

Other Viewpoints

Redirect energy – protests to politics

Occupy Wall Street has moved to Topeka. Or rather, the "occupy" fad has been picked up in Topeka.

Either way, we don't understand exactly what the movement hopes to accomplish or why Topeka is a good place in which to accomplish it.

Occupy Wall Street reportedly sprung from disenchantment with, among other things, the high unemployment rate, failures of the financial system and the subsequent bank bailouts. The movement has spread over the past month from a small, private park in New York to the West Coast, other countries and now even to Topeka.

According to a statement on the occupytopekaks.org website, "The one thing we have in common is that we are the 99 percent that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1 percent."

Occupy Topeka's percentages seem to be a bit skewed, and the greed and corruption the group opposes could use some further definition. Frustration with a high unemployment rate that refuses to move in a positive direction is understandable, but the financial system meltdown and bank bailouts are very old news, and it would seem the time to protest them has long passed.

We have no problem with peaceful protests and staunchly support the right of citizens to express their grievances in such a way.

It's just that Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Topeka and other occupiers haven't defined their grievances in anything but a very broad manner. Some specifics would be nice, and a statement of what the group, or groups, hope to accomplish through their efforts, beyond a show of solidarity, would be even better.

If Occupy Topeka and other occupying groups in this country can articulate their grievances and what they think should be done to remedy them, they could use their time more productively.

Sitting in a park for weeks on end while flashing signs and shouting slogans – or walking the streets with a sign and talking to other pedestrians – may attract a lot of attention, but it really doesn't get a lot done.

All that time would be better spent finding political candidates who agree with them and then encouraging like-minded citizens to go to the voting booths next year.

The most effective protests are those done with the power of the vote. And if Occupy Topeka's percentages are correct – 99 percent to 1 percent – the movement's task should be easy.

– The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

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Creative language lends inaccuracy

Word abuse, I call it.

I first noticed it a couple of years ago when wire-service reporters were writing about people stuck on the aprons and taxiways of our airports.

In bad weather, they could be trapped out there for hours, waiting to be deiced, for a runway to open, for the tower at the destination airport to give the OK to leave. In a couple of extreme cases, people were held on the apron for most of a day, prompting new federal rules and stiff penalties for holding passengers against their will.

And that's when some bright and supposedly literate reporter – probably one who'd read a British novel or two – started referring to these people as "trapped out on the 'tarmac.'"

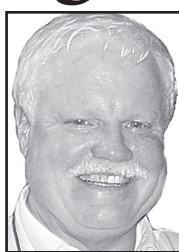
Sounds kinda cool, huh? Very British. I really noticed when my daughter was spouting the phrase when describing an airline trip.

Only tarmac isn't just a synonym for pavement, or even asphalt. It refers to a specific process for building up a road surface, the way many roads out here were paved from the 1920s to when I was a kid.

I sort of knew that, but I didn't know the whole story until I looked it up, and thereby learned a few esoteric facts to be filed away in that great vault of random information that makes me a fair trivia player.

First, the term tarmac comes from two origins, tar, or heavy oil, and macadamization, a technique for building up roads perfected in the 19th century by a Scots engineer named John Loudon MacAdam.

Mr. MacAdam didn't invent tarmac pavement, as I had thought, and he certainly never



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

envisioned paving the parking area at an air-drome. What he invented was basically the process still used today to build a gravel road – cutting a ditch on either side, grading out and packing the surface with only a slight crown, then putting down layers of small, crushed rock which pack to form a solid, relatively waterproof surface.

The engineer perfected this process about 1820, and within a couple of years, roads in America – and around the world – were being improved his way.

Wagon-wheel tires actually packed the top layer into a tight, smooth surface, and that worked until the advent of motor cars. Speeding vehicles sucked up dirt and gravel off the surface, causing a dust problem and tearing up the road. It fell to a Brit engineer, Edgar Purnell Hooley, to notice that tar covered with crushed rock made a dust-free surface for a Macadamized road.

Mr. Hooley secured a patent for his "tar macadamization" process in 1904, giving the world tarmac. And while modern hot-mix asphalt paving was invented in the 1920s, it didn't fully replace tarmac in this country until about the 1960s.

I can remember contractors rebuilding west-

ern Kansas roads in the '50s by packing the base, then building up layers of larger rock which were worked back and forth with a grader as traffic passed. That left a pile of rock in the center.

My mother got stuck on that pile going through one job, probably on K-96 down by Dighton. Dad gave her a lot of grief, but a nice man from the construction firm came by and pulled her out. He said it was no big deal; he pretty much spent his days doing just that.

Anyway, the final layers would be smaller rock, just as Mr. MacAdam specified, though undoubtedly broken by machine, not by convicts or laborers swinging hammers. Those were sealed with hot asphalt, sometimes before spreading, but always after.

Today, it's hard to find any tarmac pavement. Asphalt rules the highways, at least where the traffic doesn't justify concrete paving. You still find it on older county roads and on city streets in places like Oberlin, where the paving has been built up over years and years of sealing.

But it's been 50 years or more since any tarmac was laid down on a U.S. commercial airport. Taxiways and aprons are mostly concrete today, with some asphalt here and there. Tarmac probably wouldn't hold a 737, which could sink into the goo on a hot summer day.

So, stuck on the tarmac? A romantic notion, perhaps, but hardly accurate. A stretch at best. But, for a while, at least, the phrase caught on, and that's how word abuse gets its start.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Pro-ferret minority deserves a voice

To the Editor:

Recently a small group of people applied political pressure to force the Oakley school superintendent to cancel a planned school program with the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The school program was to provide information to students about the recovery from near extinction of the black-footed ferret. Later, the same small group, who were not all residents of Logan County, petitioned the Logan County Commission to withdraw approval for the use of the Logan County 4-H Building to make a presentation to the general public. Finally, this group used economic pressure to keep the program from being presented in a meeting room at a local business.

This group is actually angry about prairie dogs. They hate prairie dogs with such a passion that any reason to justify the existence of a prairie dog colony must be rejected. The problem for this group is the fact that the black-footed ferret only eats prairie dogs. This rare and specialized carnivore must have prairie dogs to survive. Apparently this group believes that neither creature should exist in their natural habitat.

Most ranchers believe that prairie dogs cause economic damage. Sometimes prairie dogs move from one property to another. The prairie dogs then compete with livestock for grass and damage rangeland.

Everyone know this, but how many people know that the organizations which are trying to reintroduce the ferret invest \$100,000 in Logan County each year to control prairie dogs that move from ferret reintroduction sites?



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

This money is also used to control prairie dogs already present within three miles of the two ferret sites. This service is free of charge to landowners. Unfortunately, this is the kind of information certain opponents want to stifle.

The black-footed ferret is extremely rare. There are only nineteen sites in the entire world where this ferret can live in the natural environment. Logan County has two of these sites and they are considered to be the best new reintroductions. These ferrets and the diversity of other wildlife associated with prairie dog colonies represent a world-class tourism resource that many communities would love to have.

The democracy we cherish in our United States demands free and uncensored exchange of information and ideas. If a small group of people are able to keep their fellow citizens from this information by intimidating school boards, county commissioners, and private business owners, then something is very wrong.

We must respect the thoughts and opinions of everyone involved with the difficult issues related to the stewardship of private land and the preservation of our wildlife for future gen-

erations. It was wrong to deny access to the amazing story of the black-footed ferret to our school children and other interested people in the community. It is wrong to only allow one side of this issue to be presented locally.

Finally, there is an even bigger issue that this small ferret represents. We have been called by God to care for his earth. We have been given dominion over the animals that he has created and dominion does not mean to kill them all.

We need to celebrate the return from near extinction of one of God's creatures. It is an incredible story of luck, hard work and courage. Please join us for this celebration at our farm located five miles west of Monument from 1 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 5. From U.S. 40, turn south 3.2 miles west of the intersection with K-25, the go 1/4 mile south and turn west at the mailbox.

Come with an open heart and mind to visit with friends and see a black-footed ferret from the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. There will be other animals from the zoo along with tours, food, games, prizes and maybe some live music. Come, bring the kids, have some fun, and explore the prairie we all love.

Tim and Rebekah Peterson Monument

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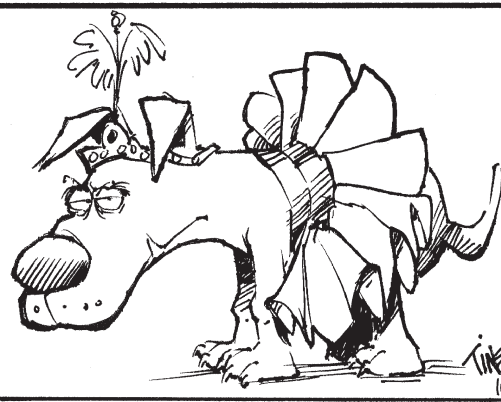
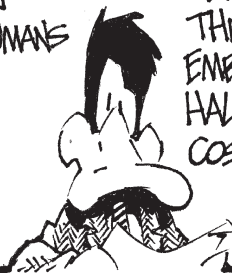
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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

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...AND PEOPLE DRESSING THEM UP IN EMBARRASSING HALLOWEEN COSTUMES...



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