



Virginia played big role

In the just-completed 2012 presidential election, Virginia played a key role as a “swing state.” The race between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney was too close to call in several states, so the candidates spent much time jetting back and forth, trying to convince voters in those “battleground states” they were the best choice.



Opinion
By Doug Anstaett
danstaett@kspress.com

The race went down to the wire, and Virginia’s electoral delegates eventually were awarded to the president.

This isn’t the first time Virginia has served a significant role as a “swing state.” In the days leading up to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, representatives from the “Old Dominion” declared a valiant effort to include basic individual rights in the nation’s founding document.

While a listing of those rights we cherish today didn’t make it into the original document, Virginia’s delegates placed considerable pressure on their peers to promise they would be addressed by the first U.S. Congress.

Serving as the chief catalyst for this movement was a man who never got much credit for it. He didn’t become president or vice president and certainly was seldom mentioned in the same breath with the other Founding Fathers.

In fact, you’ve probably never heard his name except for when the university named for him advances in the NCAA basketball tournament.

But George Mason extracted a promise from fellow Virginian James Madison, a future president, to make sure those rights—freedom of speech, press and religion, free-

dom from search and seizure, the right to a fair trial by a jury of one’s peers and the right to bear arms—were spelled out.

Mason, who had been a Virginia delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, already had affected the American Revolution by writing the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Many phrases from that document can be found in slightly altered form in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including “all powers vested in, and consequently derived from, the people,” “the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety” and his call for “frequent, certain and regular” elections.

Mason believed government power should be limited and that the rights of citizens should be paramount. But his proposal for a bill of rights fashioned after Virginia’s was defeated. At the first session of the first Congress, however, Madison, also an elected representative from Virginia, introduced a Bill of Rights that reflected Mason’s ideas.

Besides the rights already mentioned above, those first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution also outlawed excessive bail or fines

and cruel and unusual punishment and reserved some powers to the states.

Today, some 221 years later, Americans exercise those rights each and every day. Maybe this year we should say a word of thanks to the state of Virginia and especially to the delegate who wouldn’t take no for an answer on our most cherished rights: George Mason.

Doug Anstaett, formerly an award-winning editorialist at the Topeka Capital Journal and the Newton Kansan, is executive director of the Kansas Press Association in Topeka.

In the U.S.A.

America is much more than a geographical fact. It is a political and moral fact—the first community in which men set out in principle to institutionalize freedom, responsible government and human equality.

— Sen. Adlai Stevenson
Presidential candidate
Feb. 4, 1900 - July 14, 1965

Midlife crisis hits all of us

So, if your husband decides all of the sudden to buy a little red sports car and cruise around with the top down, scientists says, it’s not really his fault. It’s just biology.

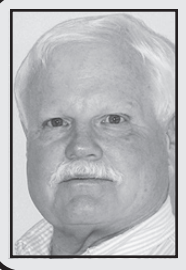
And not the kind that might prompt him to seek a younger blonde to ride around with him. That’s just poor taste.

No, the authors of a recent study say maybe that’s just the way we are. Others have shown that people tend to show a low ebb in emotional well-being at midlife. And now at least one study shows the same is true for apes.

It’s not that apes start leaving their mates for younger females or go out and buy a red Ferrari. In fact, one of the authors hastened to add that there was no proof an ape ever bought a red sports car.

Isay it could have happened. Several chimps made it to star status in Hollywood in decades past. Today, of course, it’s frowned upon to use chimps in entertainment. And the SPCA would mostly likely give the producer a ticket if anyone allowed an ape to be filmed smoking a cigarette, and that used to happen in Hollywood, too.

But we know the midlife crisis is staple in Hollywood, and who’s to say that one of those chimps making the big bananas years ago didn’t go out and buy a flashy car. Heck, he might have had a blonde



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansan.com

or two to run around with him for all we know.

It could have happened. But back to the study at hand, which shows that the great apes are just as susceptible as the rest of us to midlife depression. Captive chimps and orangutans show a remarkably human tendency to midlife decline that could have been passed down through evolution.

So in scientific terms, you might not be “a monkey’s uncle”—technically, as the forebear on the evolutionary tree, wouldn’t the monkey be your uncle, anyway?—maybe you and the monkey are depressed for the same reason.

Your old car’s a clunker. Younger females no longer turn and watch you walk by. Midlife is just no fun without a sports car.

None of this scientific malarkey is going to help you, however, when the wife finds out how much that car really did cost, and I’m supposing for most of us, it won’t be a Ferrari.

Maybe an old, used MG or a nice little Mustang.

“You paid what for that? We could have had the bathroom redone and new curtains in the drawing room.”

Whatever a drawing room is. And if there’s a blonde involved, well just forget about scientific explanations. She’s not going to want to hear about evolution or biology, let alone nature and nurture.

You might as well have hired the lawyer first.

Come to think of it, the depression that precedes your midlife crisis might pale beside the headaches you’ll have after you get the car and the blonde.

My suggestion is just leave the whole thing to the apes. Take up gardening or golf, and consider yourself lucky. Let them chase the younger females.

A midlife crisis is just going to be too much trouble.

Technology is killing memory

A professor at Shandong Normal University in Jinan, China, confided to me over lunch after my morning lectures at his college last year, “Our students are forgetting how to write!”

The culprit was the new electronics. The Chinese-language input system for handheld smartphones as well as for computers uses a program to prompt the next-most-likely character. For instance, you want to start a message with “I want...” You key in the sound of the word for “I” and the Chinese characters that have that sound are lined up with the most common word first. You press 1 and that character is selected.

But before you can key in the sound for “want,” the next-most-likely characters are lined up for selection. And “want” is the most-likely second word. Click!

The result is that the user merely recognizes the Chinese character by overall “looks,” or pattern.

“The students are forgetting how to write the characters stroke-by-stroke because the computer brings it up for them,” my colleague said.

Today, our cell phones are making texting easy for American children by using this same next-most-likely-word input system.

Students are trained to write without elegance or creativity. They are copying the most common and simplistic way of saying things.

Reading researchers have documented the lack of deep reading among the techie generation. We are now experiencing a similar lack of “deep writing” as teens and tweens send text messages a day, often using a program that narrows their literacy by offering convenience.



Education Frontlines

By John Richard Schrock

Even adults can feel the pull to shallow reading on an electronic screen. I find myself skimming on-line documents, barely reading the first line of each paragraph.

And it gets worse. A year ago, one high school teacher pointed out that some of his students could no longer name the months of the year in order. January-February-March no longer came in that order because at any time, a student can reach for the smartphone and read the date.

Like a phone number that you look up and repeat to yourself as you dial—but then never move into long-term memory, many students today never look at a calendar.

They no longer have the month sequence in mind, although they did know it when they graduated from kindergarten to first grade.

Nor does the techie generation think they need to know anything if they can access it by smartphone. Their memory is more and more stored on their belts or in their purses.

The consequences are far-reaching. For the first time, China entered the international PISA competition and scored a jaw-dropping hundred points beyond prior winners in mathematics. While in China this spring, I asked my Chinese students

when were they allowed to use calculators in math class: “Never before sixth grade.”

What about electronic dictionaries? The limit on English was the same as math.

But electronic Chinese dictionaries had to wait until later. To put it simply, Chinese students know what division and logarithms mean; American students just hit a key.

Down the road, techie futurists have an even bigger dream.

Why are we even teaching reading? We can put books under a scanner and the computer will read them to us.

And why teach writing? Record into DragonSpeak and it will write for us.

Getting rid of cursive is just the first step.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher’s college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

24th Annual Wichita RV Show
JAN. 9TH-13TH
Special Show Prices
\$8 ADULTS • \$1 CHILDREN
2 FREE ADMISSIONS WITH THIS AD!
Wednesday, January 9 4pm-9pm
Thursday, January 10 4pm-9pm
Friday, January 11 12-9pm
Saturday, January 12 10am-9pm
Sunday, January 13 12-6pm
Kansas Coliseum Pavilions • www.wichitarvshow.com

Burn Ban Lifted

Oberlin City is no longer in a burn ban.

Energy credits cost us money

Democrats call Republicans defenders of big business. Republicans accuse Democrats of meddling in the market at the expense of taxpayers.

Democrats (sometimes accurately) accuse Republican leadership of prioritizing the interests of Corporate America ahead of the average person. Republicans (often rightfully) criticize the Obama Administration for expensive “investments” in the private sector that yield negative returns for taxpayers.

But, when it comes to energy subsidies, politicians on both sides of the aisle embrace their characterization of the other: Republicans are willing to distort free markets and Democrats are willing to defend corporations. This is reflected in the bipartisan supporters of extending—once again—the massive taxpayer subsidy for the wind-energy industry.

A one-year extension of this 20-year-old “tax credit” carries a total price tag of \$12 billion. According to the industry’s own estimates, not extending it for one year will result in 37,000 jobs lost. That amounts to roughly \$324,000 in taxpayer subsidy for each job. And this wind subsidy is 86 times greater per unit than subsidies for oil, gas, and coal. (I’d like to see those gone, too, by the way).

Budgeting is always about priorities, particularly so when America is already \$16 trillion in debt. Are we going to hand out \$12 billion—40 percent of which would be borrowed—on propping up a private industry that should stand on its own after 20 years of massive taxpayer support? Or should we instead use that \$12 billion for another year of the school lunch program? Or how about let small businesses and families cough up the \$12 billion with the scheduled massive death tax increase next year? (Or, perhaps Washington will instead do what it has done for decades: put it all on the credit card!)

Contrary to the claims made by well-paid lobbyists, this is no infant industry still in incubation. While the subsidy goes to the wind farms that produce the energy, the loudest supporters are the large manufacturers who produce turbines and other related equipment. Siemens, which

has threatened to lay off workers in Kansas if the tax subsidy is not extended, is a \$100 billion global corporation. General Electric, or GE, another big player in the wind-product business, is even larger. These companies have enormous legal and accounting departments that should be smart enough to know that Washington cannot keep spending and borrowing forever.

Businesses like Siemens and GE get to reap the rewards of success when they make smart decisions. But, they should also suffer the consequences of bad decisions. If this is a profitable industry, then they will find a way to survive without massive taxpayer subsidies. If they cannot, then they and taxpayers should not be in the business. Why should American taxpayers be on the hook for subsidizing these billion-dollar corporations, including one (GE) that paid no taxes on its billions of dollars of profit in 2010?

It certainly is possible to run a profitable energy venture without subsidies. Just this past week, I participated in an oil and gas conference in Hutchinson. The 600 people at the meeting were all looking to create jobs—and none on the backs of taxpayers.

The time to take off the proverbial training wheels is now. When Congress originally created this tax benefit in the 1990s, it was intended to be temporary. Every extension since then was intended to be temporary. Unsurprisingly, this time around, they tell us the same thing: the need is temporary. What evidence is there that the same industry lobbyists will not be back next year asking for just “one more year?”

Republicans and Democrats alike should not be tricked into ignoring the principles for which they typically stand just so big businesses do not have to evaluate and improve their own practices. We need more of all types of market competitive energy, and we cannot afford a massive, market-distorting \$12 billion subsidy for an industry that should be profitable by now.

Tim Huelskamp, a Republican from Fowler, and a former state senator, is the congressman for the 1st District of Kansas.

24' x 24' x 8' Garage \$7,800
Experience the QSI Advantage

- Free Estimates
- Free On-Site Consultation
- Fully Insured
- 5-yr Workmanship Warranty
- Pre-engineered for code laws
- Licensed ICC General Contractor
- 3-Ply Laminated Posts (60 year warranty)
- Steel Roof and Sides (40 yr. warranty)
- 16 colors available
- 8' o/c Post Spacing
- 4' o/c Truss Spacing
- 90 MPH Wind Load
- 30lb Truss Load
- Site Preparation available

QSI AWARD WINNING!
Quality Structures, Inc.

Material Only Kits Now Available!
www.qualitystructures.com • (800) 374-6988
Call for FREE information and estimates

Penn Avenue Boutique
Penn Avenue Boutique, 101 S. Penn Ave, Oberlin, KS, will be closed December 25-29. Reopen 9 a.m. December 31 with an end of the year big bang sale! 50% off everything in the store. One day only. Don't miss this great sale of the year. (785) 475-5851.