

No matter her flaws, our republic still the best

The fireworks are over, the picnic eaten, the boat put away. America is back to work today.

Our country is another year older, marking its 235th birthday on Monday.

Back at the office, the field, the highway, the Legislature, we face the same old problems: not enough money, too many needs, too many demands, too much poverty, schools that do only part of what we want them to do, roads with too many potholes and not enough lanes.

The list is endless.

Are we right to celebrate our country?

It was, and is, a grand experiment. When the Founding Fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence, no nation on the face of the Earth held out the ideals of democracy and self-government, of freedom and liberty, they proclaimed.

Men were ruled by kings and despots. Brief flirtations with self-rule by Greeks and Romans were but footnotes to history.

Yet, English noblemen and European thinkers had begun to articulate a higher standard. The English, still subject to the will of the king, had won certain rights. Philosophers wrote about the “natural” rights of man.

But our forbears, led by the pen of Thomas Jefferson, took this a step or two further. They declared the “inalienable” rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” granted to men by “Nature and Nature’s God.”

Having declared Independence from the English king, fought for and won it, they set about creating a nation founded on those principles. It was not easy, nor did it come quickly.

Even the Constitutional Convention, which gave us a framework for government, did not

address our rights as humans. That was left to a group of Virginians concerned that the new governments would become so strong they would oppress us, even as the king had.

They gave us the example of a Bill of Rights, later adopted into the federal Constitution, to limit the authority of our government. That was a key concept. The Bill guaranteed our liberty, from the right to bear arms to the right to a speedy trial when accused by the government.

The First Amendment alone is a marvel of spare and efficient language. In just 45 words, it gave us the rights to free speech, a free press, to worship, to assemble and protest, and to petition our government.

And so we began our grand experiment under a system like no other.

Perfect? Far from it.

The Declaration, with its high ideals of freedom, came from the pen of Jefferson, who owned slaves. The Constitution, as the Founders understood it, granted rights only to free white men.

We’d have to fight a Civil War to settle the issues of slavery and secession. It’d be another century before we began to address the second-class status of blacks and other minorities, of women and others.

We’ve come a long ways since then. We’re a better country now than 50 years ago, but still not perfect. So many problems to solve; so many things not even our government can fix.

And yet, our ideals remain so much higher. If you made the argument we have the best system on Earth, who would disagree? We just need to keep making it better.

Happy Birthday, America.

— Steve Haynes

Wind sweeps away shed roof

Water, wind and wain. I mean rain.

Water, because that’s what I do every day: water flowers, water tomatoes, water chickens and goats. I’m discovering the chickens drink more water than the goats.

I usually let the hose run a trickle on the plants and move it every couple of hours. Plants get a good soaking that way and I can still get other jobs done at the same time.


However, there is something therapeutic about standing with a garden hose in your hand, delivering thirst-quenching water to living things.

Wind, because that was quite a “blow” we had through here over the weekend.

We were quietly watching television one night when, the house sort of trembled, trash cans began beating against the fence and, even in our quiet, well-insulated home, the wind became an audible roar. Then, just as quickly, it was gone.

It wasn’t until the next morning we discovered the damages. A nice, upper branch of our beautiful cottonwood tree was lying in the street; a neighbor lost a huge portion of one of their stately elms; and Jim discovered the roof to one of his sheds torn to bits.

The good news is sheds can be repaired, trees will grow new branches and no one was hurt.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts

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Wain (rain) because when it did come, it poured. Not very long but, it was a “gully washer” for a few minutes.

-ob-

Another beautiful fireworks display went down in the record books for Fourth of July 2011. We took a friend with two little kids with us this year. The baby was wide-eyed as the explosions shook the air. Her 7-year-old brother was “ah-struck.” That was what he kept saying, “Ah-h-h!”

I admit I’m as big a kid as any of them. I love the Fourth of July. My mom did not like firecrackers, so they were pretty much banned when I was a kid. She did allow sparklers. I’m not sure why. They were probably more dangerous than firecrackers.

Think about it. Little children running around with a piece of molten metal in their hands. It’s a wonder we didn’t “brand” each other. But it sure was fun writing

our names in the air.

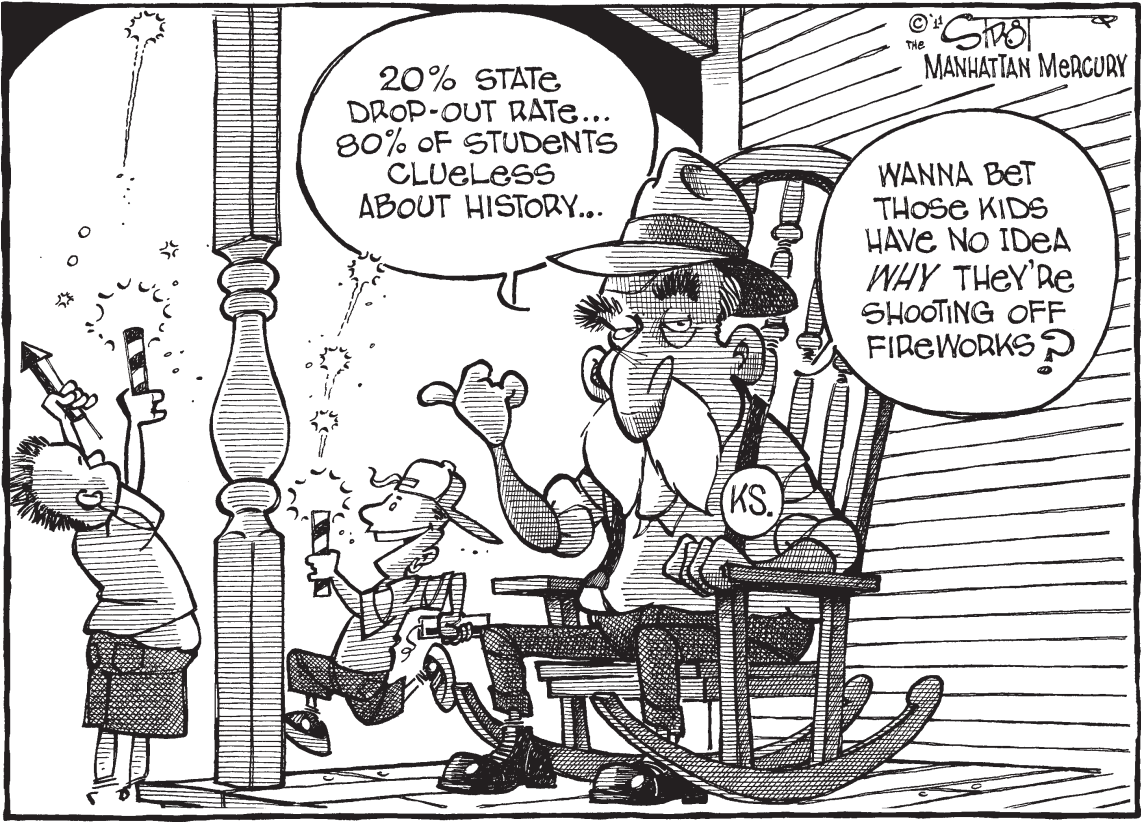
The Fourth is my brother Jim’s birthday. Called to wish him a “Happy Birthday” but missed him at home and on his cell phone, so I’ll take this opportunity to send him belated birthday wishes.

-ob-

We have one happy granddaughter. Alexandria is the proud new owner of a 2006 Mustang Fastback. It is baby blue, with leather interior and all the bells and whistles any 16-year-old could ask for.

Alex is a straight-A student and has set her sights on a career in the medical profession. She will be a high school junior when school resumes next month, and with some of her advanced classes, making hospital rounds is a requirement.

She texted pictures of the car (from every angle) and we are happy she is happy about her new set of wheels. It’s another big step in her growing up process. Oh, the independence it brings!



Addiction peaks in summer

Addiction is a terrible thing. It drives men to madness. Makes them do things they would not normally think of doing. Causes disruption of homes, families and work.

The problem is, most addicts don’t believe they have a problem. The common theme is that they can stop any time.

Steve is addicted to baseball. It’s an insidious addiction which causes him to cheer for a team so hapless at times that listening to the games can be a painful experience.

When we lived in Kansas City, he was a Royals fan.

Back in those days, the team was awful. They started to get better, and I was dragged to a couple of playoff games in the late ’70s, where we froze our tails off and watched future Hall of Famer George Brett boot several easy grounders.

We moved, and the Royals got better but then we were living in a town without radio. Literally, we couldn’t get a radio signal due to the mountains.

Steve had his sister tape a couple of games and send them to us. We listened to those two games about 50 times.

Then the Rockies came to Denver, and we moved to a town with



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes

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radio. We got a set and started listening to the games. We even got to go to a few.

After moving to Kansas, Steve would meet our oldest daughter, who by then lived in Wyoming, in Denver for games.

Over the years, we’ve collected about six portable radios for listening to games. We have the outside radio, the upstairs radio, the kitchen radio, the radio to take to the lake and the one to take on evening walks around town.

We are signed up for satellite radio in case we are out of range of the Denver and Goodland stations, and can get the games on the Internet if we miss one and need a replay.

We have a large-screen television to watch the good plays on Sports Center late at night. We seldom watch the games because the Rockies aren’t usually good enough to be the game of the day – that honor usually goes to the Yankees, Red

Socks or Braves.

When there’s a game on, the radio or computer is on at home, in the office, in the car, on the deck, in the back yard or under the stars as we walk the dog.

In the winter, he goes into a depression and starts to calculate the number of days before the pitchers and catchers report for spring training – always sometime in February.

It’s always a long, bleak, base-ballless winter for him.

Now, Steve will tell you he can stop any time. He doesn’t really listen to all the games. He’s not really hooked on the national pastime.

Don’t believe him. He’s hooked, line and sinker.

But, then I shouldn’t complain. It’s a reasonably cheap addiction, and it could be worse. He could be addicted to football. There never seems to be an off season for football.

Not all in awe of the Yankees

I started to get a little irritated the other day as the Rockies played a three-game series in New York.

The broadcasters, supposedly veteran sports announcers, were acting like little kids admitted to the candy factory.

It was like, “Geez, we’re in YAN-KEE STADIUM.”

First of all, it’s a new stadium, not the crumbling ruin of the place where Babe Ruth hit all those home runs. And these guys are supposed to be experts, experienced people. They’ve been there before.

OK, the Rockies don’t go to American League parks all that often. But play-by-play man Jack Corrigan used to travel with the Cleveland Indians. We know he’s been there.

I know a lot of people across the country grew up in the thrall of the mighty Yankees. I just wasn’t one of them.

As a kid growing up in eastern Kansas, I learned to dislike the Yankees.

Our first “home” baseball team was the hapless Athletics, who moved from Philadelphia to the old Muehlebach Field in Kansas City in 1955. The first year, they finished sixth with a 63-91 record. But we had a major league team.

The A’s had long been the No. 2 team in Philly, and owner Arnold Johnson was perennially short of cash. If he needed some in the middle of the season, why he’d trade his best player to the Yankees.

One year, a young guy named



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes

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Roger Maris was thrilling fans in Kansas City when ... well, you get the picture. In New York, of course, he became the first to break Ruth’s single-season record of 60 home runs.

Another time, Bob Cerv, a supposedly worn-out outfielder, came down from the Yankees in an out-right purchase. The former University of Nebraska star had what today they call a “career year” in 1958 – hit .305, smacked 38 homers, and had 104 runs batted in for Kansas City. He was elected to the American League All-Star team, beating out Ted Williams for the starting spot, and finished fourth in the Most Valuable Player voting that year.

Before you could say “Damned Yankees,” why he was traded BACK to New York in 1960. (The old ’50s musical sort of summed up the way we felt.)

Life, sigh, was like that when your club was so bad it could only make it through the year by dealing with the devils in pinstripes.

Then Charles O. Finley, a Chicago insurance man, bought the team, and things got worse, though much more interesting, until Finley

pulled up stakes and moved to the Bay Area in 1968.

In his few short years in K.C., however, Finley changed baseball, bringing on brightly colored uniforms, grazing goats (and a mule named Charlie O) in the grass out past the outfield, and an elevator to make a green-and-gold-dressed rabbit pop up at home plate to deliver fresh balls to the umpire.

Everyone hated Finley. One year he bought a field out in Johnson County and threatened to play there if the city didn’t come to terms on stadium rental.

Oh, we had Yankee fans. For years, the Kansas City Blues, owned by beer baron George Muehlebach, were a Yankees Triple-A farm team, and many storied players came through town.

We just weren’t among their fans. I still hate the Yankees, and I know I have a lot of company.

And if I have to listen to much more of the hero worship from the Denver broadcasters, I may have to switch back to the (once-again hapless) Royals.

Damned Yankees.

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Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers of *The Oberlin Herald*:

From the Bible

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. The way of man is froward and strange; but as for the pure, his work is right.

— Proverbs 21: 6, 7, 8

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