

from our viewpoint...

Great weekend, today great news

The Goodland Chamber may want to change the name of Freedom Fest to Soggy Fest, but it was a great weekend with great performances and some great moisture thrown in.

Those attending the Tracy Lawrence concert came away impressed with his ability, and his dedication When it started to rain on his parade, he kept on playing.

Sunday was great, with a nice patriotic parade followed by a large crowd at the fairgrounds for the Chamber's dinner, the Rotary watermelon feed and the carnival rides in full swing.

Mother Nature stepped in about 7 p.m. to change the scene and close the rides a bit early, but the clouds parted about 9 p.m. for the fireworks show. The weather did delay the sky show by about an hour as the pyrotechnic crew worked to get their lines reconnected.

Even with the delay, the crowds parked around the outside of the fairgrounds and those in the fairgrounds were treated to another wonderful Diaz fireworks show in co-operation with the Goodland unit of the Kansas National Guard, who add their fireworks to the total show.

While waiting for the display to begin, the kids and adults were treated to free glow sticks from Moonlight Entertainment, and there were many imaginative displays and dances with the glowing wands to keep the kids entertained .

The police and sheriff's departments did a great job of handling traffic and watching for the safety of those waiting for the big aerial show.

The wait was worth it, and as the grand finale went skyward, there were shouts, applause and honking horns from the audience.

Following a weekend of celebrating the birth of our nation, we can again be proud of the indomitable spirit of those who came to Sherman County with the announcement of the new power, ethanol and biodiesel plants to be built west of town.

The combined efforts of many people over the past several months put this program together, and it is great news that Ron Pickman, former city manager, will head up the construction and startup efforts.

Forward-thinking people took the initiative to find a way to give the area an edge in power production and at the same time expand the agriculture-related industries in the area to the benefit of both city residents and the surrounding farmers.

Having a source of power is a plus, and in addition to the planned wind farm, will give the city an opportunity to expand and provide a competitive advantage when recruiting new businesses.

We can celebrate the birth of freedom in our country and celebrate the efforts of community leaders willing to step forward to pledge their efforts to keeping that flame of freedom glowing brightly — *Tom Betz*

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Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 2005 www.caglecartoons.com

Spending a weekend in Estes Park, studying

I recently spent a weekend in Estes Park, Colo., on the edge of the Rocky Mountain National Park.

It rained. I was stuck indoors. I had to study. Steve had to stay home.

It was still fun.

I was taking my semi-annual pharmacy continuing education classes.

In order to practice pharmacy in Kansas, you have to keep your registration current, and to keep it current you have to get 30 hours of continuing education every two years.

Kansas offers courses in Lawrence, Topeka and Wichita most years. You can get credits through the Internet or from courses in magazines. Or, you can go to Estes Park, Breckenridge, Denver, Colorado Springs or Beaver Creek and get them from the Colorado Pharmacists Society.

Boy, don't you just hate these tough choices?

While I didn't get into the National Park, and didn't see any deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep or



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mountain goats, I parked next to a prairie dog town and spotted several marmots and ground squirrels. I suspect there was other wildlife in the bars in town, but I didn't catch any of that, either.

I enjoyed the mountain air and instead of walking from my room to the conference center through the tunnel-like corridors of the hotel, I went outside and went around the building. I got a little wet. I got a little chilly. But I got a little exercise and got to enjoy some wonderful scenery and the smell of rain and spruce.

The mountain flowers were wonderful. The lilacs are just blooming up there.

I missed a week of lilacs in Kansas this spring when we went to visit our children in Georgia and South Carolina. I love lilacs, and I made up for that loss by stopping frequently, jumping out of the car and sticking my head into someone's bushes. Luckily, I didn't get arrested or even any strange looks. I suspect I wasn't the only lilac lover in the mountains.

I did get one look at the national park from just outside the boundary.

It looked healthy. There was a mountain stream coming down over rocks and the trees were all leafed out. There were no large clumps of dead spruce, pine or aspen. The wildflowers were blooming and the bushes were sparkling with the rain.

The mountains are wet and healthy. Hopefully, there won't be any fires up there this year.

I looked a long time at the Front Range. It'll probably be a long time before I get back up there, and I hope when I do, it will all look just the same.

County missed opportunity with Internet

Down the road, we may ask ourselves if the country missed a good opportunity when we let the big telephone companies take over Internet service.

Internet is big business today, with phone companies offering high-speed access for less than we used to pay for dial-up connections.

Nearly everyone can get high-speed service from a cable company or phone provider. Even farm areas will be served by wireless systems now being built.

And the role of the phone companies in all that is critical. Still, you have to wonder.

In the beginning, the Internet grew out of academia and the military. When colleges made e-mail available to students, not just researchers, it really started to take off.

But the big phone companies didn't have a clue. A couple of the more nimble ones, including MCI and Sprint, provided the cross-country "backbone" of the system.

But the local-service "wireline" companies, especially the "Baby Bells" created out of the AT&T breakup, really didn't catch on.

All they knew was there was a sudden surge of demand for telephone lines as thousands of "mom-and-pop" Internet services sprang up across the country.

People were putting Internet "POP" systems in their basements. Businesses stuck them in closets. We had one in a furnace room, another in a long-disused storeroom.

The Internet was hot. People wanted e-mail and bulletin boards and something called the World Wide Web. Nobody knew what it all meant, but it looked like fun.

What sprang up was a crazy-quilt patchwork of services that served some areas and not others. But as the Internet caught on, service moved into smaller and smaller towns.

Our company had systems in Norcatur, McDonald and Bird City, as well as places where we had newspapers. If something didn't work, the phone would ring at home — sometimes in the middle of the night.

In Herndon, the school district put in a line and opened its system to the community. Some places, the city had a role, others the county, still others a college.

When we got into the business, though, I remember saying that we'd probably be success-



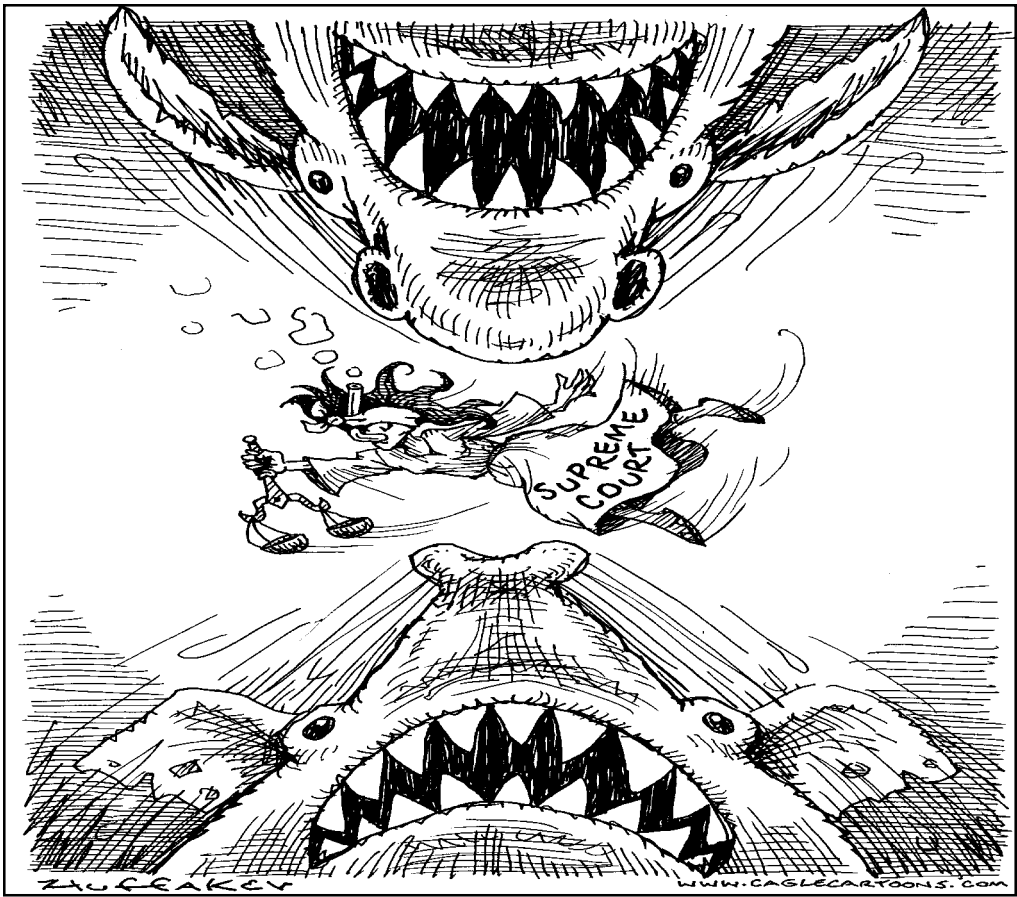
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ful only as long as the phone companies didn't understand what was happening.

And for a while, everyone made money: providers, phone companies, equipment dealers, the lot. For a while, we were the phone company's favorite customers.

Then the phone companies started to figure it out. And when they did, the big guys started to muscle in on the market. Southwestern Bell was offering high-speed lines with Internet service for the same price it offered bulk lines to independent providers. Most small businesses knew, in the long run, they'd never be able to compete.



garfield

