

from our viewpoint...

# Some Kansans not celebrating I-70

You'll read a lot this week about celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Interstate highway system, but some Kansans are not celebrating.

The Interstate system, if anything, is a mixed bag. Only about 2 percent of the nation's road system, it carries fully 25 percent of the traffic.

Being on that 2 percent can be great for a town's economy, but the Interstates have meant slow death for towns and neighborhoods that aren't on a freeway.

U.S. 36 across northern Kansas is a good example. Until the 1960s, there was plenty of through traffic headed for Denver on U.S. 36. I-70 changed all that.

Since the opening of I-70, through traffic on 36 has fallen to a fraction of what it once was. Except in towns with other business — Marysville with its railroad center, Belleville with U.S. 81 — hardly a hotel has been built since the 1960s.

Don't talk to people in southeast Kansas about Interstates. They've waited 40 years for good roads since I-35 went to Wichita rather than Tulsa. They haven't got them yet.

With the coming of the Interstates, railroads lost much valuable traffic. They had to close many branches, forcing heavy grain trucks onto the state highways. Passenger trains dried up as mail and people shifted to the roads.

Even along the freeway, prosperity is uneven. In Salina or Russell or Goodland, old motels sit in decay and service stations in town are abandoned, even as new business centers spring up along the freeways.

Crime, violence, drugs and decay ride the freeways. Drug busts, seizures of cash, holdups and thefts come to town on the Interstate. Other towns seldom see such action, so it seems, there are benefits to being off the beaten path.

Economic growth is not one of them. Slow times are common along the two-lane roads. Businesses don't want to locate off a freeway. The rich towns along the freeway get richer and the poor areas off the road just get poorer.

No one planned it that way. President Eisenhower and his giddy allies doubtless saw a vision of fast, efficient roads moving people from city to city.

No one saw the negatives. No one saw the shift of business, the decline of railroads and the change in economic patterns.

No one much cared, either. Progress is progress. New is new.

There is no way the state can build a freeway to every town. There's not enough tax money to build them, not enough trucks to fill them if they were built. But there ought to be something the state and federal governments can do for the places that were collateral damage to this progress.

Kansas, slowly, is pushing better roads into the southeast. The southwest still lacks even four-lane expressways on U.S. 50 and U.S. 54. Northern Kansas has no four-lanes at all.

Let them celebrate down on I-70.

Elsewhere, they've got their peace and quiet.

But some places think it would be nice to have some business, too. — *Steve Haynes*



# A message to G.W. from San Diego voters

The other day I watched President Bush making the case for immigration reform in an appearance down on the border in New Mexico. He made a very persuasive case for tightening border security and even for some kind of temporary guest-worker program, and I'm sure he was right on the same page with the majority of his fellow Americans.

Then he spoiled it all when he climbed out on a limb and put himself at odds with America by sticking to his demand for enacting the Senate's so-called comprehensive immigration reform, which most everybody else calls a program for amnesty.

Just how far out on that limb he went became evident when the voters of San Diego sawed it off by defying the liberal media and electing Brian Bilbray to the U.S. Congress. He was involved in the fight of his life, seeking to fill the unexpired term of former Republican Rep. Duke Cunningham, now in the slammer for wholesale acceptance of bribes.

According to the chattering class, the voters in his district were just itching to teach the GOP a lesson for saddling them with a congressman who did everything but put a for-sale sign on his office door. They would either vote against Bilbray or not vote at all simply because he was the GOP standard bearer.

It didn't happen that way. Bilbray won, and he won because he was on the right side of the immigration issue. He stood for tough border



michael reagan

enforcement and he opposed the Senate bill the president has gone all-out to get enacted.

His Democrat opponent, school teacher Francine Busby, was on G.W.'s side — she backed the Senate bill and that became the main issue in the campaign. She stood with the president and Sen. John McCain on the wrong side of this issue. McCain even ducked out of an appearance with Bilbray at the last minute apparently in retaliation for Bilbray's vehement opposition to McCain's Senate bill.

Busby really got on the wrong side of the issue when she told illegal aliens, "You don't need papers for voting." In so doing she played right into Bilbray's hard-nosed immigration stand and apparently helped convince a lot of Republicans who had planned to stay home on election day to come out and vote for Bilbray.

The point of all this is the president's utter failure to understand how the majority of Americans feel. They are single-minded about the issue — they want the border sealed tight against the flood of illegal aliens pouring across the border. At the moment that's all they want, and they are convinced that tackling the

problem of what to do about the 12 million or more illegal aliens here only clouds the issue.

Moreover, they know that the Senate bill is loaded with such absurdities as giving Social Security benefits to illegals who use forged documents to gain employment. Talk about waving a red flag in front of a bull — that piece of Senate arrogance conveyed a message that the members of the Upper Body could not care less what the people think and want.

A lot of the 12 million or so illegals now in the United States have been here for years. What's the big hurry about dealing with them? Can't it wait until we take care of the immediate problem — securing the borders? Must we confuse the issue by adding a huge program to provide what most Americans rightly or wrongly consider to be a form of amnesty?

It's all a matter of first things first. Let's solve the border problem now. We can attack the problem of the illegals now here once we secure our borders.

That's what the people want and by insisting on an all-or-nothing approach the President runs the risk of ending up with nothing and costing his party control of the Congress in the November elections. That's what the voters of San Diego made clear. Is he listening?

*Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. Email Comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.*

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# Good news, bad news

Its almost dead-solid meteorological summer and the crossing of the solstice seems to have inaugurated a season of good news, bad news for George W. Bush, the Democrats, Iraq, you, me, pretty much everybody. Allow me to illustrate.

- The good news is George W. Bush pulled off a secret mission and flew to Baghdad in the dead of night. The bad news is he only stayed five hours and then came right home.
- The good news is Ben Roethlisberger is going to be okay. The bad news is that diagnosis is based on the Gary Bussey scale.
- The good news is oil prices are going down. The bad news is they're taking stock prices with them.
- The good news is Iraq's future is in its own hands. The bad news is Iraq's future is in its own hands.
- The good news is Karl Rove is not going to be indicted in the Valerie Plame case. The bad news is Joe Wilson got his hands on some curare.
- The good news is the Republican Party won the special election for Duke Cunningham's 50th Congressional District in San Diego. The bad news is they had to spend the GNP of Estonia to do it.
- The good news is Bill Frist's gay marriage amendment went down in flames. The bad news is the flames are being put out by the drool dripping out of his mouth just thinking of the flag-burning amendment in his back pocket.
- The good news is we've uncovered a new



will durst

- raging moderate

tactic of Al Qaeda: asymmetrical warfare. The bad news is the three guys at Guantanamo Bay who introduced it aren't able to tell us where to send the royalty checks.

- The good news is Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi is dead. The bad news is 72 virgins in heaven just filed a restraining order.
- The good news is Senate Democrats have scuttled a Republican attempt to eliminate the estate tax. The bad news is their kids are really pissed off.
- The good news is Michael Chertoff has determined New York City is without any national monuments and therefore safe from terrorism. The bad news is Michael Chertoff gets to determine anything.
- The good news is U.S. President Bush has resolved to stop taunting the world at large with his tough-guy, he-man posturing. The bad news is Iranian President Ahmadinejad is taunting the world at large with his tough-guy, he-man posturing.
- The good news is failure is not an option. The bad news is it's a factory-installed standard feature.
- The good news is President Bush got a

Zarqawi bounce. The bad news is it's not as high as Zarqawi's body actually bounced.

- The good news is President Bush got to look Nouri Al-Maliki eye to eye. The bad news is Nouri Al-Maliki has to sleep with a chicken foot under his pillow to counter the curse of the evil eye.
- The good news is Tiger Woods is back on the PGA Tour. The bad news is he's playing like me.
- The good news is U.S. air carriers are expected to be more crowded this summer than any time since 9/11. The bad news is one more cut in service and they'll have to tear out the seats.

*Comic, writer, actor, radio talk show host, sun worshiper Will Durst thinks he could fit in the overhead compartment.*

## Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: [star-news@nw-kansas.com](mailto:<star-news@nw-kansas.com>).

## garfield

