

Headline diseases not really a threat

Let's hear it for the overrated disease. Every time you pick up the morning paper, there's some new threat to human health. It's hard to say which is the most overrated, but if any disease actually killed or even sickened as many people as the hype would have you believe, we'd be in real trouble.

Where should we start? Anthrax? There's no doubt that the purified anthrax some wacko sent through the mail two years ago was deadly. Trace amounts left in postal equipment apparently killed at least two or three people who never saw one of the original letters. Congress was locked out of its offices for weeks. Mail facilities were in an uproar. But the anthrax powder is more of a poison than a disease. The bacterium is deadly enough at "weapons grade," but the disease itself is hard to spread and fairly easy to treat.

So much for the anthrax scare. West Nile virus? For all the hysteria the last couple of summers, the number of serious cases has numbered in the dozens in this area. It's not a nice thing to get, but it's no epidemic. The disease is deadly enough for birds, but most larger animals — horses and humans seem to be the most susceptible — recover quickly. Any virus has its risks, but West Nile is not going to depopulate the United States.

SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome? Virus caused, sort of a heavy-duty cold, SARS is a nasty infection, but it's been successfully contained the last couple of years. Again, it's not something you'd volunteer to have, like getting the mumps while you're young. But SARS is not the Black Death, or bubonic plague.

Neither is the plague these days, come to think of it. Endemic in many areas, plague seldom bothers humans today. Better sanitation and limited contact with rodents has stopped its spread.

Just don't play with prairie dogs. Hantavirus scares me. Like the African infection ebola, it's often fatal. The infection is painful. No one wants to be that sick. But unless you play in deer mouse droppings, it's hard to get hantavirus. It doesn't seem to be spreading to the human population with any great speed. Nor has ebola left its African homeland.

And then there's mad cow disease, more properly known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy. It's a nasty little infection, caused by a particle known as a "prion" that defies definition. Sheep, deer, elk and people all get some form of this disease, and it seems to spread in most species by eating brain tissue.

Or maybe not. No one knows. But the number of humans infected is infinitesimally small compared to the number of people who eat beef, venison, elk and mutton.

It's been a good guess that the next big flu epidemic will take more people than all the others combined, but influenza is more of a common-type disease, hardly worthy of scare headlines and 5 o'clock treatment.

That should put the trendy diseases in perspective. Ah, but where's the fun in that?
— Steve Haynes

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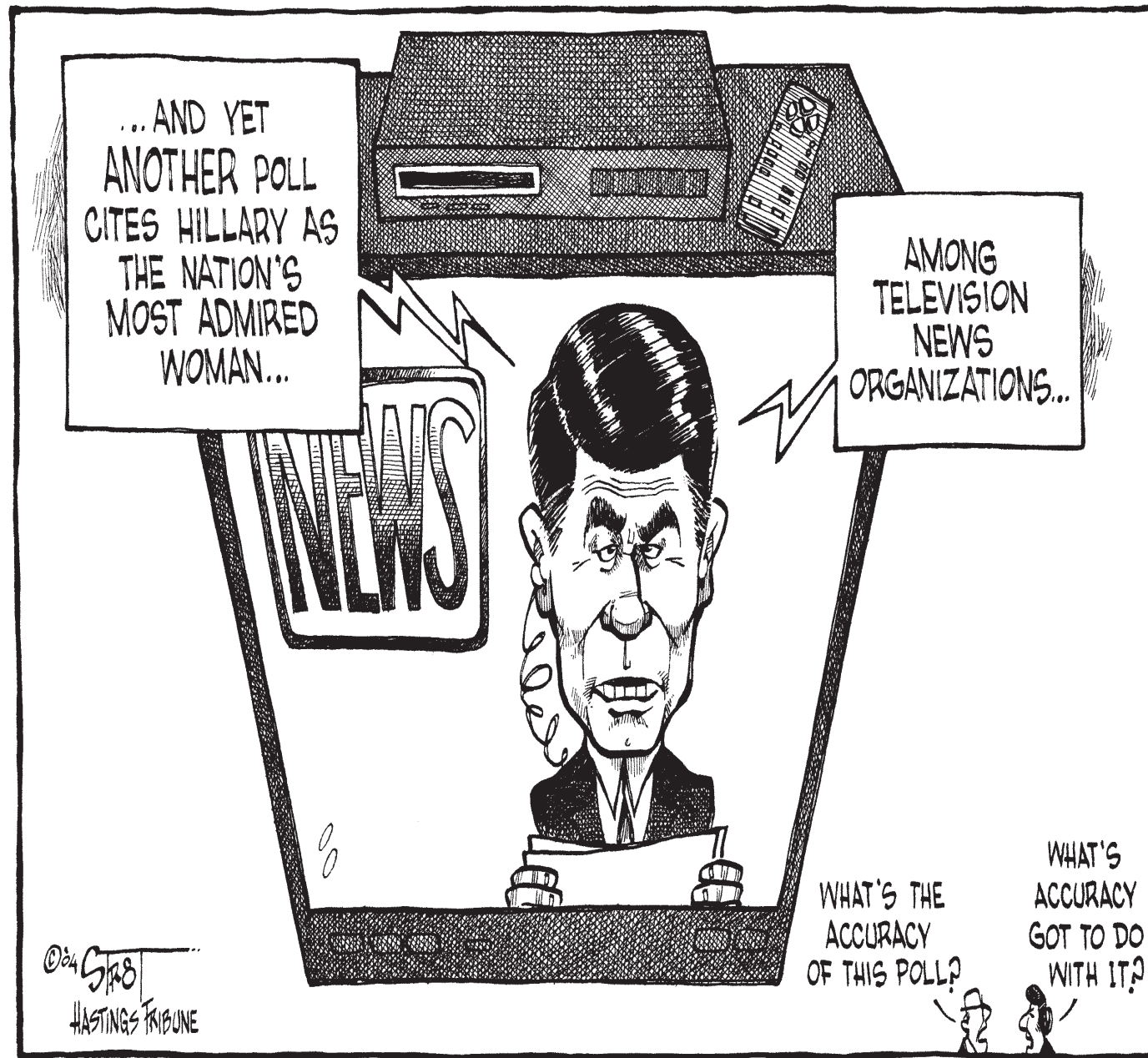
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Christmas was different this year

Christmas is over and the New Year has begun. The holiday season was different for our family this year since I sat by the bedside of my father on Christmas Day and each day until he died on Dec. 28.

The memories of other Christmas celebrations flood my mind.

When I was very young I remember my grandfather would purchase the most delicious oranges and we would receive oranges, apples and nuts. — always an abundance of English walnuts.

We thought that was a big Christmas gift from Grandma and Grandpa.

My mother saw that we celebrated Christmas from Christmas Eve until Jan. 7 (the twelve days of Christmas). I never did know if there was a special significance to that or whether it was just because she loved Christmas so much. She decorated everything and everywhere and did not take anything down until after Jan. 7.

I remember one Christmas that we had such a big snow and we had not been to town for weeks. We did not need to go since our cellar was full of food, we had milk from the cows and eggs from the chickens.

Memories Sonya Montgomery



A day or two before Christmas my Dad left on the tractor and Mom said he needed to go to Norton which was 10 miles away and I worried about him. His sister was living with us then and I think she worried too.

When he returned he had a few groceries, not many, but I learned some time later that my mother had forgotten to get something for our stockings and he had made the trip to town for the most part to get those gifts.

There are many other Christmas times I remember and I hope this causes you to remember the wonderful times with your family.

There were later Christmas times when the children were sick or something happened, but we always had a good time during the holidays.

Many of the past Christmas celebra-

tions included caroling to neighbors and friends then back to the house for hot chocolate and cookies before opening gifts on Christmas Eve.

We did not have the opportunity to do that this year. Maybe next year.

If the weather was too bad, we sang Christmas carols around the piano with the relatives that were able to be at our house.

The holiday season was different this year. And yet, when the entire family which included grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews as well as cousins and friends arrived for Daddy's funeral service, there was still joy and celebration even through the tears.

And now we begin a new year — different than any I have ever known before, without my parents. But with optimism and faith, I believe, it will be a good year. Life goes on and there are blessings and beautiful skies every day.

The beautiful snow that fell this week — yes I know it was a little chilly, zero and below, — but it is the different things in our world and life that make for a beautiful picture.

I wish all of you a very happy and joyous New Year.

And the china flew over the moon

Gwamma, gwamma, they's stealin' you blind." My little nephew (now a junior in high school) wasn't kidding. We were stripping an upstairs bedroom when my mother called from Texas.

Mom was spending the winter in Texas and my sister Marie was watching her home in Concordia while she was gone.

I had a child in college who needed some bedroom furniture and Mom had a set that hadn't been used since my sister and I left home.

Mom told me to go over to her house and get the stuff whenever I had a chance, so Marie and I were busy moving beds and a dresser from the upstairs of Mom's place to the tiny U-Haul behind my truck.

In the middle of this operation, Mom called and Curtis, who must have been all of 5 or 6 at the time, told on us.

I remember this as I watch my youngest daughter pack up my china for the trip to Lawrence.

"Gwamma, gwamma, she's stealing me blind."

The china, like that bedroom set, has not been used in years. In fact it has not been unpacked since we moved back to Kansas 10 years ago.

The kids left home and we have another set of good china, so I have just not needed a set of fine dinnerware for 12.

This set is enormous. It has 24 plates and 12 of everything else that you can think of. There are two sizes of bowls — one for soup and one for fruit. There are cups and saucers and half-size or demi-

Open Season Cynthia



tasse cups and saucers. Serving pieces include cream and sugar, salt and pepper, three sizes of vegetable bowls, platters, a coffee pot and lid and a tea pot and lid.

Unfortunately, the lids are broken on both the sugar and coffee pot. This is not bad for a set I got before I was married 32 years ago.

The dishes have silver around the rims and tiny green leaves and white flowers about one-half inch from the rim. The bottoms say Sheffield Fine China, Japan, and Elegance, which I assume is the pattern name.

It is a beautiful set of china, which I used in Kansas City when I entertained the snooty women of the Westheights Ladies Club. It got packed away when we moved to the log home in Colorado and was used only rarely thereafter.

Now youngest daughter has claimed it and was repacking it and moving it to her home in Lawrence, where we hope it will get more use than it has in my garage the last 10 years.

While I have seen this china in antique stores, it was not especially expensive when Mom bought it for me — more than

30 years ago after I announced my engagement.

Steve told Lindsay to tell all her friends that the set was purchased at Boogarts in Concordia, a store which has since gone out of business.

That is, of course, true. What she isn't to say is that Boogarts was the grocery and the plates, cups and bowls were 39 cents each with a \$10 purchase.

Hey, all the extras added up to quite a sum, but Mom had all her friends buying pieces for me. That's how I ended up with more than 200 pieces of Elegance china fit to serve the snooty gals of the Westheights Ladies Club.

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