

OPINION



Mark Fourth with care

It's that time of the year. We know Sedgwick County residents will be out with gusto and with fireworks in hand starting June 27 to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday.

We understand.

While our communities and our nation are facing many difficult challenges, we have plenty to celebrate.

Most of all, at this time of the year, we celebrate our freedoms.

So, we say, go for it. Celebrate. Have fun.

But do it safely.

Be kind to your neighbors. Clean up after yourselves. Follow your city's rules, especially the ones about when you should stop at night.

And remember, discharging fireworks is a privilege. It can be taken away. There are guardrails.

The Kansas Fire Marshal's office has issued these common-sense guidelines to keep us safe while having fun:

- Always purchase high quality fireworks from reliable and legitimate sources.
- Always read and follow label directions.
- Have an adult supervise all fireworks activities.
- Always ignite fireworks outdoors.
- Have water nearby.
- Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-ignite malfunctioning fireworks.
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Dispose of fireworks properly.
- Never throw fireworks at another person.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.

We all want to come away from the Fourth of July week with all of our fingers and friendships intact. Think clearly before you begin your fireworks celebrations.

— The Ark Valley News

Contact The News

Opinion
news@arkvalleynews.com

News
Chris Strunk
news@arkvalleynews.com

Circulation
Taylor Messick
taylor@arkvalleynews.com

Sports
sports@arkvalleynews.com

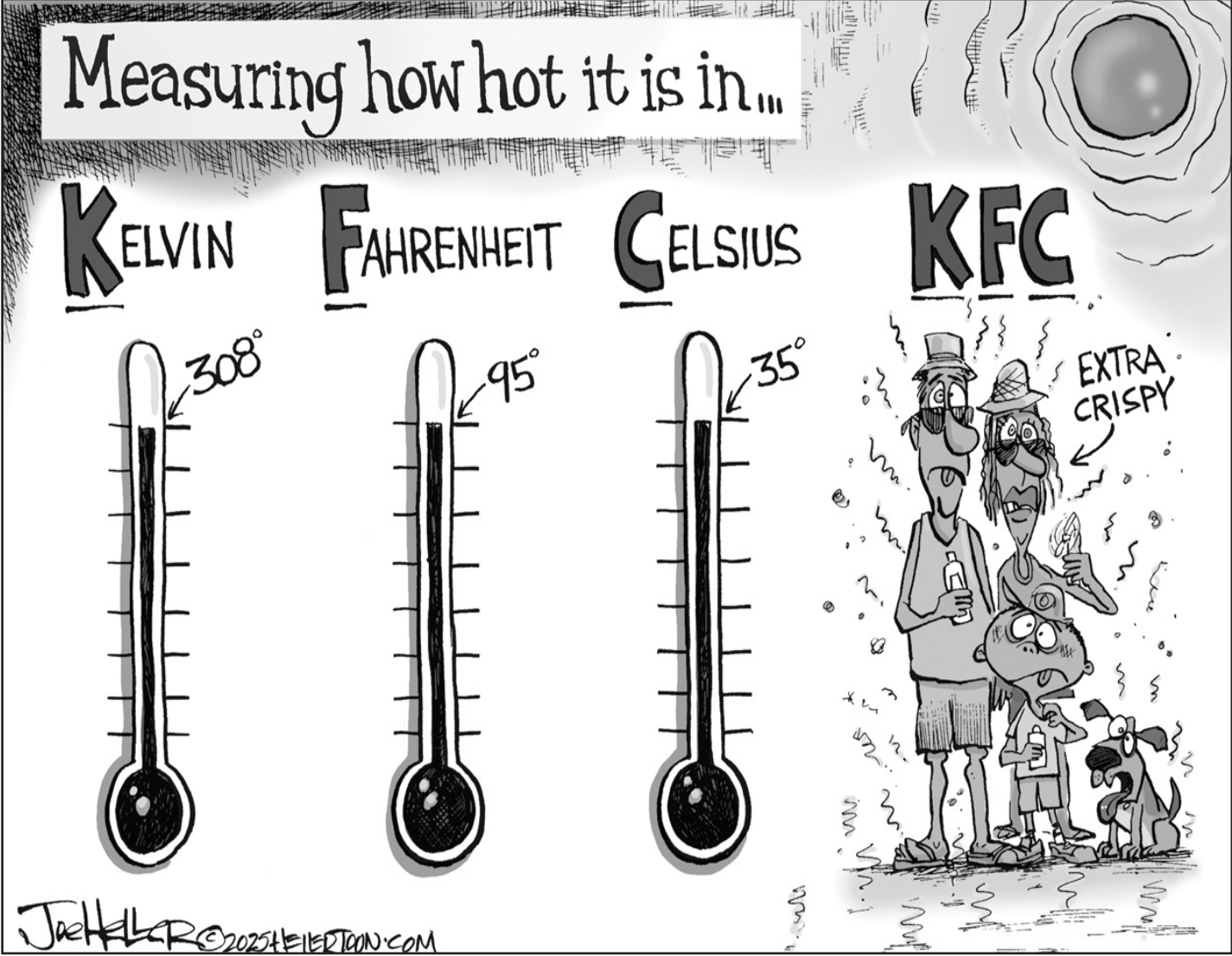
Advertising
Erika Birk
ads@arkvalleynews.com

Phone: (316) 755-0821
210 W. Main, Valley Center KS

The Ark Valley News

(USPS 655-380 PERIODICALS)

Published weekly by Strunk Publishing LLC at P.O. Box 120, Valley Center, Kan. 67147. Publisher: Chris Strunk. Periodical postage paid at Valley Center, KS 67147. **Postmaster send address changes to: The Ark Valley News, P.O. Box 120, Valley Center, Kan. 67147.** Subscriptions are \$40 annually in-county and \$50 annually out of Sedgwick County in Kansas. Out-of-state subscriptions are \$60 annually. The Ark Valley News merged with the Valley Center Index Sept. 10, 1975. Telephone: 316-755-0821. Fax: 316-755-0644. E-mail: legals@arkvalleynews.com. Official city newspaper for the cities of Bel Aire, Kechi, Park City and Valley Center. The office is located at 210 W. Main, Valley Center, Kan.



Largest dumpster barely big enough

My life is essentially governed by to-do lists. I'm not sure what I'd get done if I didn't have them.

And I know I'm not alone.

Last week as I was checking off an item on the day's list, I ran across a handwritten note near one of the trashcans in the post office in Valley Center. Curious, I turned it over to see what it was. It was a to-do list. It even had that label in the top right corner.

I don't mark my to-do lists with a such an obvious label, but I do label them with days of the week and dates.

This one was routine and interesting at the same time. This person was getting groceries, toilet paper, dish soap and laundry detergent — more of a shopping list than a to-do list.

Then I read a couple of interesting entries — work clothes for X, manager clothes and bedside table/dresser.

Work clothes for X? I wonder who X is.

I left the note alone and grabbed the mail out of our post office box. Just 12 more



Out of the office
By Chris Strunk

things to do today.

On my list of things to do last week was to rent a dumpster. In all my life, I'd never rented a dumpster.

I called our local 1-800-Junk-Pro and got it all set up. If you need a dumpster, start there. They're very helpful to make it a pain-free task.

They delivered the dumpster on Friday morning. I had it filled up by 7 o'clock that night.

Most of the junk was the result of a couple of bathroom renovations we're doing at the house. We completed our first renovation a while ago, but had the remnants of a shower and other items in the garage. We finished tearing out the shower, walls and floor in the basement bathroom last weekend, so all that debris was piled up in the garage as well.

Plus, we had been waiting to get a dumpster for a bunch of other junk we'd accumulated and wanted to get rid of over the years — old mattresses, a non-working treadmill and an old exercise bike, a broken-down washing machine and a couple of chairs that were well past their prime, among other things.

When the dumpster — the largest they had — was full, I told my wife that we should've gotten one of these things every few years or so during the past 33 years of marriage. It's nice to de-clutter a little bit now and then.

Speaking of de-cluttering, I know many of my Valley Center friends were busy last week cleaning up after the storm on June 17. I saw a bunch of them at the city's limb dump over the weekend.

There's a mountain of tree limbs over there. It's incredible. During my first trip to dump grass clippings on June 20, there seemed to be plenty of room to get around the tree limb pile.

The next day was a different story. I brought in

a truck full of limbs from my yard and was greeted with a keep-right sign and a single lane of traffic. Everyone had to unload from the sides of their trucks and trailers. No one could back in toward the pile. Thankfully, no one got behind me so when I was done, I was able to back out and leave.

City crews must have visited between then and my second visit, because the outer edge of limbs was pushed back toward the pile for more room to maneuver.

That's going to make an awesome bon fire — if that's what they do with it.

I got a new chainsaw for my birthday over the weekend. My old one, which I bought right after the ice storm of 2005, was becoming frustratingly unreliable. The new tool worked great. My back and arms? Not so well.

A massage should be on my to-do list this week.

Chris Strunk is publisher of The Ark Valley News. Reach him at 755-0821 or news@arkvalleynews.com, or find him on Facebook.

Music the way it 'used to was'

Some people driving American streets and highways see trucks as a roadblock. Others see them as a necessary evil. Still others acknowledge their usefulness in supply chain logistics. A few even suggest they should be banned. Of course, just how those few would find food, clothes, furniture, medicine or fuel without trucks is a question they've never answered.

It's true. Trucks are getting bigger by the decade, drivers are getting younger and loads are getting heavier. It's also true that lines are getting longer, tempers are growing shorter and patience is ebbing quicker. But it's also accurate to say that if you wear it, eat it, drive it or assemble it, a truck almost certainly brought it to your table, your closet, your yard or your garage.

What I often think about, in the presence of big rigs, are the characters of trucking music history. A rookie trucker in 1978, at the wheel of a 5-year-old Kenworth K-100, I was already a



A likely story
By Roger Ryberg

veteran of the midnight radio show called "The Road Gang." They played country music "the way it used to was," as host Charlie Douglas described it, from the studios of WWL radio in New Orleans.

AM 870 had 50,000 watts of power, in the days before XM radio, and we could hear "The Road Gang" from coast to coast some nights. The show catered to truckers, for the most part, but was also a favorite on riverboats, drilling rigs, campsites and all-night cafes. From midnight to 5 a.m. every night, it brought country music and home-spun humor to the hammer lanes of North America.

It also had national weather forecasts, three times every hour, and road

reports border to border just as often. They rarely did remote broadcasting from off-site locations, but Charlie Douglas always made the listener feel like a brother, a friend and companion. He was always on time, yet never in a hurry, even as the Storyteller-In-Chief.

If he knew other famous artists, like some midnight radio hosts bragged about, then we didn't know it. But he played genuine country music, aired family-friendly humor (always 29 minutes after each hour) and took one call each hour from a phone booth somewhere along an interstate. Dubbed by some as "The Father Of Overnight Radio," Douglas hosted "The Road Gang" for just 13 years, but it spawned a half-dozen imitators.

It was Douglas who changed the broadcast landscape of trucking radio before passing the torch to Dave Nemo in 1983. Like others in this niche of trucking radio, he moved to XM after hosting "The Road

Gang" and did quite well, by all accounts. Me, perhaps, not so much. After all, I miss the show to this day. But I digress. A storyteller, not just a broadcaster, much of Charlie Douglas' humor and personality came from growing up in Ludowici, Georgia, with his best friend, "Dammit Ray."

Douglas, whose real name was Doug China, was inducted to the Country Music DJ Hall of Fame in 1994. He died on Thanksgiving Day, 2011, at the age of 78. Colorful, opinionated, patriotic, and sometimes daring, Charlie Douglas used "The Road Gang" to spread a message of safety, sanity, humor and respect to the American trucker. Better late than never, Charlie, thank you!

Roger Ryberg is a Valley Center resident. After 40 years of interstate trucking, he's too old for a paper route, too young to retire and too tired to have an affair. You can reach him at roger-clark437@gmail.com.

What's on your mind?

Write a letter and drop it off at 210 W. Main, Valley Center, or email comments to news@arkvalleynews.com