

## **Celebrate Independence Day!**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

It's July 1<sup>st</sup>. We are heading into the busy Independence Day celebration. Parades, gatherings, parties, food, and fireworks. But the problem, as I see it, is that now days we are celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, not Independence Day. Call me old fashioned, call me a relic, but in my mind, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is a date on the calendar. Independence Day is the day that we celebrate what those brave signers of the Declaration of Independence had in mind.

The Declaration of Independence wasn't whipped out in a couple of days on a word processor. It was painstakingly drafted with quill pen and parchment, first by Thomas Jefferson, and the edited and debated and compromises (an important concept) worked out. Jefferson wanted a prohibition of slavery. But he and others knew that the southern states would not vote for it with that provision in there so after debate it was removed. It bothered Jefferson, even though he had slaves of his own, but he knew that it was important to start with the big picture and some of the other issues would have to be dealt with later.

I annually sit down and re-read the Declaration of Independence. It is an amazingly powerful document that still resonates today. It was a document that changed the world. Granted, much of the document outlines all the grievances that the colonists had with King George of Great Britain. Anyone who was paying attention in American History class knows that the Declaration starts with those great words, "When in the course of human events..." But have you ever taken the time to read down to the second paragraph. It is a powerful paragraph that outlines the important idea that all people are created equal. ALL people, not just those of a certain race, religion, ethnic origin. It said ALL. Time and time over the centuries we see cases around the world where one group doesn't want to accept that all human beings are equal. Read the powerful words of that second paragraph.

"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. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."

We need to spend time realizing, and celebrating, the power of this document. The simple fact that we are all equal and governments should not be "changed for light and transient causes." We are in it for the long haul and we need to realize that acceptance, moderation, prudence, and compromise were critical elements of the Declaration of Independence and they still need to be today. Have a happy Independence Day every one!