

Only 50 days left until general election

The Republican and Democratic conventions are behind us, and the campaign stretch has begun, with 50 days remaining until the the first Tuesday in November.

This was a strange year for conventions, with both parties having chosen their nominee long before. Both were designed mostly to play to the prime time television audiences.

One commentator said he thought the old exciting conventions were a thing of the past, and that probably in the future, the Republicans and Democrats will have their delegates gather and party for the weekend, do about three hours of actually convention for the television networks on Monday and Tuesday, and that would be it. He suggested they might keep the main speech from the nominee on Wednesday, but felt that really could be the windup to the Tuesday television show.

Over the next eight weeks, the gnashing of teeth over the military records of both George Bush and John Kerry will continue to surface among the waves of rhetoric. The evidence so far is that Kerry is unfit to command because he came home and worked against the Vietnam War along with millions of other people in 1971, and that Bush is unfit to command because he found politics in Alabama more important than making his National Guard weekends.

These should not be the main reason someone decides to vote for either man, but there will be lots of charges and counter charges between the two camps. Many citizens feel these tactics are a good reason to stay away from politics; they are not members of either major party.

Referred to as the "great unwashed," those who cling to the No Party Affiliation on their registration seem to always complain about the choices on the November ballot, but do not want to be part of the decision process.

Now that the conventions are over, the Democrats and Republicans will focus their efforts to convince the unaffiliated that their guy is the best choice. Neither of the major parties has enough members to control the national election; to win, they must attract the unaffiliated.

There are splinter parties who have members across the nation, and seek the same unaffiliated voters. In a close vote, their numbers might throw the election into doubt or keep either major party from winning and it would end up in the House of Representatives. This is the stuff political science theories and doctoral theses feed on.

The polls continue to show this a close race for the White House, and it will be interesting to watch the pundits as they try to divine the winner before any of us have entered the voting booth.

Politics is a global game we all are involved in, whether we are affiliated with a party or not. Politics is everywhere, and will be a daily story for the next 54 days to Nov. 2.

— Tom Betz

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ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654
Published each Wednesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002
Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



Home remedies weird but effective

Do you have an old wives remedy for wasp stings?" Jennifer asked over the phone one day last week. "Did you get stung?" was my brilliant reply.

Duh. Here's your sign. Yes, she had been stung and wanted to know what to do.

"Mud," I tell her. "Put mud on it." "Are you just saying that because you think I'm foolish enough to do it, or does it really work," was her skeptical comment.

When I was a kid, mud is really what my mom would tell me to put on a wasp sting. Probably because it was convenient and I could do it myself. And it was soothing, which is about all you can do for a wasp sting.

But, getting back to Jennifer. I knew she wouldn't begin to put mud on herself. After conferring with my coworkers, it was agreed that a paste made of baking soda and water would be the appropriate treatment.

Knowing her father is extremely allergic to hornet stings, I did advise her to watch for any adverse developments.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



Later, she reported that the pain and the swelling had gone away.

But let's not dismiss those old-time remedies. My children didn't know the dread of having a sticker removed. When they would come to me with a sliver, I would apply a bread and milk poultice. Leave it overnight and by morning it would, literally, "pop" out.

A bread and milk poultice is made by taking a pinch of bread, dipping it in milk, squeezing out the excess, placing it over the offending splinter/sticker, covering with a Band-aid and waiting 'til morning. There is some reaction that happens between the bread and the milk that creates a "drawing" action. It may not work in all cases, but I swear by it, and so do my kids.

Plants are pieces of life and memory

A friend was talking about her house plants and how each was as much a memory as a plant.

I know exactly what she means.

As I look around the house, I see not just stems and leaves, but parts of my life.

In one corner is our oldest plant, a mother-in-law's tongue. I'm not sure how old it is, but I remember it sitting on a radiator in our home in Kansas City.

We had a lot of plants in Kansas City. House plants were in vogue, and I had them everywhere. However, most of them died when we moved to Colorado.

We moved in November and had to spend two nights on the road. All the plants were loaded into the back end of Steve's old Blazer.

Two-thirds of them didn't make the trip. Most of the rest died during the month we lived in a one-bedroom cabin with three small children. The mother-in-law's tongue lost a lot of leaves, but was meaner than either the cold or the children.

This hardy plant is sitting in the kitchen waiting to return to its permanent home in the dining room. The dining room has been in the middle of renovation for about six months and the mother-in-law's

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



tongue has been pushed against a kitchen wall. It just keeps growing.

Across the kitchen is the plant I brought home from my father's funeral. That was almost a dozen years ago. I don't know what it is. It has a narrow stem and lots of yellow-spotted green leaves, which it sheds all over the floor. When I see that plant, I think about my father. He wasn't a big house plant lover, but he enjoyed outdoor gardening and had a wonderful grapefruit tree growing in Texas behind the trailer he and my mother called home in the winter.

In the living room, there is a Norfolk pine that my brother-in-law Kenny's coworkers sent to my mother-in-law's funeral.

Normally, if your friends send a plant

to a funeral, you get first crack at taking it home. However, Kenny lives and works in California, and he didn't think he could manage taking a tree back home with him.

My mother-in-law was a wonderful woman, and I smile every time I see her tree.

On the phone table is a philodendron, a gift from friends who used to live in Denver but have moved to Washington state. I may never see them again, but I remember going to Rockies baseball games and to Ocean Journey in Denver with them.

There are spider plants on Steve's desk and hanging from the ceiling in the dining room. They are relatives of ones his sister Barb has in Emporia. I don't remember if she had the original plant or we did, but either way, a lot of spider babies have been batted off by busy kittens over the last 20 years.

When I look at the spider plants, I remember both Barb and the many cats we have both taken in over the years and smile.

My friend was right when she said that each plant is more a memory than a piece of foliage. And each memory is a smile.

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