

from other pens...

# Old Glory symbol of basic freedoms

Before you get yourself all worked up over this flag burning thing and end up looking like a pretzel, please hear us out.

Bear in mind that we wore the uniform of the United States Air Force as an active member four years and active reservist another four before being discharged in 1963.

We love America. We love everything the American flag stands for. And we still remove our hat and place it over our heart when the flag passes by at parades. When the flag is raised to the sounds of the national anthem, we place our hand over our heart.

At other times we reflect on the meaning of the American flag. First to come to mind is freedom — of speech, in its many forms. And ironically one of those freedoms would be to burn the flag. Only in the land of the free would this situation prevail.

No, we wouldn't burn the flag of the United States of America. There are, however, times when someone should. When it becomes torn, soiled, weather weary. There are proper ways to dispose of it.

But all that said, we still have a problem with OUR flag.

We bought one a few years ago when it seemed like everybody in America was showing their support and pride. We brought it home, took it out of its wrappings and as we attached it to the pole that came with it, we noticed a small sticker on the bottom edge of the flag. How disappointed we were to find that the sticker contained this notation: "Made In China."

We didn't display that flag.

Then we wondered: if the flag of this great nation is our most prized possession, why then is it that we don't have companies in this great nation that make the American flag?

Maybe we do have companies that make flags, but probably for other countries. That's sort of the way things are playing out in this day and age of global hugging.

But, you might say, it's what the flag stands for, not necessarily who makes it. While that may be right, there's just something in the mix that doesn't quite ring true.

Something to think about. Or debate over morning coffee.

Since the purchase of that "made in China" American flag, we have, thank goodness, found a few businesses that sell the U.S. flag carrying the notation, "Made in the U.S.A."

That would make Betsy Ross smile!

—Tom Dreiling, The Norton Telegram

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**Editor's note:** We agree with Dreiling about the importance of our freedom of speech that would, in an extreme, include burning the flag. We were relieved when the U.S. Senate failed to pass a constitutional amendment to limit this freedom of expression.

Burning the flag makes us mad, but the idea of being told we cannot do something as an expression of free speech would be worse.

True pride of being and American is in our hearts, and the flag is a symbol of that pride. Our country has been under different flags in history, and we are proud of the one we place out in front every business day.

In Goodland, we order our flags through the Veterans of Foreign Wars to get one Made in the U.S.A.

Our active service was in the U.S. Navy from 1969 to 1973, with reserve service until being discharged in 1975. We later served in the Lamar unit of the Colorado National Guard in the mid-1980s.

— Tom Betz



## Post Office statistics are pure bunk

Benjamin Disraeli, a 19th century British diplomat and prime minister, once said, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics."

Then there are letters from Postal Service public relations men.

One of those wrote a response last week to our May 31 editorial warning of planned steep increases in postage.

Wrapping himself in the cloak of Founding Father Ben Franklin, our country's first postmaster general and also a noted newspaper publisher, Postal Service Vice President Azeezaly S. Jaffer tried to make light of rate increases planned for newspaper subscribers.

It's pure bunk, backed up by statistics.

If you look past the breezy references to poor old Ben, you'll note that the writer does not deal with the arguments about declining mail volume, diversion of profitable first class traffic to electronic delivery and the death spiral initiated by ever-increasing price increases on the remaining mail.

Because that's all true.

Soon, the service will be delivering mostly what we call junk mail. Soon, it will be hauling a letter you mail to someone across town to Wichita to be sorted at an "efficient" automated center and hauled back across the state.

The letter does not deal with the horrible service out-of-area readers get, because the Postal Service hasn't done anything about that so far.



steve  
haynes

• along the sappa

Higher prices for worse service, that's been the rule.

Then come the statistics. The editorial warned of a coming 24.2 percent increase on newspapers mailed in the county where published.

Why, that's a bargain, he claims. Those rates haven't gone up, they've gone down. The rate would be "only" 9 to 11 cents a paper — which is true.

It's also true that the rate today averages about 8 cents a paper, and 2 cents is a 25 percent increase.

The writer claims a dime to deliver a paper sounds like a bargain. He claims newspapers are getting "Express Mail" service for just pennies.

Except that no one pays Express Mail rates to get a letter across town overnight. That's what we expect from the Postal Service for ordinary mail — next-day delivery in town.

Uh-oh. Does that mean we'll soon have to pay \$14 for Express Mail just to get a letter delivered to a neighbor?

The fact is, newspaper readers are facing an

unwarranted 25 percent increase in delivery charges. It'll cost them a buck or two a year. And they can expect more and more to come.

A dime to deliver a paper might seem like a bargain, but the current rate is a fair price. Publishers sort and deliver papers in walk-sequence order so carriers don't have to "work" them. They just open the bundle and pass them out.

Newspapers, one industry spokesmen points out, don't use much of the postal system's infrastructure — just the carrier:

"Not the blue boxes, not the transportation, not the mail processing plants nor the machines nor air freight nor rail nor most of the rest of the huge infrastructure. Most of this mail does everything but tie the carrier's shoelaces."

Postal delivery is preferred by publishers and readers, but it costs just 5 to 6 cents apiece to hire carriers to deliver the same paper. That's an alternative many publishers will have to consider.

Is a 25 percent increase in costs a bargain, as Mr. Jaffer says?

I don't know anyone who'd buy that statistic. Publishers' experts says the Postal Service doesn't have valid cost data to back up that rate.

Newspaper readers will have to swallow it, though, unless something changes.

And we all better get ready to pay more and more for other postage, too.

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## Thanks for great July 4 celebration

To the Editor:

My family was lucky enough to attend the festivities at the Goodland fairgrounds Tuesday night, July 4, and I just wanted to send out a big public "Thank You!" to anyone and everyone who had a part in the evening.

It was straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting, from the food to the rides to the snow cones and free concert. It was a night any community would be proud of, topped off by one



from our  
readers

• to the editor

of the best fireworks displays I have ever seen.

After a year of wondering what would happen to Goodland's Fourth of July celebration,



## garfield

