

Our first amendment made a victim

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



First-Amendment rights are fine, apparently, unless what you say is so controversial no one wants to be associated with it.

At least that's what David Guth, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Kansas, found last week in the wake of the Navy Yard shootings in Washington.

Guth issued a "tweet" on the web service Twitter reacting to the 13 deaths: "Blood is on the hands of the #NRA. Next time, let it be YOUR sons and daughters."

Not much happened until a website called CampusReform.org posted a story on Thursday, but that sparked an angry reaction across the country. Soon, pro-gun members of the Kansas Legislature were called for the professor's job, if not his head.

At KU, his bosses were behind him – way back, it seemed. Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little announced that Professor Guth had been placed on administrative leave pending a review, in order "to prevent disruptions to the learning environment."

Higher ups at the state Board of Regents issued a statement expressing "disgust and offense" at the tweet and backing the chancellor. Ann Brill, dean of the School of Journalism, said in a statement, "Professor Guth's views do not represent our school and we do not advocate violence against any group or individuals. ...

"While the First Amendment allows anyone to express an opinion, that privilege is not absolute and must be balanced with the rights of others. That's vital to civil discourse."

So much for freedom of speech, or academic freedom, for that matter. Gun-rights groups began calling for the professor to be fired. A National Rifle Association spokesman was quoted as calling the tweet "hate speech."

"It is disgusting and deplorable," he said. "It has no place in our society." Mr. Guth himself was calmer.

"It got a conversation going," he told the Associated Press. "That's exactly what I wanted to do."

He said he agreed with the university's action in light of e-mailed threats he and others at KU had received.

"It's in the best interest and peace of mind of our students that I remove myself from the situation and let cooler heads prevail," he told the AP. "I know what I meant. Unfortunately, this is a topic that generates more heat than light."

Dave Guth is not the kind of guy who'd want to see anyone shot. His was a comment sent off to the world in haste. He could perhaps have chosen his words more carefully. That's one of the pitfalls of Twitter.

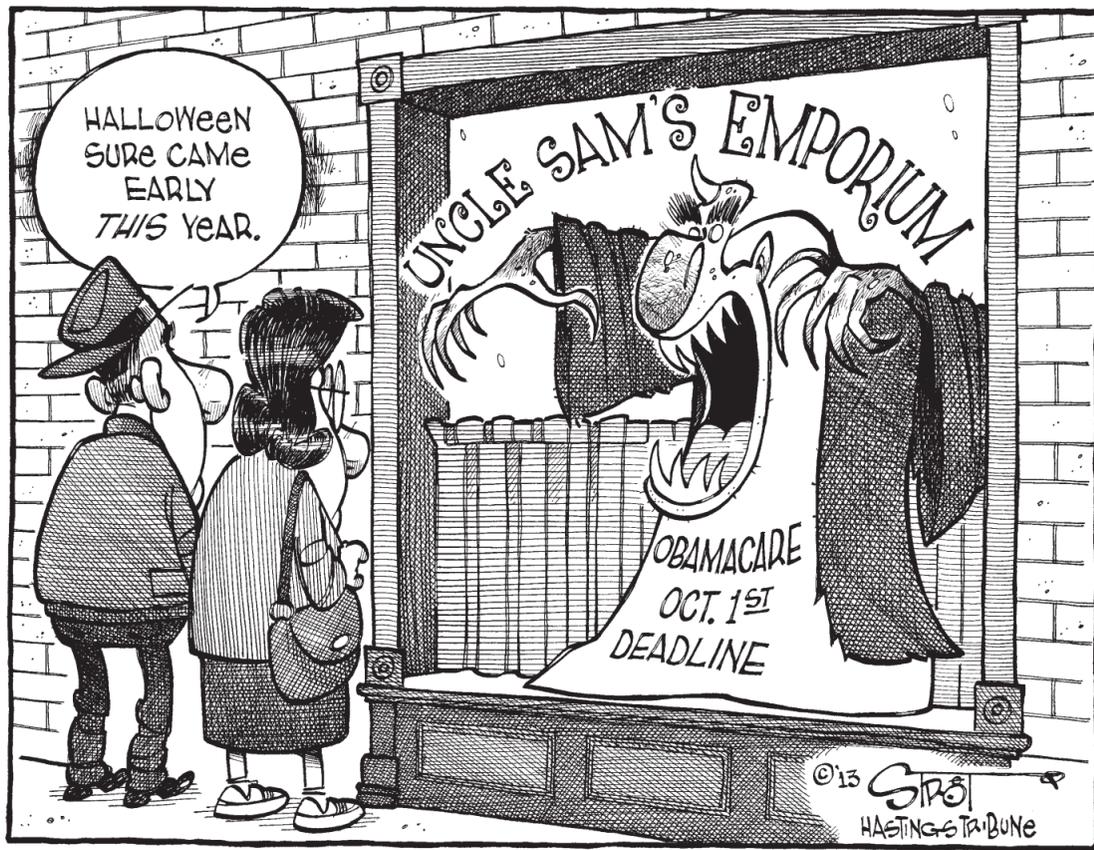
Many might agree with his argument that gun-rights groups would see things differently if some of these nut-case shootings involved someone they knew. It's not a sentiment that this newspaper endorses, by the way, but it is a legitimate argument for one side in the national debate.

The victim here, aside from Dave Guth, is the First Amendment, and the free and open debate the Founders wanted to protect when they wrote that "Congress shall make no law" abridging the right to free speech.

Those who love and protect the First know it can be lonely duty. The rights set out in the First cover everyone, from the man next door to your minister to the teacher at your kid's school, you and us and all the rest, but that includes a lot of people many of us don't like, from ponographers to the Rev. Fred Phelps.

And if we really mean it when we say we believe in free speech, then we sometimes have to defend all of them, not just pick and choose.

David Guth will find a lot of people in his corner, even if they don't buy his choice of words – or his ideas about the Second Amendment. – Steve Haynes



Never stop learning from and living life

You never know how much others don't like something you've done... until you go back to doing it the way you used to.

Last winter and spring I thought I needed a change. A change of hairstyle. More specifically, longer. Since my hair grows quickly this didn't seem like a big deal. Every six weeks I needed a haircut, so I thought by 12 weeks, it would surely be to my desired length. Barbara, my hairdresser, knew enough to keep her mouth shut and give me enough rope to hang myself. She knew I wouldn't like it, but she didn't say a word.

What I hadn't taken into consideration was the fact that my previous hairstyle had the hair cut out above the ears. The first three months was dedicated to growing that out and I always felt like I had earmuffs on. Then the top seemed too long, the sides too short and the back wasn't working either. It had been more than six months since the beginning of this "project", and I wasn't liking any of it.

Right before fair time in August I called Barbara and said, "I can't stand it any longer. How soon can you cut my hair?" She came right up, (yes, my hairdresser makes house calls) and in minutes had me back to a manageable state.

During my first public appearance after being shorn, I received a nice compliment regarding the new "do". That

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



nice comment was immediately followed by, "I sure didn't like you hair that other way. Made you look older. And heavier. And...."

Stop! I get it. I didn't like it either. That's why I cut it.

Several others felt compelled to share their dislike for my previous style. In fact, if one would start, others would soon chime in their agreement.

Will I ever change my hairstyle again? Probably. But will it ever be a longer style again? Never.

I know when I'm out-numbered.

-ob-

The weekend past was the annual women's retreat I so look forward to every year. It is a time when you can be with other Christian women and just get totally away from the "real world". If you're involved with the planning and implementing of the weekend, it can be hectic leading up to the event, but once you're there, everything seems to run smoothly.

The guest speaker was Mary Lou Powell, aka "Second Hand Rose". She used to be a model, now she just dress-

es like one, with almost everything she owns coming from thrift stores, garage sales and bargain basement racks. Every outfit she wore was stunning. She delighted in sharing what each piece cost and where she picked it up.

Mary Lou is a natural-born public speaker. She shared her difficult childhood; told story after story; and totally engaged her audience into her message of forgiveness.

Tall and reed thin, she moved with ease and grace. Her hair was perfectly coiffed, her false eyelashes enhanced her eyes, her make-up was perfect, her manicured hands gave expression to her elegant gestures.

She didn't brag about her age, but she didn't shy away from it either. We learned she was 79. She suffers from some of the issues we all deal with. She has cataracts, a heart condition, sometimes difficulty walking, other aches and pains and yet her spirit is unquenchable.

Married for 53 years, she was widowed three years ago. She said she told her children she would never marry again. But....then she said a man (and she lit up) has come into her life. I think she blushed when she began to share the story of how they met and the relationship that has grown between them.

We could all learn a lesson from this Second Hand Rose. Never stop learning, living, laughing or loving.

Getting an education from life on the farm

The farm has always been a fertile field for producing crops, but it is also an environment rich with learning experiences.

For generations, children who grow up and work with their parents on the family farm have learned valuable skills. While they are learning to sow seeds, cultivate weeds and harvest grains, flowers and vegetables, they are also cultivating knowledge.

Lessons learned on the farm include math, social studies and vocabulary, leadership, not to mention cooperation and responsibility.

All those skills acquired in a simple field of soil and vegetation? Absolutely. Tucked away in those vast acres of grass, trees and crops there's a living outdoor classroom teeming with lessons on life. Children who learn to till the soil come to understand such basics as distance, depth and height. They learn that the plants that bear our food came from places all over the world – rice from the Far East, wheat from Russia.

They see stems, leaves, seeds, flowers and bulbs in their hands, instead of in a book – an enduring way to plant words in their vocabulary.

While growing up on a land whipped by the wind, warmed by the sun and cooled by the stars, youngsters learn to respect their environment. They learn that by caring for this fertile land it will

Insight
John Schlageck



in turn care for them.

Such a valuable learning experience can provide children with the tools likely to influence family and friends to respect the land as well or at least raise their level of awareness. Youngsters also learn that hope is not wishful thinking of harvest success. Rather, hope is the action of planning and planting seeds. There will be those years when harvest may not occur, but the seeds of hope must be planted if there is even the thought of next year's bounty.

When given the opportunity to grow grains, flowers and vegetables, youngsters chart the progress of the plant. They invest in the outcome and that means harvesting their hard work, care and investment.

While encouraging students to consider growing and caring for a small plot with wheat, roasting ears or assorted vegetables, be sure to equip them with youth-sized tools. Remember they are still youngsters and do not possess

the strength, knowledge and wisdom of an adult.

Suggest themes for young gardeners. Try a garden theme that appeals to a child's literal sense, such as an alphabet garden with plants that begin with the letters A to Z.

They could also plant a pizza garden and grow tomatoes, peppers and onions. They could visit a dairy farm to learn about the fundamentals of caring for cows that produce the milk that results in cheese on the pizza. Or maybe a visit to a cattle ranch to experience beef cattle that ultimately winds up as hamburger on a pizza.

Direct the children and instill in them that caring for a crop can be an adventure. Have them add excitement to the garden with decorations including scarecrows, painted stumps and tiles and child-sized benches.

Encourage them to dig in the soil for earthworms. Tell them to pick the flowers – when they're mature.

Above all, make certain the learning experience is enjoyable. Encourage them to keep a daily journal about each day's activity.

Take pictures of the learning journey in the field and add them to the journal. Yes, there can be an abundance of lessons to be harvested in the soil. Take the opportunity to provide such an experience for a child you know.



Thumbs up to Melinda, Director of the Norton Senior Center, for all her work for the Highway 36 Treasure Hunt booth for the Sr. Center. Thanks also to the many volunteers who gave many hours to make this event GREAT! Emailed in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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