

VIEWPOINTS

Big beef over parade float

Is it possible to love beef, dislike PETA, and enjoy the music of Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, all at the same time?

I think so. Wouldn't be surprised if there are millions of people across the country who feel the same way.

That's why the news that began over a week ago in South Dakota and soon spread across the country is so disappointing.

There are so many media to choose from (practically every major print and electronic news organization picked up this story) but for the beginning of this tale of woe, I'll share portions of a Nov. 13 Associated Press report picked up by CBS News and spread nationally:

"Some South Dakota farmers and ranchers are upset by the selection of singer-guitarist Joan Jett, a vegetarian and animal rights advocate, to perform on the state's float in the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Joan Jett and the Blackhearts are scheduled to appear at the annual event in New York City, riding on the float that promotes South Dakota tourism and the Mount Rushmore National Memorial located in the Black Hills.

South Dakota Cattlemen's Association President Cory Eich, who farms and ranches near Canova in eastern South Dakota, said Wednesday he thinks it was a mistake to select Jett because she is a supporter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which promotes a vegetarian diet and

BETWEEN THE LINES



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Rapid City Journal first reported some South Dakota residents were upset with the pick.

"To me, it seems like a huge blunder," Eich said. "I guess I couldn't disapprove more. I don't understand what they were thinking."

It didn't take long for this story to have more sizzle than a 3-inch thick T-bone on a backyard grill during the Fourth of July. A sampling of headlines:

"Joan Jett booted from Macy's tourism float over ranchers' complaints about her animal rights advocacy" – The NY Daily News

"Joan Jett kicked off of Macy's South Dakota float at Thanksgiving Day parade" – Fox News

"Meat-Loving Ranchers Protest Joan Jett's Thanksgiving Day Parade Performance" – Digital Music News

"Joan Jett Kicked Off Thanksgiving Day Parade Float Because She's A Vegetarian" – The Huffington Post

To say she was "booted" or "kicked off" the float may be an

overstatement. The solution to this "problem" came from Jett herself. Realizing she was not welcome on the South Dakota float following our cattlemen's tantrum, she decided to simply step away and perform on a different float in the parade.

"I've decided to switch from South Dakota to another float because people's political agendas were getting in the way of what should be a purely entertainment driven event," Jett said in a statement Saturday. "I will remain focused on entertaining the millions of people watching, who will be celebrating a great American tradition."

A noteworthy response following this kerfuffle comes from Cory Heidelberger, who writes about South Dakota political issues in his blog, "The Madville Times." He contends that South Dakotans, with the help of the South Dakota Department of Tourism, could do much to restore our public image after our cattlemen's public relations bungle by pointing out that our state offers a bit of something for everyone.

He presents our state tourism department this script for a video to help point out that not all South Dakotans are as hardheaded as recent news stories indicate:

"[Scene opens, two nice people sitting at picnic table, eating burgers.]

[Close-up left: TOBY KEITH, in a straw hat, sleeves torn off his checked shirt, wrapping a big handle-bar mustache around a thick Angus

burger, dripping with cheese, BBQ sauce, the works. Heck, put a fried egg on top. Big noisy chewing and groans of gustatory ecstasy. Beef Check-off button clearly visible on cowboy hat.]

[Close-up right: JOAN JETT, in standard fem-punk regalia, denim jacket with sleeves torn off, wrapping sensual lips around massive soy burger, sprouts raining out from under the bun, similar dripping, similar ecstatic noises. South Dakota Soybean pin clearly visible on collar.]

JETT [looks at Keith, enunciates around big burger bite]: Hey, what're you eatin'?

KEITH: Angus burger! 100 percent pure beef! Yeehaw!

JETT: Real meat?! [makes suitable expression of distaste]

KEITH: Yeah! What-choo eatin'?

JETT: Soy burger! 100 percent soybeans! Yeah!" [makes rocker hand gesture]

KEITH: Soy? [makes suitable expression of distaste] Where's that come from?

JETT: South Dakota.

KEITH: South Dakota?!

JETT: Yeah, South Dakota.

Where's your burger come from?

KEITH: South Dakota.

JETT: Really?!

KEITH: Yeah. South Dakota. [JETT and KEITH realize oneness, exchange conciliatory gazes.]

[Enter DUSTY JOHNSON (the governor's chief of staff) and DENNIS DAUGAARD, in aprons and really big chef hats. DUSTY struggles in, dwarfed under the weight of two trays, one heaped with soy burgers,

one heaped with Angus burgers. DENNIS carries two spatulas, to keep meat from touching soy.)

DAUGAARD [with biggest goofy farm-boy grin he can muster]: Who wants another burger?

ALL [to camera]: South Dakota!

DAUGAARD: Something for everybody!

[KEITH and JETT each take one more enormous bite.]

VOICEOVER: Paid for by the South Dakota Stockgrowers and the South Dakota Soybean Association.

[FADE to black.]

There would be no need to produce such a video if our state's cattlemen would have simply kept their cool. The eventual outcome of their protests – the removal of Jett – the same musician who performed, without a whimper or complaint from anyone, at the Sioux Falls Ribfest in 2006 – likely will have no effect on the nation's dining habits.

Millions of people will view the South Dakota Tourism float as the Macy's Parade is televised nationally on Thanksgiving morning. Let's pretend nothing has changed in the course of the past two weeks. Let's pretend some members of our state's ag industry hadn't acted childish, and Jett will be performing on the South Dakota float. The result?

No one, by viewing Joan Jett perform, would suddenly lose the urge to dine on turkey, or ham, or beef later that day.

This remains a ridiculous non-controversy.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Do you believe Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed President John F. Kennedy?

No	40
Yes	24
I'm undecided	10
Total Votes	74

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no

letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion or e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.



50 years: Where were you on Nov. 22, 1963?

At 12:30 p.m., Central Standard Time, Nov. 22, 1963, the news struck darkly on a solemn keyboard that would echo for eternity.

Pounding chords of disbelief made me sick to my stomach. Below my furrowed brows, wells of heartache filled my eyes, clouding my thinking.

I remember where I was when the news hit that our beloved U.S. President had been gunned down. I was in the sixth grade and would be turning 11 years old in eight days.

School was released early. A few minutes prior, I hesitantly put away lessons on Greek mythology in exchange for a perennially violent and burdensome truth of an assassination plot to kill our president.

On my way home from school, I don't recall the expression on the crossing guard's face, but I do remember

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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looking down at deep cracks in the sidewalk and straining my short legs in long reaching steps over them.

While never really hitting my stride on that block and a half home, I found myself glum and grief-stricken, hauling debris of hopelessness, a burden I shared with every other American alive at the time.

As the concrete rose beneath my feet, it carried me closer and closer into the cold-blooded reality of what had just happened in Dallas, Texas, and all I wanted was to go back and magically make it not so.

Forlorn, my limited vocabulary for describing such horror grew exponentially from that point forward.

The trauma of such an unforeseen tragedy stole outright the composition of John Kennedy's Presidency – fresh and unspoiled – replacing it with a foreboding sense of doom.

It was the first time in our nation's history that time had stopped as Americans simultaneously huddled in their living rooms frozen around black and white television sets to see and hear Walter Cronkite glumly break the shattering news.

Collectively, we gasped. In unison, our hearts tore. Simultaneously, our fears ignited. All at once, we were heartbroken. In a blink, we were without.

Breathtakingly handsome and demure – John and Jackie Kennedy were the first couple to

occupy the White House who didn't look like our grandparents, rather resembling Barbie and Ken dolls. At 43, John Kennedy was the youngest President.

Even at my young age, I was charmed, like the rest of the country, by the romance and mystic surrounding what would become known as the "Kennedy dynasty."

According to the Warren Commission, after the shots were fired, the First Lady was overheard saying more than once, "They have killed my husband.... I have his brains in my hand." And later in a LIFE magazine interview, Mrs. Kennedy said, "All the ride to the hospital I kept bending over him saying, 'Jack, Jack, can you hear me? I love you, Jack.' I kept holding the top of his head down trying to keep the..." she stopped, unable to finish her sentence.

Now, 50 years later, I am still grieving as I watch raw footage of them seated in the back seat of a 1961 Lincoln Continental convertible, happily riding in a Presidential motorcade on a parade route down Elm Street in Dallas.

The tragic string of events leading up to the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy – only 1,000 days in office – cannot be overplayed.

The avengers – whoever they were, became characters in ever-evolving manifold of conspiracy theories. Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, the Cuban government, the CIA all conferred a new brand of mistrust in the form of unanswered questions that have permanently affixed themselves to history.

Since then, a posse of unspeakable loss and disbelief has kept watch – it's just something that never leaves you.