

Volume 120, Number 140 Wednesday, September 9, 2009



The passing years bring big changes

Monday, we celebrated Labor Day to honor the working people of our great country, and the flags were flying to honor them.

Friday will be the eighth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, and the flags will fly again, but this time at half staff to remember those who died in those attacks and the brave people on United Flight 93 who stopped the fourth plane from reaching the American capital at the cost of their own lives.

The past year has been an tumultuous one for our country, and signs indicate more tough times are ahead.

A year ago, Sen. Barack Obama was beginning his final run to the election and Sen. John McCain was beginning his final sprint to win the presidential race.

The economy was into a tail spin with the failure of the housing markets, and that soon spread to Wall Street and across the economy.

President George W. Bush pushed through Congress a housing and banking bailout to try to stem the tide of red ink before leaving office. Most of the money did not even reach the Main Street markets until much later.

Obama won the election in November, and in January he gave a stirring inaugural speech asking people to look ahead. The economy continued to fall, and Obama asked Congress for a huge stimulus spending package to help turn things around. The projects to be approved needed to be "shovel ready" to get the money moving as quickly as possible.

The administration said it would take time to spend the money, but wanted it committed before the end of the year. Now things are starting to look up, and we have that to be thankful for.

Friday it will be good to remember the terrible events of 2001 and the more than 2,900 who died, and we ought to rededicate our efforts to improving our communities and working to help our country. - Tom Betz, The Goodland Star -News

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Cooking stuff never quite goes away

My basement is the repository for almost 40 years worth of cooking stuff - some well used, some antique and some still in the original box.

While I've known about this for years, it didn't come to the top of my mind until I went looking for the beaters to an old upright mixer we got as a wedding present back in 1971.

I used that mixer for many years, then found an Oster mix-and-match set that sliced, diced, pureed, chopped and did everything but cook the food. The old mixer went into the basement and the beaters into a box.

It took me a couple of months of checking this cupboard and that box to find those beaters. I did find them, and am again using that old mixer along with the (somewhat) newer one.

In the search, I turned up a lot of memories, some real antiques and a few "why am I keeping this" items.

Under the memories category are the taco form. Its a little wire basket thingee that you put a tortilla in, dip it in hot oil and "viola," you have a hard taco shell. It was a cheap way to throw a taco party back when we were in our 20s and getting a few grease burns was preferable to spending the extra money on premake shells.



eggs comes under that category, too. Back in our 30s, we took Gourmet magazine and made eggs benedict and other fancy dishes. The piles of Gourmet from 1966 to 1980 are also down there on a shelf.

Antiques include a meat grinder I can remember my mother using. She attached it to the kitchen table with the vice clamps on the bottom and made ham salad out of bologna and hash out of leftover corned beef.

There is also a potato ricer, a conical device similar to a sieve. You put cooked potatoes in it and use a conical wooden paddle to turn them into something that resembled rice. It made mashing potatoes easier.

In the why-am-I-keeping-this pile was the electric ice tea machine that made fast but cloudy tea, the electric steamer or rice cooker, a waffle iron, a Seal-a-Meal machine, a minislow cooker in a plastic bag, and assorted The special little pan used to make poached wooden spoons, tongs, trivets, bag clips, spat-

ulas, plastic cups, mugs and vases. The whole area looks like a yard sale in the making.

When was the last time I used the vaporizer. electric juicer, apple peeler on a wooden base, old vacuum cleaner, Fry Baby, 10-cup coffee maker, melon baller, tea strainer or cast-iron roaster?

Of course, I may someday need the two four-cup glass coffee pots, all those accessories to the Oster machine - dough hooks, food grinder, food processor and blender -Salad Shooter, portable electric fan or Tupperware vegetable tray.

Oh, and there's my ladle. Darn, I just bought one of those since I couldn't find this one I knew I had. The same goes for the measuring spoons and plastic spatulas.

I think I'll just quietly go back upstairs before I get some wild idea about using the waffle iron, muffin tins or egg-poaching pan. And I'd better hurry, because I think those Gourmets are calling my name.

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701 (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

Let's talk about weather signs

For the first time this week, a touch of fall filled the early morning air. All the signs are here: overnight lows dipping into the 40s; cool, brisk winds blowing from the north; long-sleeved shirts or light jackets for the early morning hours; and a longing for something warm to drink to ward off a chill.

With the coming of fall and approach of winter, it's fun to recall some of the time-tested weather sayings. Most folks have heard some of these once or twice in their lifetime.

And, if we're from a rural or agricultural background, chances are we've used some of them ourselves. We may even use them today – I know I do.

Many of the following weather signs were collected while talking to farmers and ranchers across the state. It seems there is very little people would rather talk about than the weather.

So let's talk weather.

Mallard

Fillmore

Tinsley

Bruce

• During the winter season, strong northerly winds indicate snow and sometimes a blizzard within 24 hours. Southerly winds are a sign of dry, warmer weather.

• When cattle stand in a line with their backs toward the northwest, you can figure on a heavy, driving snow.

• Dense fog at dawn is a sign of clearing skies by mid-morning.



• The absence of birds around water denotes an approaching storm.

• White, fluffy little clouds are a sign of fair weather ahead.

• Odors become easier to detect just before rain. High pressure usually traps odors like a lid due to air density, while lowering pressure releases odors.

• When you see lightning in the north, rain is likely within 24 hours.

• When distant sounds appear louder, rain is usually on the way.

• Rising smoke is a fair-weather sign. When you see smoke going downward or showing very little rise, rain is likely.

• Birds perch more before a storm because the low barometric pressure makes it more difficult for them to fly. When you see hawks circling high in the sky, this is a fair-weather sign.

• When frogs begin to croak, look out for

 Hens and other barnyard fowl pick at themselves - oiling their feathers - just before a rain.

· Lots of dead skunks on the road mean plenty of moisture is on the way. Another good sign of approaching wet weather is the aggravation of corns, bunions or arthritis pains.

These signs are surprisingly accurate because they are based on generations of farmers, ranchers and other people who have observed cyclical changes in the weather.

Today, meteorologists watch weather patterns via satellites. Much of what these satellites detect while orbiting the earth hundreds of miles overhead, we can see by watching television, dialing up on our computer or listening to the radio.

There is plenty to be said for the folk wisdom of our ancestors. They watched and charted weather patterns for generations rather than just a few hours or days. It's fun to hear their conclusions handed down from one generation to the next, and anyway, what would we have to talk about if not for the weather?

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

