

Constitution as relevant today as 235 years ago

An essay in *Time* magazine asks if our 235-year-old Constitution is relevant today.

There's nothing new in the question; it's been asked off and on for more than 200 years.

The framers of the Constitution, so the questioning logic goes, knew nothing of airplanes, telecommunications, cell phones, modern medicine. The list is endless.

A century ago, the telegraph. You get the picture.

Of course, times have changed. The Constitution, in great measure, has not. Oh, it's been amended — we banned, then restored the liquor trade, granted civil rights to all, limited presidents to two terms, but never specified "equal rights" for women.

Overall, the changes have been relatively minor.

Changes in technology don't outmode a system of government. The Constitution sets out an elegant solution to the need for a national government while protecting both the citizens and the individual states that joined to form the Union from that government's power.

If not the Constitution, with its republican system and its balance among three coequal branches of government, how should we be governed?

By some socialist, liberal dictatorship where those who know best tell the rest of us how to live? Oh, that system has been tried, hasn't it?

By instant electronic democracy? Government by Facebook? Sounds dangerous, unstable.

The Founding Fathers may have known little of railroads, steamships or the telephone. They did know the value of the printing press, essentially the Internet of their day, and they knew human nature.

They had fought to free the colonies from oppression by those across the sea who knew

best, and understood the dangers of government granted excessive power. They gave us the framework of a system that could endure many dangers, but they left out the most precious part — our rights.

That omission was soon corrected by the addition of the first 10 Amendments, what we know as the Bill of Rights. And there, with a little tinkering, they gave us the most nearly perfect system of government known to man.

Today we look at the federal government and see that it's bloated, cumbersome, slow-moving, hard to deal with and still harder to change. Perhaps the problem isn't with the Constitution. Perhaps it's with the way it's interpreted and abused.

The framers never intended the government to be a tool for granting favors to big business interests or to social groups. They created a limited government, with limited powers and three branches to watch one another.

Time has, perhaps, corrupted that vision. It allowed the government to grow large, and at times, in its clumsy way, oppressive. Some say the system is no longer responsive to our needs. If that's the problem, though, it can be corrected.

But the framework, the framework is as brilliant today as it was 200 years ago.

A new Constitution for the Internet era?

Can you imagine? If Congress wrote it today, instead of the spare and simple document we have, it'd run to thousands of pages, replete with earmarks for the politicians and tax breaks for corporations.

The First Amendment might be 45 pages, rather than 45 words, and mention each and every group that might claim a right or two.

Let's not take the chance. Let's keep the Constitution and dump those who want to subvert it. — *Steve Haynes*



Old friends seem to be aging

Who are all these old people and why do they look so much like my friends?

We were back in Colorado for the Fourth of July, among old friends and neighbors.

Sitting at a table in the cafe waiting for our breakfast to arrive, I noted several friends from years gone by.

Back in 1980, when we moved to the mountains, these were the town's young movers and shakers. They were the 20 and 30 somethings, ready to take over from the old fuddy duddies running the show.

Now my old friends have gray hair and a lot of wrinkles.

One, a photographer and painter who lives in Colorado in the summer and Lawrence in the winter, admitted that he's receiving Social Security. It's not much, he admitted, but it pays his health insurance, and for a self-employed painter, that's pretty great.

My neighbor, who has been retired from the Forest Service for years, told me he had turned 70 last year. Yipes. His kids and my kids were practically the same age. They attended school together and played together in our adjoining back yards.



Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*
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Now his daughter lives in Australia and his son works in construction in the town he's lived in almost his entire life.

Across the street, the old superintendent of schools and his wife, who worked part time for the post office and full time in her yard, divide their time between Colorado and Arizona.

So do the couple two doors down. He was lineman for Rural Electric and she's still a housewife.

I met the former lineman at a yard sale and he confided that he really doesn't miss the ice and cold of the 40-below winters in the mountains.

This is the same man who taught my daughters to play basketball and shepherded the county's small Mormon flock. Now he's retired and hasn't climbed a power pole in years.

I remember the evening that this

same man waded through waist-deep snow to restring the power line that provided the only source of electricity for our community. He still looks as strong as an ox, but the bifocals and hearing aids are a sign of his age.

Back in the cafe, I spotted a shop owner and jewelry maker. Now her straight knee-length hair is graying and put up in a bun. Back when I first met her, she wore it down most of the time and it was coal black. Now the wild child is a matron and community leader.

How did all these people get so old. How come they aged but I've stayed a 30 something? So strange.

(No, you don't need to remind me that I, too, have many gray hairs and my children are all in their 30s. I'm busy avoiding mirrors and deluding myself, thank you very much.)

Rain puts harvest on hold

Rain was in the forecast and a dusty haze hung over low lying fields as wheat growers put every available man and machine in the field trying to bring in the harvest before the next squall hit. It was a race against time, and the rain won. Again.

This year's is turning into one of those protracted harvests that goes on and on and on. Intermittent rains keep combines out of the fields and farmers in the house. Maybe not literally in the house, but at least in the shop doing maintenance or in the parts house picking up stuff for repairs. Anyplace but where they want to be — which is in the field.

Then, the sun comes out a 'scorchin', dries things up and the race is on again.

Friday will find us on the road to Dallas. My daughter Kara called to say her daughter, Taylor, 12, had made the decision to be baptized. We, of course, are thrilled. And since this is the most important decision she will make in her life, we wanted to be there to share the day with her.

Taylor had been considering baptism for a long time, discussing it with the preacher at the church



Out Back

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she attends and with her family. A week at church camp solidified her decision, and she came home ready to take the next step. It's our understanding that 10 people from the congregation will be baptized in a lake and there will be a picnic.

This week, Taylor is on her first mission trip and won't return until Saturday night. She and the youth group from her church went to New Orleans to work on rehabbing houses and cleaning up neighborhoods still untouched since Hurricane Katrina. Mission trips have a way of changing people. I'm positive Taylor will come home a different person than the one who left.

Another of our girls, Jennifer, and her two daughters, Alexandria and Aniston, are going to come to Dallas for the day, so it will be a mini family reunion of sorts, too.

The icing on the cake is that we get to bring Taylor home with us for two weeks.

I've already planned a pizza party for her and some of the young ladies she has met over the years. Throw in swimming at the pool and a county fair, and I don't think I'll have any trouble entertaining an almost 13-year-old.

From the Bible

And he called the multitude and said unto them, "Hear and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

Matthew 15: 10-11

Want to keep car? Keep keys

A story out of Colby reminds me of one piece of solid advice that most people tend to ignore: Never leave your keys in the ignition.

Never, not for a second. The story: down in Colby, a business had a company car it kept for running errands and the like. It was parked in the lot by the office, keys in the ignition, when a thief on the road from California spotted it.

The thief jumped in the car, leaving a pickup with California tags (later found to be stolen) in its place. Colby police noted that the swap was pretty easy to spot when they got there.

Which goes to show, even in a small town, it's not safe to leave the keys in the car.

That's not the end of the tale, though. In Salina later the same night, a visitor from Johnson County was pumping gas into a company car he was driving. When he turned to replace the nozzle, the car took off.

You guessed it: he'd left the keys in the ignition. After all, he was *right there*.

You may also have guessed by now that Salina police found that car stolen in Colby nearby in the truck stop's parking lot.

Guess the thief decided he wanted one with a full tank this time.

Even in Oberlin, cars sometimes



Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*
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disappear when they have keys in them. It was worse when the youth ranch was going strong, but cars still take off now and then.

In Kansas City one winter, a woman left her baby in the car while she ran into a convenience store "for just a second." She looked out to see the car leaving, and wound up with a lot of explaining to do, once the police found her baby.

An all-time classic case happened around Goodland a few years ago. A young man who apparently had gotten more into drugs than his classes at a Colorado college wrecked his car just over the state line, flipping into a nearby field.

A farmer happened along, stopping to see if the driver was all right. The sheriff arrived. Both were startled when the farmer's truck roared to life and took off for the freeway.

He'd left the keys in the truck, of course.

Out on I-70, the kid wrecked the

pickup over on the Kansas side. People stopped to help. One of them, a guy hauling a boat home from the lake, looked up to see his rig, pickup, boat and all, taking off.

He'd left the keys in the ignition.

The boat flipped into a field on the first hard turn off I-70 and onto old U.S. 24, but the kid kept going, trailer and all, until he wrecked that truck, too, going the wrong way on the freeway. Only this time the highway patrol had him surrounded.

His last mistake, allegedly, was trying to reach into a trooper's car to take the keys. The trooper, it seemed, was still in the driver's seat.

The moral of the story is simple. There's no good time to leave the keys in the ignition. None.

If you want to keep your car, keep the keys with you, even if you are right there.

Period.

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Decatur Tomorrow likes support

To the Editor:

The Decatur Tomorrow Steering Committee was impressed by the turnout for the Community Conversation on a "Healthy Community" held June 15 at The Gateway. About 140 people found health care to be a significant issue and were present to voice their support and interest in the future of our county.

Amazing ideas and comments were a result of this conversation, and these were followed up on at a Vision Retreat on June 27. A core group of 21 people who volunteered (as a result of the Community Conversation) their time and efforts congregated at Faith Lutheran Church for this retreat, moderated by Terry Woodberry and Chrysanne Grund from Public Square Communities.

The retreat addressed concerns, ideas, and issues surrounding health care in Decatur County. Small groups of five to six people held discussions which led the community members to decide on three

Letter to the Editor

action teams to address a healthy community: Positive Community Culture, Recruitment and Sustainment of Health Providers and Communication.

These teams consist of six to eight people each. The groups will meet to discuss creative, positive and unique ways to address all issues at hand. They will make a concerted effort for the most pertinent information to the public.

The goal of the Decatur Tomorrow Steering Committee is to encourage cohesiveness in the community and start the process of growing a stronger and healthier county.

Can our committee ask a favor? Would you go out on a limb and ask any family members, friends or acquaintances who might be health-care providers, doctors or

others, if they would consider living in Decatur County, which is a quiet, safe, and clean environment to raise their families.

We have a beautiful community with quality people who care. All of us working together can make a difference by communicating this to others. As has been said, "Teamwork... is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

Kem Bryan, Deanna Castle, Oberlin
Decatur Tomorrow Steering Committee co-conveners