

from our viewpoint...

Picking up pieces and moving onward

It was not easy for Goodland Chamber board members to admit the financial problems they were facing, and they deserve credit for taking the initiative to put a stop to the spiraling debt.

The Flatlander Fall Festival has a new committee, and appears this year's event on Sept. 24 and 25 will be great. The groups involved in putting on the events that weekend have managed to meld a team together to get the weekend organized and recruit the many volunteers needed to make it happen.

That is good news with the Chamber stepping out of the festival picture to try to rebuild on the basis of serving member businesses.

The fate of Freedom Fest, which comes around in 10 months, is not so clear. If the Chamber is not available to organize the celebration, who will step forward?

With the help of the Chamber over the past several years, the annual July 4 celebration has evolved into quite a community event.

In a spirit of support, the city and county pledged \$2,500 each. plus businesses gave another \$2,500 to make it happen this year. This was without the advent of the concert, which was at least six times more expensive than the fireworks.

There was a good crowd for the concert, but it did not raise the money the Chamber had hoped for to bail them out of their financial hole.

What should be the answer for next year? Is there a group like the ones for Flatlander Festival that will step up and take on the July 4 celebration?

In past years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars were the lead in handling the fireworks show.

There is some time for reflection on what the Freedom Fest has meant to people over the past years. Decisions need to be made about whether it continues to be the larger event with more involvement than the shooting of fireworks into the July sky.

Under the right circumstances, it is possible the city and county might be willing to step up and support a new group committed to the Freedom Fest, but there will have to be public accountability of how the program is being paid for, and what the realistic costs of the event are.

As the next year unfolds, and new plants begin to rise from the open land to the west of town, there is reason to be positive about the city and the county.

Everyone likes to celebrate the birth of our country on July 4, and the fireworks show is well attended. Volunteers might go from car to car asking for money to finance the show for the next year.

It is unfortunate that the Chamber has fallen on financial hardship, but it may be a blessing in disguise if it gives us an opportunity to look at what we are doing, and where we are going. — Tom Betz



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Roberts gets ahead of bad rap on highways

Pat Roberts was on the phone early the day after the Senate passed the new Transportation Bill.

It was unusual, a U.S. senator calling the editor at 7:30 a.m. to tell him about a project south of town. It was a big deal, \$5 million to rebuild K-27 near Goodland.

Sen. Roberts was proud of doing something for the voters in his home state. It's a Washington ritual, taking credit for the pork a member of Congress can scrape out of the ol' barrel for the folks back home.

Usually, the senator's staff sends a press release.

What gives? A couple of days later, Kansas Transportation Secretary Deb Miller was confiding in Topeka reporters that Kansas had fared poorly in the transportation bill, which gave Kansas an increase of "only" 19 percent in federal highway money over the next five years.

Other states, she noted, got as much as 30 percent more, and only five states did worse than Kansas. The unspoken blame fell at the feet of Roberts and the other Republicans on the state's congressional delegation.

Miller is a Democrat, appointed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to run the highway department. Were her motives were completely pure?



steve
haynes

• along the sappa

Might she some day be running for the Senate? Or some other Democrat, even the governor?

Newspapers jumped on the story, distributed statewide by the Associated Press. Editorials followed, accusing Roberts and the others in the Kansas delegation of failing their duty.

When piles of pork were available, they sniffed, why didn't we get more?

The story from Washington is that under the old bill, Kansas got more money from road taxes than it put in. Powerful donor states, including California, demanded a better split of the pie.

So Kansas, as Miller put it, got squeezed. We'll be a donor state by 2007, she says.

Presumably, a better delegation, a more powerful delegation, would have kept us on the plus side. Miller denies being partisan.

"I don't point the finger at the delegation," she told the AP. "I point the finger at the process in Washington."

Roberts isn't buying that. He thinks most state

cabinet officers would be happy with a \$62 million annual increase in federal money. He called Miller's statements "misleading and disingenuous."

"I view the comments as a partisan attack regarding a program that until now has always been ... bipartisan," he fumed.

The state, he noted, has taken \$800 million from the highway fund to balance its budget and expand aid to schools. Maybe, he said, that's why Miller is worried about not getting enough federal money to finish the current 10-year highway plan.

It's true, the Legislature has been counting on a big boost in federal money to finish the plan. It's true, they took the money to finance schools.

The senator warned that the highway department might not get such a friendly reception next time they want him to do something.

Miller for her part said she'd reply to Roberts, but not right away.

"I intend to think very carefully about this," she said.

Probably, she'll also be thinking about how to get money to finish all the state's projects.

Maybe she could get someone to sue, charging the state had defaulted on its constitutional duty to build more roads?

It worked for the schools.

Intelligent is as intelligence doesn't

By Will Durst

Raging Moderate

Taking valuable time from clearing brush on what apparently is the most brush-infested ranch in the country, President Bush spoke to members of the press, encouraging our country's school districts to incorporate both sides of the debate regarding the development of humanity into their teaching plans:

Evolution, the theory that man descended from an infinite number of apes typing on an infinite number of typewriters, and intelligent design, the idea that an unseen force (not necessarily God — but not ungodlike either) nudged our genes with big, giant, invisible fingers to the point where no child is left behind. Or something like that.

This is shocking to the same degree that goats eat shoes. Especially to anyone who's been semi-cognizant the last five years and watched Mr. Bush work his backward magic disproving Darwin with a series of policies stripping workers and minorities and women and anyone who isn't an energy producer (and I ain't talking methane gas) of their rights. Not only does the president not believe in evolution, but ironically he has become his own best argument.

One of the logic wedges Intelligent Designers like to jump into with both semantic feet is that Charles Darwin called his discovery "The Theory of Evolution."

"See. It's just a theory!"

Oh come on, grow up. What's next? You going to require the Principle of Atomic Force attend PTA meetings? What about the Law of Gravity? Does an initiative for repeal lie in its immediate future? Apparently all we need do is to hire Denny Crane or petition one of those activist judges and voila ... broken vases and scraped knees — a thing of the past. Hey, it's just a law! And a bad one at that...



from other
pens

• commentary

The theory of intelligent design maintains life on Earth is too complex to have developed through evolution.

Too complex? Oh, no! You mean there are things we don't know?

Of course there are. We have brains the size of peas. And I tell you, if we keep dumbing down our schools, the concept of fudge will seem complicated.

Not to mention innocent before guilty. Wasn't too long ago, people thought a solar eclipse was a dragon eating the sun as it rode across the sky on the back of a giant turtle. But that was just my Uncle Bud draining a six pack on his riding mower.

Now don't get me wrong. The Bible is a great book, but it has as much to do with science as gummi bears have to do with aerospace navigation.

How soon before 2 + 2 equals whatever God wants it to be?

Back in the 17th century, Galileo proposed the Earth revolved around the sun, not the other way around, and was promptly convicted of heresy and imprisoned for the rest of his life at a time when home detention did not include adequate satellite reception. In response to his pardon from the Catholic Church 400 years later, Galileo conveniently was unavailable for comment.

If these people are really seeking alternative theories as to how life originated, I got one. I got a doozy. Santa killed the evil Martian overlords and flew us here from Pluto on his sled. How about that?

Hey, it's a theory! And I want to see it included on the blackboard of every science classroom as part of the new curriculum: Evolution, Intelligent Design and Santa's Sled. At least my Santa Sled Theory is flexible enough to explain the reason for the human appendix — it's the Martian mark of the insurgent.

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