

When In The Course of Human Events

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

If that sounds familiar, good! It's the first paragraph and a half of the Declaration of Independence. If it doesn't sound familiar, I suggest you take a few minutes to look it up and read it. Many people try to draw parallels between then and now, but I dare say there is no comparison. We are in far better shape than were those brave signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. But we should take time to remember, or learn, the history leading up to the American Revolution.

Thomas Jefferson wrote and rewrote the declaration in the summer of 1776. He was 33 at the time; what a visionary! There were things that he wanted to include in the document, like slavery, that he left out because they needed the vote of the south. He knew it would need to be dealt with eventually, but he also realized that compromise was needed to get to the first step. The notion of compromise, that has been essential in our nation's history, seems to have been forgotten today.

I see a lot of people of today try to compare themselves and today to the revolutionary times of the 1770's. I for one don't think there is any comparison to the patriots of those days. The gentlemen that signed their names were often well known and well to do individuals of colonial America. The average age of these men was 44. The oldest was Benjamin Franklin at 70. Three of the signers were only 26. All of them were literally putting their lives on the line. Had they failed to win the Revolutionary War, they could all have been tried for treason and shot or hung. We hear people talk about putting it all on the line and these men did!

It's been 239 years since that fateful day. Our country has flourished because of the freedoms that were granted then and since then. Our country has flourished because our ancestors banded together knowing that all of us are stronger and smarter than any one of us. Our country has flourished due to the blood, sweat, and tears of many people of many nationalities and races working towards a common goal. Our biggest asset, our biggest strength has always been our diversity working towards the common goal of liberty and justice and unity.

The biggest thank you that we can give to all of those who went before us is to continue to work together to find that common middle ground. Any time that we start trying to divide and start thinking only of our own best interests, it brings all of us down and causes us to fall short of those common goals. Jefferson knew that some of the issues he wanted included would have to wait for another day. He set those aside to find that common ground that all could agree on. If we remember that lesson, and follow it, I have no doubt that we have another 239 years ahead of us!