

Saba-Saba and the Fourth of July



ANDREW CLARK

A SLICE OF LIFE

The week after next we will celebrate our Independence Day.

In 1982, I was working in Singida, Tanzania, directing a development project. In a conversation about politics with a local man he talked about Saba-Saba, the day Tanzanians celebrate independence, and the great importance it has for them. He also asked what we as Americans did to celebrate our political holidays, especially our Independence Day?

That began a train of thought for me. What indeed do we do? Eat hot dogs, maybe? Drink beer? Watch fireworks? Perhaps have a party to do all three and play some softball, too? Very little, generally, to really celebrate the political freedom that for us is so far back in our history that we feel little immediacy — as opposed to Tanzanians who, because the gaining of independence is within their lifetimes, feel a great deal of involvement.

At that point I was the senior American of the area (42 years old) so I decided that we, the American community of the Singida area, would host a right and proper celebration of our Independence Day, and to that end we set about planning the event. The American population of the area was Barbara,

my wife, our five kids, me, six Peace Corps volunteers who worked on the project I was directing, and several Lutheran missionaries. We wrote to the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam outlining our plan and they did us proud. An American flag was sent and shortly before the event some dry ice-frozen hot dogs arrived — actual true American tribal-food hotdogs. What a smash.

We intended to demonstrate our true nationalism with a tribal parade, a tribal picnic with tribal foods, tribal games and then a tribal oratory. We invited a lot of Tanzanians and all the foreigners working in the area. Eighteen different nationalities attended.

The parade began. Having no electricity, I rigged a car stereo system with its attendant battery in a wheelbarrow so we could parade behind Old Glory to the tribal imperatives of John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." It was a wonderful parade, winding through where we lived with our flag flying in front.

All 18 nationalities marched, including four physicians from the People's Republic of China who were working at the hospital in town — and imagine at that time in history the irony of Red Chinese parading behind the American flag.

The tribal games began. For Americans it was pretty much standard stuff, such as wheelbarrow and three-legged races, but for the Africans it was an astonishing show of nonsensicality. They had never seen white

people behaving in such ridiculous ways and it was real jaw-dropper. After our American tribal games, the Australians felt it necessary to introduce one of theirs called "Fling the Wellie." The "wellie" is a knee-length rubber "Wellington" boot, and the idea is to see who can throw it furthest. It makes about as much sense as the American tribal games.

An Australian who won who was built like an orangutan with arms that reached almost to the ground, and he could make that Wellie float like a frisbee. Everyone played, including a German girl whose understanding of a "picnic" was a formal affair to which dress clothing was worn. Formal dress notwithstanding, the honor of Germany was at stake and she felt compelled to compete. So she hitched up the skirt of her pretty white dress to mid-thigh level and flung the wellie. It was a great event.

The picnic lunch was served. Hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, baked beans, corn on the cob, watermelon and brownies. How much more American can you get? There was lots of fun mixing and talking about the peculiar food that was being served.

The political part of the celebration began — the true foundation of our disparate mongrel American tribal identity. The orator stood on an upside-down wooden soap box. Everyone sat on the ground facing the box for the program.

First a history of how the Declaration of Independence came about and the people who wrote it, presented by a Peace Corps

volunteer who had a degree in history. He explained the background of the people involved — how the writers came from varying modes of life, their Age of Enlightenment thinking, the political imperatives of the time and the formulation of the document.

For the second piece of program, I stood on the soap box and read the entire Declaration of Independence, beginning to end, in what I attempted to make a clear, slow and respectful cadence. I have never experienced a more attentive and focused group of people — 80 individuals sitting on the ground, paying rapt attention to the entire document. A pin dropping in the sand could have been heard.

After the presentations the party was over and people said their goodbyes and thanks. In total it was a terrific event. It felt good to everyone involved. People went home having had a fun and meaningful experience.

Very importantly, we Americans could express our national identity in a positive and acceptable way without any inference of superiority or vertical relationship, and to demonstrate that we indeed do have a lot to celebrate on our Independence Day. Additionally, that we can make fun of ourselves with our stupid games was both astonishing and important, and we certainly have some great celebratory foods.

Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.



RON WYDEN

OTHER VIEWS

Prescribed fires help take heat off

It was 102 degrees in Medford on June 1, 2021. Let me say that again just in case it didn't fully sink in — Medford suffered temperatures as high as 102 degrees in spring, making it harder for firefighters battling Southern Oregon's first fires of the year.

Now, I usually like Oregon to be in the record-setting business, but not for hot, dry weather in April and May. Having a 100-degree day while still in springtime should ring alarm bells for Oregonians everywhere.

It was not so long ago that Oregon's fire season was only a few weeks in August and September. The events of Memorial Day weekend only serve as a reminder that the human-caused climate crisis has increased the frequency of fires that threaten lives, businesses and entire communities.

Over the past week, I met with forest managers and first responders in Southern Oregon, Central Oregon and the Willamette Valley to hear their forecasts for the 2021 fire year.

The bottom line is it's long past time for nickel-and-dime solutions to billion-dollar problems caused by wildfire, such as smoke-related health issues, damage to local economies and life-and-death threats to Oregonians.

Our state has a backlog of roughly 2.5 million acres of federal land in dire need of wildfire prevention. And Oregonians don't want 2.5 million excuses about why there aren't more forest health improvements and prescribed fire treatments completed on these 2.5 million acres.

They just want these fire risks reduced as soon as possible.

The science is clear: Controlled burns clear out dead trees and vegetation as well as break down and return nutrients to the soil, creating healthier and more resilient forests. Prescribed burns or fuel reduction treatments can head off wildfires before they have the chance to burn out of control, devastating lives and livelihoods.

I saw this firsthand in Sisters, where a prescribed burn near the Whychus Creek provided key support in suppressing the 2017 Milli fire before it could overtake Sisters.

To that end, I recently introduced legislation to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fires. The National Prescribed Fire Act has the support of conservation groups as well as leading timber industry voices because its passage would mean healthier forests for timber harvest, forest ecosystems and outdoor recreation alike.

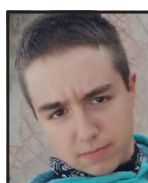
It's going to take all hands on deck to prevent wildfire in the coming dry seasons, so that's why I have introduced bills to harden our power grid by burying power lines, generate thousands of good-paying jobs for young people reducing fire-causing fuels in the woods and meet emissions goals by investing in the clean energy sector.

Smart, science-based forestry is smart climate policy. If we treat hazardous, fire-starting fuels now in the cooler, wetter months, we can prevent future fires before they have a chance to spark.

Ron Wyden, a Democrat, represents Oregon in the U.S. Senate.



Coping with inevitable changes



TYRO WOLFE

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

Climate change is an inevitable self-inflicted extinction event.

When I think about a future where we head into further climate change, never diverting our course, I think of one where there are less humans, and the rest of life on earth has either adapted, or fallen off to the wayside. Honestly, I find it almost romantic. But, it isn't romantic and it isn't inevitable. Yet, somewhere in my upbringing, I accepted it as both of those things.

In spite of the feeling of a looming unstoppable apocalypse, you'll find me doing as many little things as I can to help. As I brush my teeth, I think about turning the water off in between rinses. I think about shortening my showers, walking more and relying on local agriculture. I act on many, if not all, of these thoughts, believing my acting actually will do something.

I spend much of my free time brainstorming solutions, specifically around the topic of sustainable agriculture. However, I feel powerless to enact any of my ideas. I am left without a way to prove myself so that others will listen. I often wonder how many people are as secretly passionate as I am about the topic? How many others

have new ideas and solutions but no voice?

If you gave me a voice, or the ability to enact change by directly speaking to leaders, I'd have no idea what to say. Not because I am without words but because I feel like everything I want to say would be absolutely pointless. Politicians and corporations don't care what some Gen Z in rural Oregon has to say. I haven't any money to back up my words, and I have no power. I'm not talking to world leaders though, I am talking to you. I feel like maybe it will matter more if everyday regular people talk to other everyday regular people, and make change within, where we are, however we can.

I encourage each person to take control of their resources. Gather your own water, grow your own garden. You can make a difference, whether you grow your favorite salad green in a pot on your porch, or you till up your quarter-acre plot to plant corn and squash. Make change within your own personal system. Make your needs as local, and in your control, as possible. Rely on something other than the system that orchestrates its own disaster. Take power back in the little ways you can, in everyday things, and strive for localized self-sufficiency.

Most importantly, try doing things in new ways, research and learn, and expand your horizons. Maybe you've always tilled the back acre, but you've done some reading and you looked into no-till. You decided it's better for you, the climate,

the soil and your bottom line if you start the garden off this year by deep mulching instead of tilling. That is a good example of a change from within.

When I asked my friends what they thought about climate change, most of what they had to say was aimless and confused. They were unsure about what to even believe. Quite a few also expressed dreams aligning to some ideal life environmentally, but admitted it was just a dream; because, let's be real, how could they even dream to afford a house, let alone have time for a garden, composting or space and money to make their ideas into reality and test them?

When I think of climate change, I think of solutions, and I desire to make a difference for my lifetime and the generations to come. But I also feel lost, confused and like most of it is inevitable. I feel like we missed the boat. Most of my peers seem to feel similarly. However, our hope lies in many individuals making changes on personal levels. We know the science. We need to live it now. Maybe another boat is coming by.

Tyro Wolfe, 21, was born and raised in Pendleton with a lifelong interest in the outdoors. She first learned about climate change in elementary school and it hasn't been far from her mind since. She has been coping with both the inevitable changes that will happen in her lifetime, and racking her brain for solutions she can enact.