

from our viewpoint...

Burning our flag cannot hurt country

As we celebrate our freedom after this Fourth of July, one of the things we ought to be thankful for is that Congress hasn't yet passed a constitutional amendment banning flag burning.

Sure, it's disgusting to see anyone burning an American Flag.

We love our flag. We fly it proudly. It honors the thousands who have died in defense of our Liberty.

But burning our flag *cannot* hurt this country.

Our enemies burn our flag because they cannot defeat us.

Our detractors burn our flag because they cannot match the strength of our ideas.

Sometimes, Americans burn the flag because they, mistakenly, believe our government or our system is the enemy.

But part of our treasured freedom, enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution, is the ability to think and act as we please.

And as a political act, burning an American Flag is part of that.

We're not in favor of flag burning, mind you.

It's disgusting to see, whether it's a crowd in some Asian nation stomping on Old Glory, or protesters in Seattle.

But the act of burning the flag just shows how strong the ideas behind it are.

No flag burner can desecrate the memory of our Revolution or undermine the freedoms protected by our Constitution.

Only *we* can do that.

And by focusing on a non-issue like flag burning, we might hasten the day when those liberties slip away.

The First Amendment protects not just majority speech, not just popular speech, but everyone's speech, everyone's thoughts, everyone's ideas, everyone's religion.

That, unfortunate as it might seem, includes someone who would desecrate the American Flag to make a political point.

So what should we do about flag burners?

Ignore them.

Let them be.

No one buys the line they are selling.

The act itself is a political turnoff.

Those who sink so low have no following, no leverage, no success.

We don't need a constitutional amendment to deal with them.

We don't need to worry about them *at all*.

Our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, our Liberty are a lot stronger than that.

For that, we should be thankful.

This country has more important problems to deal with. Let's turn to them. — *Steve Haynes*

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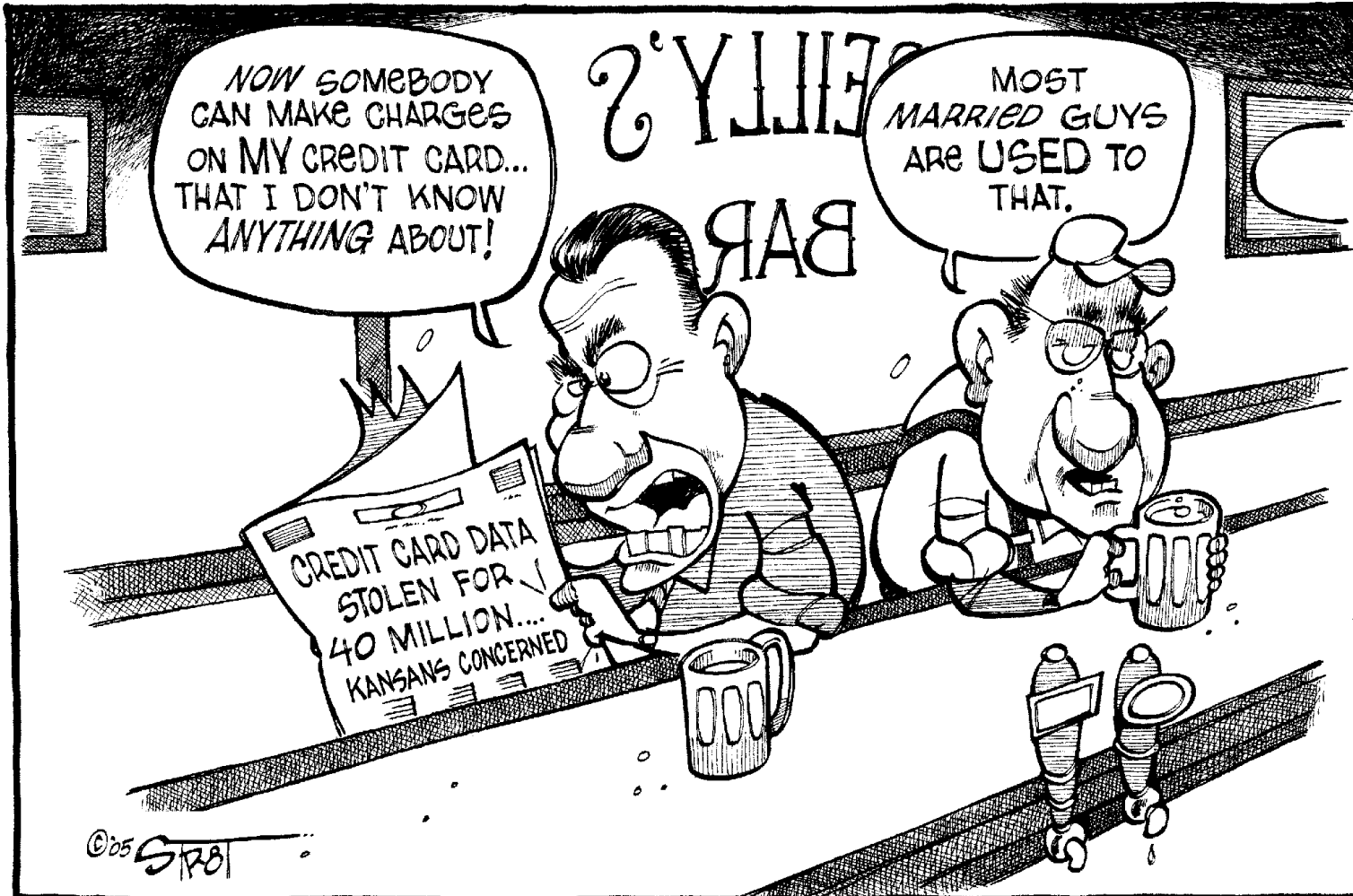
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Beautiful funnel changes reporter's mind

My opinions on storm chasing changed when I saw one of the most unique and beautiful forms of nature, a tornado, last month.

A couple of months ago, I wrote a column saying storm chasing was basically a waste of time.

I take it all back.

Sure, normally tornadoes are scary, destructive, big and unknown. But sitting in the middle of nowhere, Kansas — actually it was a mile northwest of Trego Center — next to an empty field, the storm took on a new meaning to me.

It became a part of me as I watched it grow and become a violent tornado.

The storm teased us, me and my storm chasing meteorologist husband Patrick, for minutes that seemed like hours.

We watched as the mass of dark blue clouds sucked up smaller scud clouds, to form a wall cloud.

The gray, blue and white jagged-edged clouds swirled in the sky above while we waited.

"It's gonna tornado!" "flowed out of my mouth in an excited and unusually high pitch. "Oh my God!"

Patrick, the more seasoned storm watcher, calmed me, saying we just have to wait.

Pelted with half-dollar sized hail, facing strong winds, impressed by long, stringy bolts of lightning and repelling buckets of rain, we waited.



kathryn
burke

• commentary

Camera in hand, I photographed the storm from every angle. Starting with the smallest

wall cloud, the pictures evolve into the roaring tornado that caused extensive damage to three farms.

The frequent bolts of lightning made me roll the car window back up. The glass flew down again as I got a whiff of bravery or a jolt of excitement.

We watched and wait until the north edge of the storm got long and lean, forming a small funnel that seemed to drop out of the sky.

"It's a tornado!" I shouted.

"Not yet," Patrick answered, adding he had seen storms get this close and still not form a tornado.

When the storm finally touched down and gave us what we were waiting for, I just stared in awe. It dipped down, forming a long, lean funnel. Then the funnel let up and crossed the road.

"Let's get closer," I said, trading places to let my husband take the wheel.



Yard is green, but there is no real plan

If I ever write a book about the yard, I think I'll call it "The Accidental Gardener."

I know, I know. John LeCarré had one that was similar. I can't help it if I'm a fan.

And it's not that I think our yard it good enough to write a book about. It's green, and it has flowers, but I'd be the first to admit there's no real plan.

It gets what attention we have, when we have the time, and there is never enough. But I suspect that makes us pretty typical.

We have planned flower beds and replanted lots of them. Some, like the iris, worked out as we thought. Others, like the sunflowers, well, the sunflowers are a story.

The sunflowers got started one summer day when I was talking with John Faber out by Brewster. He was planting his, and I asked for some seed.

Now, when John plants sunflowers, he's talking sections. I have to settle for square feet by the garage.

A couple of days later, an envelope stuffed with dark black oilseeds arrived. I planted them by the back fence, and they've been out there ever since.

I told John they were still going after four years, and he looked surprised.

"They probably have lost their hybrid," he said.

Could be, John, but you can't tell from the flowers.

Last year, I admit, I moved them from the fence to the side of the new garage. The star of the show,



steve
haynes

• along the sappa

though, was a volunteer that came up in the back and grew above the roof of the new building. I saved seeds from this 15-footer.

In the garden, two sunflowers appeared at opposite corners. One grew to 10 feet with a single, huge flower which produced eating-type seeds. The other, almost as tall, was a multi-headed hydra with small flowers.

This year, the oilseeds came up again by the garage with no prompting from us. The only volunteers in the garden were in the middle, though, and I think Cynthia weeded them.

While I admit to inviting the sunflowers, the wheat just came.

It sprouted up one year next to some iris and it's been with us ever since. I can go out and check it, winter or spring, and see about where the area crop is.

I can't tell you what variety it is. It's one of the older, pale ones, with short stalks, fair tillering and a bountiful head.

And hardy. It just keeps coming back.

Then there's the hollyhock on the north side. It just appeared next to an iris bed about the time

the ones by the old garage got plowed under. This one is a beautiful burgundy, though, and I suspect birds had a "hand" in helping it move in.

I just mow around it.

The bachelor buttons came with some "wild-flower" seed, and boy are they. They've sprung up in half a dozen places, and we've left them in some. The newest is a deep red, a real contrast to the pastels.

The flax I planted out front, a gift from Jim Reeves. It's spread to other beds, and it's welcome most anywhere. Its pale blue flowers are wonderful.

Next to the house is a cedar tree that just sort of grew. I moved it from the corner of the old garage.

In the front is a tiny aspen tree, apparently a clone of the one I brought from Vail. It's a transplant candidate.

I still don't know if my prairie grass is going to make it. I planted that last spring, and by fall, a dozen or so tiny plants were all that I could see in the bed. It was hard to tell if any made it through the winter.

The garlic, that must have survived from Mary's herb garden. We planted iris there, but the garlic just kept growing. This year it has its own corner, and we have no fear of vampires on this block.

There's more, but you get the idea. Sometimes the uninvited guests do better than what we plant, but if they bloom, why there's always room for a few immigrants.

