

Pears should be picked in good time

You know Christmas is over when the partridge in a pear tree turns into a hail of putrid pears.

Lining one side of the walk going into the Norton County courthouse are four or five lovely pear trees.

Right after Christmas the city truck was removing the decorations from the front of the courthouse. As the boom moved forward to take down the decorations it hit two of the trees and brown, slimy pears came raining down on the lawn and sidewalk making pedestrians jump and run for cover.

In the spring they bloom, in the summer they turn green and leafy, and in the fall they are full of fruit.

But, there is no one to collect the fruit. Oh, a few people will pick up some windfall or grab a piece of ripe fruit from a low branch, but for the most part, the pears sit on the trees until they rot and fall off to litter the grounds.

There's a wonderful natural resource sitting on the courthouse grounds going to waste while the city fathers are trying to think up ways to get people to town and spark interest in something — anything.

Why doesn't someone come up with a use for those poor, pitiful pears?

We bet that the county commissioners would be more than happy to have someone pick them.

The city has a boom truck that could be used to get the fruit off the higher branches, while a dozen people with ladders could get bushels off the lower branches.

Why not have a pear-picking party? Someone could organize a pear-preserve making day.

Maybe we could have a pear festival.

We could celebrate the appearance of the pear blossoms. We could picnic under the trees in the summer and admire the ripening fruit. We could all get out our ladders (after signing waivers of liability for the county) and pick them pears.

Then we could eat, sell, cook, cut, decorated, pulverize, wear or squeeze the fruit. Whatever we did, we would be ahead. We would be using our natural resource that is now rotting on the trees and falling onto the heads of unsuspecting passers by.

Perhaps the Chamber of Commerce or a service club like Rotary or the Lions could come up with a way of using the produce. It could be used to help someone, or turned into money or as a community event.

Money does grow on trees. You just have to get it picked in time.

— Cynthia Haynes

Savings bonds — grandma's gift of the future

I might grow older, but I'm kicking and fighting it all the way.

Every miracle cure for wrinkles finds its way into my medicine cabinet. I've started a savings account for my "eye job", and I still refuse to wear sensible shoes. It's good that I'm married to an older man.

Jim will turn 60 the middle of March. Why do we say "turn (fill in the age)"? Milk turns. So does fruit. We say we've "turned" a particular age, then after a certain point it becomes, we "made it" to 70 or 80.

Anyway, Jim is fast approaching this milestone and Jennifer and I have been discussing how to mark the occasion. Then it dawned on me — we will be in Mexico over his birthday. It will be our third trip to Juarez in three months.

Rather fitting though, I think. A lot of people think 60 is the beginning of the downhill slide.

And he will be going full-steam, doing something he loves.

Jim can still work circles around men half his age. Plus he has the advantage of having already made his mistakes, so now he doesn't have to waste time fixing them. He may be a little slower "snapping back" from a full day's work (and he knows no other kind of day except a full one), but

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



after a night's rest, he's right back on the job.

—ob—

Taylor celebrated her fifth birthday this week and Alex will be 9 in a few days. They are the first two grandchildren to reap the rewards of our new attitude towards birthday presents: savings bonds. Yes, savings bonds. No, they're not too exciting. No batteries. No moving parts. Just a little piece of paper that their parents will immediately confiscate, put in a safe place and declare, "You'll appreciate this when you get older."

Even Angelia, at the advanced age of 12, will appreciate it in a few years when those little pieces of paper suddenly become several hundred dollars that can be used for college, a car, a house, even a wedding.

Besides, waiting for a savings bond to mature is a good exercise in patience. Seven years is a long time.

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

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- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- ★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715
- ★ **State Sen. Stan Clark**, State Capitol Building, Room 449-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399
- ★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500



The perfect way to travel back in time

For awhile now, I have wanted to become a hermit. We own some property below the Kirwin Reservoir, along the Solomon River. The access road goes down quickly to the river channel. There are lots of trees, a couple of little hay meadows and then the river.

At first I thought I'd like a little house down there. But I seem to recall a phenomenon called rain, so probably that would not be the best idea. A second notion is to go south of the river and build on a bluff overlooking the water, the master of all I survey (or at least the acreage between the highway and me.)

This idea has lots of appeal.

You can't get across the river in a vehicle so I would definitely have the isolation I want. I'm not sure how far I would want to carry this, do I want to be self-sufficient or just left alone?

Do I want to milk a cow and cure my own hams? Chickens I could handle and I like to sew. Of course I'd have electricity and indoor plumbing and maybe a phone. I am the only one in the family who thinks this is a good idea.

My husband treats my idea with the same consideration that you'd give an addled child. He would never hurt my feelings but I can tell he isn't taking me seriously. The girls are not so kind.

I think a lot about how Kansas was years ago. In 1902 my grandparents married and homesteaded in Graham County. Their

Back Home Nancy Hagman



first home was a dugout in the banks of Wild Horse Creek.

It seems sort of heroic to me, but many people were in similar situations at that time so it probably really wasn't. Although they did not have a cell phone or the Internet they had more neighbors than I have. They were hardly isolated.

I can imagine their lives. What I would really like to see is how Kansas was in 1802.

I love the movie "Out of Africa". The aerial scenes are breath taking. How I wish I could have flown over Kansas when the great buffalo herds followed their migratory trails, before roads, fences, bridges and electrical lines. What were the rivers like?

The Smoky Hill valley between Oakley and Scott City is a good guess. But what about the little creeks and rivers in this part of the state. The Prairie Dog could have hardly been so grand and I just cannot imagine the North Fork of the Solomon without trees.

Lately a large flock of turkeys has taken

up residence right south of our house. I'm sure there are more than 100 birds. I've never heard anyone wax poetic over the magnificent turkey herds of the Great Plains. I know we're talking turkeys here, but they really are pretty cool to watch. Did they have flocks of thousands of turkeys 200 years ago?

Give me a time machine and an airplane. In the background I'd prefer the "Out of Africa Original Soundtrack" recording. I'll find out and report back.

Several years ago two sociologists from (gasp) New Jersey did a study of the Great Plains.

They came up with the idea of Buffalo Commons. The Great Plains should be returned to its unsettled state as sort of a national park or preserve. This theory did not set well with the locals. Interestingly, much of what they proposed seems to be happening anyway. We have vast herds of deer and turkey. There are even elk in Norton County now. (And you thought hitting a deer was bad.) Everyone has heard stories of mountain lions in the area, recently we even heard a report of a bear.

As for moving the people out, that seems to be taking care of itself, too.

The railroads are being abandoned although we do still build roads. I may not need that time machine, all I have to do is live long enough — down on the river — just me, the turkeys and the old man (if I can convince him to wait with me).

New memories of a life together

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Some people will be unfaithful, some in spirit and some in body, the effects are the same, only the pride suffers more in the latter. The truth is with each hurdle we pass we choose whether it strengthens us for the race ahead or merely blocks fur-

ther strides. The choice and, yes, the responsibility rests with each of us.

These two couples were linked to Jack and me in memories as well as in hopes and plans for the future

"Let's get together next year," was written in each Christmas card. And then as part of a community comes a nagging question, if we had gotten together could we have helped in some way.

Now we will never know we can only speculate on the strengths we might have brought or the weaknesses we might have witnessed.

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