have their contracts reviewed by an attorney or financial specialist so they know they're not being cheated, and it protects farmers who speak out against unfair practices from retaliation from packers and processors.

It allows a poultry farmer, previously denied the opportunity to watch his chickens being weighed after purchase, to make sure the weights recorded are accurate.

Hog farmers who were kept in the dark about each others' contracting agreements could compare their contracts and other vital documents to make sure they are being treated



from  
other pens

• commentary

fairly.

These are common-sense rights small-business owners in other sectors currently enjoy. Any critic who claims the proposed GIPSA rule is "regulatory overreach" that will "kill jobs" does not have farmers, ranchers and consumers' interests in mind. Farmers, ranchers and consumers overwhelmingly support the Rule, as do the two largest general farm organizations in the country (National Farmers Union being one of them).

But the GIPSA rule is not just important for family farmers. Consumers need it, too.

Unless the GIPSA rule is implemented as Congress directed, more small farmers will go out of business and meat production will be further concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer even larger farms. What does this mean to you, the consumer?

One recent example is the salmonella outbreak in eggs that occurred in 2010. The outbreak prompted the largest egg recall in history, affecting more than 550 million eggs

and sickening nearly 2,000 people nationwide. Those 550 million eggs were marketed under at least 16 different brands all originating from two factory farms owned by the same individual.

If packers and processors successfully kill the GIPSA rule, you can look forward to more production being concentrated in the hands of a few megafarms and the increased possibility you may someday be eating tainted food from the same farm as schoolchildren in California or a family in Maine.

In order to find the source of the anti-GIPSA rule campaign, one need only follow the money to the meatpackers and processors.

Family farmers do not have the resources to compete with national messaging campaigns, flawed economic analyses, and full-page ad buys, but we do have grassroots power on our side.

I leave it to you to decide who to believe: the largest meatpackers in the country, who made billions in profits last year, or two million American family farmers and ranchers?

Roger Johnson is the 14th President of the National Farmers Union. Prior to his post at NFU, Johnson held the position of Agriculture Commissioner in North Dakota for 12 years and his family farms in Turtle Lake, N.D.

## where to write

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