



## Other Viewpoints

### New park opens at a good time

The opening of southwest Kansas' newest recreational facility couldn't have come at a better time.

On a day the high temperature soared above 100 degrees, a nice crowd headed to the Jetmore area for the Saturday opening of HorseThief Reservoir.

Area residents who enjoy boating and fishing weren't disappointed with the new lake, which now covers some 250 acres and offers an ideal place to cool off.

Bringing such a recreational facility to life in an arid part of the country was for decades a goal of members of the Pawnee Watershed District.

Studies of Buckner Creek flow, land-use practices and drainage showed the project was feasible. Approval in April 2005 by voters in Finney, Ford, Gray and Hodgeman counties of a 0.15-percent sales tax helped launch the project.

Dam construction began in 2008, and the lake now is about 80 percent full — progress that no doubt exceeded even the expectations of those who knew this was possible.

While the recreational facility now is open for fishing and boating, campsites should be ready this fall.

For Garden City residents, the drive to HorseThief is roughly the same distance as Lake Scott State Park. The scenic park in Scott County will continue to be a popular destination for fishing enthusiasts, campers and swimmers, but cannot offer the water skiing and other pleasure boating opportunities of the larger HorseThief.

As unique as each area park may be, they are much the same in providing an oasis in a drought-stricken region — and in making southwest Kansas more desirable to visitors and prospective residents.

Southwest Kansans were thirsty for more water recreation options, especially boating, fishing and water skiing, along with the campsites, picnic shelters, horseback riding and hiking trails HorseThief will deliver.

Saturday's opening was more than a time to celebrate a new venue for fishing, boating and other recreation. It also was proof of what can happen when Kansans refuse to sit back and settle for our shortcomings, and instead work with determination on ideas that promise a better quality of life for all in the region.

— *The Garden City Telegram, via The Associated Press*

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## The journey to freedom isn't over

Independence — freedom — is a concept that is much touted but perhaps poorly understood. On this Fourth of July weekend, it's worth taking a look at whether we have achieved independence or maintained freedom 234 years after declaring it on July 4, 1776.

Our 13 original colonies were not made up of perfect people, any more than our nation is today. Their flaws included racial oppression, sexual oppression, classism, slavery and religious bigotry.

They came to North America for many reasons. Many came as a form of escape, yet the problems they fled came along with them. You really can't run away from yourself.

Those who fled religious persecution, set up their own autocratic religious communities.

Those who fled economic problems, set about arranging a new economy in which they were on the top of the heap instead of the bottom. There was still a bottom of the heap.

Who were those at the bottom in 1776?

They were indentured servants, who sold themselves for seven years in exchange for expensive passage on an ship.

They were the native inhabitants of the continent, who had been rudely shoved aside by interlopers who believed that anyone who didn't speak a European language or dress or live the way they did was automatically a barbarian, probably not really human, and unworthy of much consideration. Many were enslaved, though this did not work out well for the Europeans when they died of European diseases or simply slipped away.

They were African slaves, brought in by the hundreds of thousands for the labor-intensive tobacco plantations.

They were the women, without a legal voice, treated as children from the day they were born



**Marian Ballard**

### • Collection Connections

until they died of old age. They were dependent on the men in their families, from father to husband to son. If there was no man, they became dependent on charity, or menial low-wage jobs, or prostitution.

Colonial life was never the utopian ideal that many must have hoped for. Yet it was a new start, away from the weight of history that ruled every action in Europe.

Then it went downhill. The British government had pushed out the Dutch and pushed the French back into Canada. Yet the king saw these colonies as more of a cash cow than a part of the nation, neglecting development in favor of control at the expense of civil liberties or protection. The colonies, in turn, decided we would be better off on our own.

In fact, that happened; the United States of America is today a separate entity from the United Kingdom.

Beyond that, though, is the old truth that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

We no longer have slaves. We do have workers who are barely able to feed themselves on their earnings. As minimum wages go up, so does the cost of living. We still deal with race as a social issue, but I hope we are all closer to recognizing the value of all humans.

The franchise — the right to vote — has been extended to women, to citizens who do not

own real estate or know how to read or have white skin, and in my lifetime to 18-year-olds who had been eligible for the military draft but ineligible to vote for those who would draft them. Yet many who could vote who do not, seeing it as an inconvenience rather than a gift.

We have religious freedom — the absolute right to follow conscience in matters of faith — whether it leads to a cathedral or a mosque or a Buddhist temple. Yet we still have a great many people who want their own freedom, but not everyone's. The Puritans on the Mayflower sought to establish a theocracy modeled on Puritanism. The mainstream Christian faiths of the 1950s saw this as a Christian nation, rubber-stamped with God's approval. Yet the constitution still says "no law respecting an establishment of religion" without reference to any particular faith.

We struggle under the burden of government whose regulations affect every part of our lives. The latest incursions I've heard of this week have to do with taxes on tanning salons and regulation of small meat packers. Are we free? Regulations do have value. Too many regulations are probably self-defeating.

Independence Day is great. But maybe it should be called Interdependence Day. We are not alone, not as a nation and not as individuals. Our freedoms must always be relative to the needs of all.

Celebrate our nation this weekend. And however you celebrate, watch over your part of the nation, being careful and responsible while driving, while partying, while using fireworks. Your neighbors are depending on you.

*Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press.*

## High drama gives ag a bum rap

During the last year the entertainment industry has stepped up its portrayal of agriculture in a negative light. So many of these attacks are based on unsubstantiated information and emotional pleas.

No doubt you've seen some of these television episodes, like the couple who dined at a fashionable bistro and died — one from a fast-moving E. coli infection and the other from botulism.

The show's detectives determined E. coli originated in a water supply on a cattle ranch and ended up in the woman's salad. Her dining companion contracted botulism from genetically engineered corn.

Plenty of other anti-agriculture episodes have aired along with talk-show programs that also target farmers and ranchers, especially on their care and handling of livestock.

One particularly outrageous television show featured a character who tried to convince her friends to save a pig from becoming bacon.

Laughable?

Hardly. And when another character refused to participate, she was accused of ignoring the "alleged" ugliness of animal production.

What's going on here is "high drama" in the entertainment business. Unfortunately, viewers watch this programming and ratings are high. Hollywood has taken irresponsible liberties with the truth and turned farmers and ranchers into villains.

It is a travesty that Hollywood celebrities and activists are given time or have the money to



**John Schlageck**

### • Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

promote anti-agriculture agendas with little or no regard, or understanding, of what happens on farms and ranches across this country.

The real shocker is that so many viewers know little or nothing about farming and ranching. They've never been to a farm and never learned about the care and feeding of livestock.

Farming and ranching are a family's livelihood and way of life. When the entertainment industry airs falsehoods about the food supply, this negatively impacts the entire community.

Raising livestock on today's farm or ranch is a dynamic, specialized profession that has proven one of the most successful in the world. Only in the United States can less than 2 percent of the population feed 100 percent of our population — and other people around the world — as efficiently as we do.

Today's animal husbandry is no accident. Because our livestock are the best cared for, we can provide such efficiency.

Farmers and ranchers work hard, long hours to care for and nurture their livestock. They are neither cruel nor naive. A farmer/stockman

would compromise his or her own welfare if animals were mistreated.

Livestock producers will tell you they love their animals. They spend their lives producing healthy animals that will one day feed others.

These animal caretakers understand the cattle, swine, sheep and chickens are living creatures. They understand and take seriously their obligation to care for each animal's welfare.

Farm animals are generally housed in barns or other buildings with the exception of beef cattle. This is to protect the health and welfare of the animal. Housing protects livestock from predators, disease and bad weather or extreme climate. Housing also makes breeding and birthing less stressful, protects young animals and makes it easier for farmers to care for both healthy and sick animals.

Modern animal housing is well ventilated, warm, well lit, clean and scientifically designed for the specific needs of the animal. Inside these facilities, livestock receive plenty of fresh water and nutritionally balanced feed.

As U.S. livestock production grows and changes, farmers' methods for ensuring welfare of their animals also progresses. Farmers and ranchers are dedicated to providing the highest quality and safest food in the world — their livelihood depends on it.

*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.*

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

