

Cowboy singer pleases crowd at home on range

The afternoon was gentle, the breeze cool, and cotton fluff drifted through the grove shading a few hundred hardy music fans waiting for Michael Martin Murphey to come on stage.

There's something right about watching Michael, who bills himself as "American's No. 1 Cowboy Music Singer," from a seat where you can see the range, not some city auditorium.

"Murph" has come a long ways since the days of "Wildfire" and "Carolina in the Pines," leaving Nashville for ranches in Taos, Colorado and Texas and, strangely enough, Wisconsin, where he lives today.

He's into old-time cowboy ballads, and he had a haunting version of "Streets of Laredo" for the crowd at Lake Atwood this Sunday.

Wearing jeans, chaps, spurs and boots, a vest and an old cowboy hat, Murphey bounded onto the stage — really two flatbed semis parked back-to-back — after an opening set by Erica James, an Oklahoma father-and-daughter duo who do original music on violin and guitar.

He opened with "The Long and Lonely Ride to Dalhart," a sad and lovely ballad about a cowboy coming off the summer range. Michael is no Hollywood cowboy, though he said as a kid, he dreamed of being the next Roy Rogers or Gene Autry.

He grew up on his grandfather's place in the Panhandle and still calls Texas home. He raises horses and runs stock, and the farther he gets from Nashville, the more cowboy he is.

He's also a heck of a nice guy, an entertainer of some means who takes time to sign everything offered and talk with each fan in a long line after the concert. He's done benefits,

like the one Sunday, for restoration of the old Shirley Opera House in Atwood, for years.

Back in the days when southern Colorado ranchers were fighting a Canadian billionaire who wanted to sell their water to California, Michael would drive up from Taos each summer to do a benefit for the water war. He never failed to draw a crowd to the rodeo grounds in Monte Vista.

He left New Mexico for Colorado a few years back, he told the crowd, when yuppies cooking steaks behind their condos started to outnumber the elk he could see from his porch. He didn't want to wake up to a forest fire, he added, and it was getting a little crowded. There was an attitude.

And at 10,000 foot elevation, it was pretty poor range anyway.

He started something called "Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Experience" in central Colorado, where dudes could live in the bunkhouse and ride horses all week on vacation. Maybe the real cowboy life wasn't for most city folks, but he gave that up a couple of years later — for love.

His new wife, he said, has three girls who can't leave Wisconsin, so that's where Michael punches cows these days. He doesn't seem any worse for the wear.

We hope Jeff and Alice Hill and their supporters made a few bucks for their project Sunday, but we know they made a lot of music fans happy. Michael, too.

He gave the crowd a heavy dose of new and old cowboy tunes, teasing them a little about his Nashville life.

But when they stood and cheered, he rewarded them with "Wildfire," his first and most enduring hit.



COWBOY SINGER Michael Martin Murphey put everything he had into a sad old trail song Sunday during a benefit concert at Lake Atwood. — Herald staff photo by Steve Haynes

Men need to focus on what's critical

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:
Some questions I would like to ask the men of Oberlin: How are things? Are you doing OK? Really?

What's your relationship with your wife like? Are you loving and cherishing her? Or are you sitting in front of the television while she does all the things that enrich your life, as well as taking care of your kids' needs?

Do your kids have a vague notion of what role you play in their lives, or are they solidly connected to you?

Look, we know you work hard, that you deserve a little down time. First, though, you need to let your woman know that she means more to you than anything, that you would sacrifice your very life for her. Your kids need your undivided attention as you instill them with self-worth and show them what a good father and husband looks like.

Do you want to stay married? If you are not sure, let me help you out. You desperately want to stay married. Any alternative is not going to provide any happiness for you. Any good legacy you might wish to leave will be destroyed if you allow your marriage to fail.

And let me assure you, whether or not your marriage succeeds is entirely in your control. No wife and mother will have the desire to be parted from the man who won her heart, loves her sacrificially and fathered her children. If you are in an unhappy marriage, it is your fault.

You are thinking, "Oh, yeah, easy for you to say, you don't know this woman I live with."

But I do — she, in some ways, is a lot like you and me. She wants to be loved; she needs to be accepted. She needs to know that you, above all

others, approve of her, like her, and want to be with her. She wants you to admire and desire her.

Men, give her what she wants! It is your duty (And here's a little secret, it will serve you well. Trust me on this.)

Life in America is pretty good right now. Most of us men haven't experienced a lot of deprivation and uncertainty about our very future. As a result, we are flabby mentally and morally. We aren't entirely sure we measure up to the ones who came before us, those who conquered the land, sea and space, who wore rugged individualism as a badge of their manhood. We're told to be nice. We are stuck in an adolescent mindset.

Guys, we need to grow up. We need to minimize our pursuit of childish endeavors. (Think sports, hobbies, NASCAR — you get the idea.) We need to focus on what makes a man a man — and that's laying down our own interests to satisfy our wives' and kids' interests.

I've got some bad news: It is virtually impossible to do that under your own power.

Here's some good news: We have help available! The power of Jesus Christ and His resurrection is all we need to be able to have a successful, fulfilled life.

Call me. Let's talk about what it means to be a man in the world today. I don't have all the answers, but I know Someone who does.

Steve Stacy, Oberlin



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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The song came to him in a dream, he said, and interpreting dreams is God's work.

"I don't know how to tell you," he said, "but I don't understand this song. I don't know how to explain it."

Nobody seemed to mind.

Bills to curb pickets, end business tax, lift English

The Legislature got school finance out of the way early this year. On Day 2 of the 2007 session, with a strong desire to move forward, money was set aside for the next two years of school funding.

Unlike all other years I have served both in the House and the Senate, we did not wait until the end of the session to debate school finance. Early on, we placed enough money in reserve to pay for public schools for the next two years.

Here is a summary of major bills passed this year:

SB 244 - Funeral Picketing — This bill created the Kansas Privacy Act, which will prohibit persons from picketing or directed protest within 150 feet of any entrance to any cemetery, church, mortuary or other location where a funeral is held. This bill will go into effect after the Kansas Supreme Court or a federal court upholds its constitutionality.

HB 2528 - Conceal Carry Follow-up — For the second time in Gov. Sebelius' tenure, the Kansas Legislature successfully overrode a conceal carry veto. This bill deletes the authority of cities and counties to regulate firearms licenses by zoning measures; repeals the ability of public entities from restricting or prohibiting concealed weapons on public premises; repeals the ability of property owners from restricting or prohibiting concealed weapons; and requires posting of signs at the areas where the law does not allow concealed weapons.

HB 2062 - Alexa's Law — This bill defines an unborn child as a person against whom certain crimes could be committed. The effect will be to allow prosecutors to bring separate criminal charges against people who commit crimes against a pregnant woman and her fetus. It contains a provision making clear that it does not apply to abortion.

HB 2264 - Corporate Franchise Tax — Both chambers worked this bill so that corporate franchise tax



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
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would be phased out over the next five years. Beginning his year, the exemption will be increased from \$100,000 of net worth to \$1 million. The rate will be reduced from the current \$1.25 per \$1,000 of shareholder equity or net worth to \$.9375 in 2008; \$.625 in 2009; and \$.3125 in 2010. This tax will be repealed altogether in 2011.

SB 66 - Expanded Gaming and Lottery Extension — For me this was, by far, the most disappointing and sad turn of events for Kansas. Following a historic 12-hour filibuster, the Senate voted 21-19 to concur with the House and send the governor a bill that will allow construction of up to four state-owned casinos in Kansas and the installation of slot machines at the three existing horse and dog racing tracks.

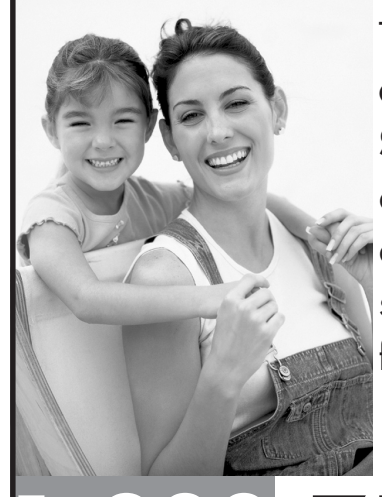
This bill will impose a 25-year moratorium on any future expansion of gaming. Possible casino locations, each subject to local voter approval, are Wyandotte County, Sedgewick or Sumner County, Ford County and Crawford or Cherokee County.

HB 2140 - English as Official Kansas Language
This notion was first introduced to the Legislature more than 11 years ago. It finally passed to make English the official state language.

HB 2237 - Regents Deferred Maintenance — Last, but certainly not least, this issue was definitely the dark horse of the session. This bill creates the state Educational Institution Long-Term Infrastructure Maintenance Program.

Beginning in July, the state will make annual appropriations over the next five years to the Board of Regents to repair deferred maintenance projects at state universities. These transfers will total \$90 million in new money, including \$47 million from the state General Fund. There are countless requirements and stipulations that institutions must follow.

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