

from our viewpoint...

Fourth celebrates U.S. point in time

Today marks the 230th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, a document that changed history and set the United States of American on a path to greatness.

There have been high points and low points in that 230 years, but each one has been worth celebrating by citizens who count themselves as the freest in the world.

In Goodland, people have come together to demonstrate the grounded belief of Americans that anything people want to have happen will happen. In less than six weeks, the people of this town came together to organize, collect money and produce a home-town Fourth of July.

Those who organized the events for tonight can share the success, and everyone who put money in a jar or sent a check to help pay for the fireworks show played a part in that success. Not only did the effort raise enough money to pay for the show this year, there is a good start on next year's display.

Every dollar raised for the fireworks will be used for that purpose only, and people can continue to make donations to the Freedom Fest Fireworks Fund in the weeks and months ahead. Checks, made out to the Sherman County Community Foundation and marked for the fund, may be dropped at Bankwest, the Sherman County clerk's office in the courthouse or the new Sherman County Economic Development office at 10th and Main.

The history of the United States is a remarkable story, and the freedoms guaranteed under our Constitution are what our young men and women have had to defend in wars both at home and around the world.

Today we have troops on the ground fighting in a battle that has become more deadly over the years. As we watch the fireworks, eat watermelon, ride the carnival rides and listen to the concert, we should remember those who serve the cause of freedom in Iraq, Afghanistan and numerous other countries where our troops are stationed as peacekeepers.

In the history of the world, the United States is a small dot. Putting it into perspective, those of us who have been citizens since the late 1940s can say we have seen about 24.5 percent of the country's historic 230 years. That is the group of people known as the baby boomers, who came along at the end of World War II.

The amount of history we have seen drops when we step back to the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Those same citizens have been around for 14.8 percent of the American history if you measure it that way.

Dropping back to 1492, when Columbus landed in the western hemisphere — without determining whether that was the first time the continent was discovered — the boomers have been around for 11 percent of the continent's history.

The percentage continues to get smaller as the timeline is taken back beyond the history of the known world and to nothing when the ancient world is included.

Looking back is important, as is remembering the struggles it took to bring a new nation into existence and with an untested democratic framework. That's why we celebrate those famous words spoken first on July 4, 1776.: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that man has the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

When the first salute is heard tonight, let's cheer and salute the Founding Fathers and the thousands of men and women who have been witness to the history of this great nation. May the flag of freedom wave forever. — *Tom Betz*

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Trend shows at the end

Current surveys show a tendency among voters toward the Democrats but do not show a route as of yet.

Any Republican strategists who take comfort from that did not live through 1986 or 1994, the two most recent years when a party trend swept through Congress like a plague, killing the deserving and the undeserving alike.

In both of those years, the trend toward the party that eventually won manifested itself only in the last week of polling and really only in the last few days. So it will be in 2006. Whether there will be a rout or not is anybody's guess — mine is that there will be and that the Democrats will win both houses of Congress. But you won't see the process one way or the other in today's polling data.

In 1986, the Republicans had no idea they would face a decimation of their Senate delegation. Many party leaders were insecure because the Reagan Revolution class of 1980 was coming up for re-election and they worried that many of these young senators had not sufficient time to sink their roots and came from states where a Democrat would probably win in normal times. But nobody could foresee the extent of the Democratic Party victory, enough to keep the Senate in their control until 1994 despite losing the White House in 1988.

In 1994, the trend was even less evident. President Clinton traveled to the Middle East two weeks before the election to oversee — and take credit for — the signing of a peace accord between Jordan and Israel. When he returned, his approval ratings were higher than they had



dick morris

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been in months and he was brimming with confidence that the Democrats would hold onto both houses. When the debacle struck, he was totally surprised and unnerved, as were Democratic strategists from coast to coast.

Why does party trend manifest itself so late in the polling process? Why is it so hard to pick up early on?

Despite the prompting of pollsters, voters do not focus on Congressional or even Senatorial races until much later in the process. Beforehand, they watch and listen but do not collect their thoughts or correlate their overall partisan inclinations with the votes they must cast in their own specific race. That thinking takes place only at the end.

To understand it, think of sports fans. Those who follow football avidly probably can handicap the Super Bowl on the first day of the regular season. But those who pay little or no attention have no idea what is going on. But on the day of the Super Bowl, everyone — fan or not — knows who is playing and likely knows some of the subplots the media has invented to hype interest in the game.

The reciprocal of this example would be Christmas shopping. Most men buy their wives' presents during the few days before the

holiday while their wives have purchased theirs' in September or October. A Christmas ad in the fall will reach the shoppers but leave their spouses unmoved. An ad on Dec. 23 will make little difference to those who have already done their shopping but would be of great moment to the others.

So what is the state of play of the Congressional handicapping now?

A bit less than half of all voters say that the country would be better off if the Democrats ran Congress while a bit more than one-third say they would like the GOP to remain in charge. Bush's ratings are regularly below 40 percent and his profile on the issue that voters care about most — energy prices — is virtually nonexistent. The main GOP issue is terrorism but, as we succeed in the War on Terror, its saliency is dropping every month. Corruption has become a one-party issue and the blame is falling squarely on the Republican leadership in Congress.

That a Kennedy fell off the wagon and McKinney flew off the handle are not enough to besmirch the Democrats. Jefferson's Louisiana larceny — keeping \$90,000 in his freezer, a new definition of frozen assets — is also not enough to offset the spectacle of DeLay resigning and the House leadership running for cover.

So this year will probably be a wipeout for the GOP. Enough to lose control? Probably. But, the point of this column is that it's too soon to tell.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. E-mail him at dmredding@aol.com.

Brothers under the skin

I've been wondering why there is something familiar about the behavior of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, and suddenly it dawned on me that we have our own similar insurgency right here at home — it is called the Democrat Party.

Think about it. Both are operating under the same motivation — an unrequited lust for lost power. And both will do just about anything to retrieve it.

Remember, under Saddam Hussein's long rule, his fellow Sunnis — a distinct minority in a nation with a vast Shiite majority — were the kings of the hill — and incredibly cruel monarchs to boot.

Saddam may have ordered the atrocities, but it was the Sunnis who carried them out, torturing, beheading and otherwise brutalizing the Shia and the Kurds and looting the nation's treasure.

They were very well compensated for their services — and since being ousted by the U.S. invasion and the deposing of their benefactor they have been unable to accept their current powerlessness. They are, as the liberals like to say, "in denial." They just can't live with their loss of authority and act as if they can somehow regain what they lost by mounting an insurgency against the new Iraqi government.

It's a case of "anything goes," as demonstrated by their recent idol, the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Killing their fellow Iraqis — including women and children — by the hundreds, destroying the infrastructure, and depriving their fellow Iraqis of electricity, water and income from oil are all acceptable meth-



michael reagan

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ods of expressing their lust for power.

What it all comes down to is a willingness to tear down their own house if they can't assert absolute ownership of the premises. It's what is known as a "rule or ruin" strategy.

Here in America we have a similar situation — a political party that for years dominated Capitol Hill. They ruled the roost for so long that they began to believe they had some divine right to control the House and Senate.

They got to run the committees, with senior members reveling in the title "Mr. Chairman" with all the perks that went with the title. Only they were allowed to introduce legislation or hire committee staff. The minority had to go to them, hat in hand, to get even a tiny minority staff. Thankfully, they weren't able to torture or behead the Republican minority at will, but they never let it be forgotten that they were in charge and if Republicans wanted the key to the men's room they'd have to bow and scrape to get it.

Like the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, the Democrats cannot accept their minority status, even though when the GOP took over Newt Gingrich refused to impose the kind of absolute, anti-minority rule his party suffered under the Democrats. They were treated as col-

leagues, not serfs whose presence was to be barely tolerated. Since then, the Democrats have shown not one whit of gratitude.

Like the Sunni insurgency, the national Democrat party and its congressional contingent has demonstrated time and again that they will willingly sacrifice the welfare and security of the American people to get their way.

As Michael Barone has written: "It comes down to this: A substantial part of the Democratic Party, some of its politicians and many of its loudest supporters do not want America to succeed in Iraq. So vitriolic and all-consuming is their hatred for George W. Bush that they skip right over the worthy goals we have been, with some considerable success, seeking there — a democratic government, with guaranteed liberties for all, a vibrant free economy, respect for women — and call this a war for oil, or for Halliburton.

"Successes are discounted, setbacks are trumpeted, the level of American casualties is treated as if it were comparable to those in Vietnam or World War II. Allegations of American misdeeds are repeated over and over; the work of reconstruction and aid of American military personnel and civilians is ignored."

In the end, all that matters to them is regaining the power the American people took from them in 1994, and, thank God, have kept it out of their hands ever since.

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