

from our viewpoint...

Rainbow strikes chord for relay

The skies were cloudy as the Sherman County 12th Annual Relay for Life began on Friday evening, but the storm slid past to the east dropping a few sporadic rain drops.

As the program began a rainbow appeared in the southeast sky as if the man from above was encouraging those who had come to celebrate surviving cancer and the hope to continue the fight for a cure.

The Relay for Life continues to bring people together to raise money for the American Cancer Society, and as Hero of Hope Debbie Winter of Medicine Lodge told the crowd it give those who hear those three words "you have cancer" a place to turn to for help and support through the ordeal.

Winter told the crowd about her fight with breast cancer 10 years ago, and how turning to the American Cancer Society helped her focus on her progress through the cancer treatments and recovery.

Winter said the first thing to remember is the support available from the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 and on the Internet at www.cancer.org.

The 10 teams at this year's relay brought some new people and participation by a number of young people who enjoy the games and get to spend the night out camping and walking for a good cause.

Getting the young people involved is an important way to encourage the spirit of giving to the next generation and expose them to the deep emotional commitment many make to the fight against cancer.

The opening ceremony always brings many memories to the front, and the special color guard from the Boy Scouts reminds the people this is a national effort. Peggy Berls did a wonderful job on the national anthem, and Mayor John Garcia gave a stirring welcome and thank you to the committee members who worked through the year to put the event together.

Watching the cancer survivors gather on the track for the opening lap reminds people cancer can and does hit a wide variety of our friends. As Winter said for many making that first lap each year is special because they know they have made it through another year.

Around the track are luminaria with names of those who are being remembered for their life and fight, and for those who continue to fight. The lighting of the luminaries as the sun sets makes the point those who have cancer must have support to fight through the dark times of treatment. The luminaria symbolize the hope the cancer patients can cling to as they continue their individual fight against their disease.

The early morning sun rise concludes the relay, and symbolizes the end of treatments and the light at the end of the tunnel as they know their life will go on and they have a new beginning.

We salute all those who worked to make the Relay for Life a reality this year, and will remember that special rainbow that was a great backdrop for the crowd of cancer survivors and caregivers who gathered to celebrate life and to continue to fight back against cancer.

This was a special relay we will not forget as we remembered and purchased a luminaria to celebrate the life of our father who died in September from another terrible disease Alzheimer's. — Tom Betz



Lines that divide our country

This column is about lines that divide the country.

Not the Mason-Dixon line, which divides North from South back east. It's kinda irrelevant out here, except that in an accident of history, it also serves as (approximately) the border between Kansas and Nebraska. It runs just 13 miles from my house.

That's because Kansas was to have come into the Union as a slave state, part of a long-time compromise that kept an uneasy balance in the U.S. Senate for the first half of the 19th century.

Abolitionists from the North colonized and eventually controlled Kansas, however, leading to a decade of border warfare and eventually, 150 years ago, the Civil War. After Kansas was admitted as a free state, you see, the South could see the handwriting on the wall.

But that is dry, historical stuff. Today, we're going to talk about the Sweet Tea Line and the Green Chili Line. And if there's time, maybe the Firefly Line.

In Yankee states, even the more northern border states such as Missouri or Kentucky, you can go into a restaurant and order iced tea and it will come unsweetened, maybe with some of those little sacks of sugar or sugar substitute.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

In the South, diabetics fear ordering tea with lunch. In the South, they just assume you want sugar. My son-in-law, who lives in Georgia, likes "unsweet" tea, and he always orders it that way. He gets sweet tea half the time anyway.

The Sweet Tea Line, best I can figure out, is somewhere around the border between Tennessee and Kentucky, give or take a county or two. By the time you get to Texas and the Gulf States, best taste your tea first.

Then there is the green chili line. It's been blurred a little in recent years, but generally it runs north and south through the High Plains. In New Mexico, Colorado, southern Wyoming, Arizona and west, no self-respecting Mexican restaurant would think of not serving green chili, that wonderful concoction of fresh chopped chilis, onion, garlic and (usually) pork, with (sometimes) potatoes or tomatoes thrown in.

Drive east from Colorado, and you'll have a hard time finding anything but red chili, made

with ripe, dried chilis, beef or pork, with or without tomatoes, and (shudder) maybe even beans.

Out west, by the way, traditionally, in the Southwest, you get a choice. The server will ask, "red or green." Or you can order "Christmas," by which they mean one color on half the plate and the other on the other. Yum.

Growing up in Kansas, I was innocent of green chili until we moved to southern Colorado some 31 years ago. I grew to love the green, which can be mild or hot, with varied ingredients as noted. But nearly always good.

In New Mexico, it's pretty much the state food.

And the Firefly Line?

In most of Kansas, kids wait for warm summer nights when they can chase and capture those fascinating little glowing creatures. Not in Denver, or most of the mountain West.

The Firefly Line runs somewhere between Atwood and St. Francis, it seems. West of there, they are rare or wholly absent. Oberlin and Hoxie seem to have plenty, while Colby and Atwood have a few.

'Tis a pity children of the West are deprived of this simple pleasure, but they seem to find other things to do.

Like eat green chili and drink unsweet tea.

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Safety trumps fashion



Insight this week

• john schlageck

What's today's fashionable farmer wearing to work?

If you guessed any of the high fashions featured in GQ, Esquire or any other men's magazine, guess again.

Looking good is great when you go to town but safety and comfort are more important when dressing for farm chores. And while farmers and ranchers may not give the notion of dressing for safety a second thought doing so may prevent accidents and lead to a long and healthy life living and working on the land.

Let's begin with the head, after all that's where thinking about safety should start.

Head injuries are common on the farm and tend to be serious. When doing work that may involve head hazards, trade your comfy ball cap for a hard hat.

When you're spraying chemicals, wear a wide-brimmed hat impervious to liquids, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director. Make sure the brim is wide enough to keep chemical spray from drifting down on the back of your neck or face.

Eyes have been called the "window to the soul" but just like all windows they can break if something is hurled, splashed or sprayed into them.

Safety goggles/glasses and sunglasses should be just as much a part of your daily garb

as a good pair of steel-toed shoes, according to Higgins. Sunglasses are important because they lessen eye fatigue after long hours in the bright summer sun and when worn throughout the years may help prevent cataracts.

While many people consider the farm and rural America a place of quiet tranquility, many farmers experience hearing loss.

As a general rule, whenever the noise level reaches 85 decibels, farmers should reach for ear protection. While farmers don't carry testing equipment to measure decibel level, they should wear protection when in doubt as to the noise level.

Earmuffs are preferable to ear plugs because the latter can cause compaction of ear wax that is difficult to remove.

While they may be more comfortable, avoid wearing loose fitting clothes that could get caught. If you plan to stay in the sun most of the day, wear long-sleeved cotton clothing. Natural fibers allow the skin to breathe and offer protection from the sun's harmful rays.

Avoid wearing sweats with long drawstrings

that hang from the waist or around the neck. These strings are made of extremely strong nylon or other artificial fibers. Such fibers don't rip or tear as easily as clothing like cotton. It's too easy for dangling strings to catch in augers or other moving parts.

Shoes and boots can provide foot protection and good traction. Make certain your shoes are clean of mud and manure that can cause slipping and falls.

Good fit is important for both daylong comfort and stability. When spraying chemicals, wear waterproof or impervious footwear that won't absorb chemicals.

Rings and watches hang up on bolts, sharp corners — just about anything you find around a farmstead. Always remove rings and other loose-fitting jewelry. If you fail to do so, you could easily lose or injure a finger or some other limb.

While the safely-dressed farmers will not make the fashion pages of GQ or Esquire, you won't find them in the hospital, emergency room or obituary pages either.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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