

from our viewpoint...

Fourth fantastic flag waving fun

Sherman County certainly celebrated our nation's birthday in grand style, and the crowd of over 1,000 that participated had plenty to cheer about.

The Blue Healer band had some great rock 'n roll music, the carnival sold out of arm bands and the 4-H booth ran out of food.

The evening finished with a sky full of fireworks and a beautiful ground display of an American flag in the rodeo arena.

With the help of the Goodland Elks and the Family Career and Community Leaders of America from Goodland High School, several city streets were lined with Old Glory. Some of the flags had been put out on Tuesday evening before the Fourth, and some were put back out in front yards by homeowners who received the flags during the first round. In the last two years, said Zona Price, Elks secretary, the program has put out over 500 flags, and the lodge hopes to keep the program going to cover the entire city.

Seeing the streets lined with American flags on special holidays shows our pride in being Americans and for the city where we live. Driving up Main to the fairgrounds and seeing the blocks full of flags brought a smile and that feeling of pride we get every time we recite the Pledge of Allegiance or sing or listen to the Star Spangled Banner.

The fairgrounds was teeming with people, and kids of all ages stood in line to get on the rides. The carnival people said they sold over 850 all-rides armbands.

The bleachers set up near the carnival rides were nearly full through all the songs from The Blue Healers, all the way until it was time for the fireworks.

The 4-H Ambassadors sold out of hamburgers and hot dogs, and it took the Goodland Rotary Club only about an hour to slice and give away 18 watermelons.

As the time for the fireworks show grew near, people gathered in the grandstands and in front of the grandstands to view the aerial show.

Parking was a bit tougher this year, but when the show was over, people took their time leaving in an orderly fashion and the Goodland Police had a good plan to move the traffic out as quickly as possible.

If you thought the fireworks show was a bit shorter this year, it was. Brad Schields, chairman of the home owned carnival, said he told Joe Diaz they had \$5,000 for this year's show. That was down \$2,000 from the past couple of years, but it was a great show.

Money continues to filter in for the fireworks, and it appears there should be about \$2,000 to begin the pot for next year's show. Our hat's off to all those businesses who helped and those who let the Shine on Sherman County Community Resource Committee put out collection jars to help with the fireworks. The jars are not the only way money is raised, but those who dropped in their change or dollar bills added \$160 to the effort. That may not sound like much, but it is more than three times what the jars brought in last year.

Organizers plan to keep growing the collections to expand the number of people who help pay for the fireworks. We need to get the fund large enough to always have the \$5,000 to \$7,000 needed to put on the biggest show between Hays and Denver.

Not getting the American flags out on Main downtown was a disappointment, but when the parts are not there in time, we understand the frustration. The flags are ready for the upcoming holidays, and we know the city crew is ready to help get those red, white and blue symbols of freedom in place.

Our salute to all those who helped organize and put on the nation's 231st birthday celebration in Goodland. — Tom Betz



Dubai television executive was impressive

Najla Faisal Al Awadhi is good. Very good. Meeting a group of American editors, she circulates around the room, handing out her card and taking theirs.

Looking each one in the eye, she takes the card, speaks their given name and goes on to the next.

A half hour later, deep in conversation with an inquisitive group, she begins calling us by our first names.

Strikingly beautiful in the traditional black robe worn by many women here, she balances a career as an executive of the Dubai state television station with a seat on the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, a budding parliament.

She is one of nine women in the new council, of which 20 seats were chosen by about 1,000 voters in an electoral college and 20 appointed by rulers of the seven emirates. (She was appointed by the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who also served as vice president, or prime minister, in the federal government.)

Ms. Al Awadhi explains that the council, established with the federal government 35 years ago, underwent reorganization last year. In this new phase, the first elections brought new members and a new influence in federal affairs, though the council can only question and amend laws. Power still resides with the Supreme Council, made up of the sheikhs, or rulers, of the seven emirates, and ministers appointed by them.

"We are proud of our role," she says, noting that the tiny nation on the Persian Gulf faces many challenges, not the least of which is its



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dependence on foreign labor.

"We have to move aggressively in terms of human capital," she says. "We don't want to keep depending on foreign labor (which makes up 80 percent of the population today).

"We really want to focus on 'emirization.' I would stress that education is the key."

The two largest emirates, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, have a solid strategy for development and diversification out of an oil-fueled economy, she said, and the goal is to move the other five states up to their level.

"As a nation, we are only 35 years old," she says. "We believe in gradualism."

The native-born population has a high rate of college education, she said, with 60 to 70 percent going on to post secondary education, including many more women.

"We as women have to prove ourselves more," she says. "We're erasing a lot of myths about women."

She counts herself as lucky, since her family encouraged her to travel — she majored in history at the University of New Hampshire — and because the attitude toward women is more liberal here.

"Across the border in Saudi Arabia," she notes, "women can't even drive. You can have all the oil in the world, and if you don't have enlightened leadership, what happens?"

She calls herself a practicing Muslim, adding that she does not mind wearing the black robes.

"It's my heritage," she says. "Our understanding of scripture is based on interpretation. The Islam that you found under the Taliban is not my view of Islam. We are tolerant. It has a lot to do with leadership.

"We don't see anything in Islam that restricts us from progress. We didn't have to fight for our rights as women; it was given to us."

Still, notes Ms. Al Awadhi, it's not a perfect world. Schools are segregated by sex and in the business world, single women have a tough time meeting eligible men in a "respectable" setting. Many remain single, as she has. Polygamy is the law.

"When it follows the regulation Islam puts on it," she adds, "then it is fine. I think men sometimes pick and choose what they want."

"The mindsets of the legal system are inclined to favor the rights of men."

In business, she is deputy chief executive officer of the Dubai Media Group. In politics, she thinks she is part of something special, though not yet a legislature.

"We're not looking for democracy in the Western sense," she says, "but something that will fit our culture."

"We're taking an entity that used to be called a Department of Information and remaking it. We inherited a lot of inefficiencies that exist in government in the Third World.

"We are reforming the company and creating great television. Media in the Gulf countries is very new."

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Will Rogers on Congress

People sure are unhappy with Congress. Gallup says its approval rating stands at 14 percent. The timeless wit and wisdom of Will Rogers explains why:

"Congress is so strange; a man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens, and then everybody disagrees."

"We all joke about Congress, but we can't improve on them. Have you noticed that no matter who we elect, he is just as bad as the one he replaces?"

"When Congress makes a joke it's a law, and when they make a law, it's a joke."

Rogers spoke these words in the 1920s and 1930s, but they're just as true now. When voters put Democrats in office, they voted for change — voted for an end to partisan yapping. But the yapping has gotten worse.

They also voted for Democrats to end the sloppy, arrogant, fiscally irresponsible ways of Republicans, but Democrats were happy to pick right up where the Republicans left off.

As for jokes that are laws and laws that are jokes, is anybody happy with Congress' immigration reform initiatives?

Of course, according to Rogers, there's nothing new about the shenanigans of Congress:

"We cuss Congress, and we joke about 'em, but they are all good fellows at heart, and if they weren't in Congress, why, they would be doing something else against us that might be even worse."

"Never blame a legislative body for not doing something. When they do nothing, they don't hurt anybody. When they do something it when they become dangerous."

That is for certain. There are some nutty ideas floating around in Congress, but so long as they never become laws, no harm is done. And because our government is divided, it's hard for either side to ram any agenda through. The country often runs better when Congress is unable to get things done.

Rogers saved some of his best barbs for the



tom purcell

• commentary

Senate, the allegedly august body of distinguished minds that is supposed to snuff out bad ideas and bills and advance good ones. Though even during Rogers' time, things hardly ever turned out that way:

"About all I can say for the United States Senate is that it opens with a prayer and closes with an investigation."

"Senators are a never-ending source of amusement, amazement and discouragement."

"The Senate just sits and waits till they find out what the president wants, so they know how to vote against him."

I'm amazed that Rogers could describe Sen. Harry Reid some 70 years before Reid became Senate majority leader. Reid truly is a fellow who is "not as narrow-minded as he forces himself to be."

That's what is most agitating about our Congress. Too many members on both sides of the aisle are narrow-minded, partisan and looking to advance their self-interests.

where to write

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The average American doesn't like that. The average American knows that the country is facing giant challenges — entitlement programs that are going to bankrupt us, radicals who want to blow us up, spending that has spiraled out of control ...

The average American wants these problems to be solved by people who are interested in the good of their country — not Republicans and Democrats interested in the good of their parties.

It's no wonder we are disgusted. Of course, according to Rogers, that's nothing new either:

"It's getting so if a man wants to stand well socially, he can't afford to be seen with either the Democrats or the Republicans."

"There is something about a Republican that you can only stand him just so long; and on the other hand, there is something about a Democrat that you can't stand him quite that long."

We can only hope our Congress begins to comprehend what the American people have been trying to tell it — that it needs to get in step with the wisdom and will of the people.

And that, said Rogers, "our country is not where it is today on account of any one man. It's here on account of the real common sense of the Big Normal Majority."

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