

Addressing systems can help and hurt rural counties

Most counties out here already have or seem to be moving inexorably toward naming or numbering all roads. This may be a good idea — it's certainly a trend — and then again, it may just be one more worthless "unfunded mandate" foisted off on us by Washington and Topeka. The people of this area need to let officials know what they want, because this is going to affect them. It will cost all of us some money, but those with rural route addresses could wind up spending a bundle.

First, let's deal with a myth: Officials are saying the county "has" to name the roads. That's just not true. There's no state or federal agency with the authority to force the county to do this. It's possible somewhere along the line, the county might miss out on some grant money if it does not name the roads.

Even that is far from certain. The counties could choose to fight. Naming roads, like Norton County has done, and adding addresses, which Norton County hasn't done, has some advantages, especially when all the rural intersections are marked:

- It'd be much easier for everyone — delivery people, emergency crews, police and firemen, visitors, hunters, everyone, really — to find rural homes and locations.
- The Postal Service, phone companies, power utilities and the like have computer systems that use street addresses. They all prefer an address system.
- New 911 emergency systems integrate global positioning technology and address grids to direct crews to an emergency. The location of a home or even a GPS-equipped cell phone will show up on a computer map with this equipment. Dispatchers can use the road names to direct emergency workers.

There's a price to be paid for all this, however. For one thing, everyone on a rural route will have to change their address, from the present route-and-box style to a five-digit street address. Instead of Rural Route 1, Box 93, you'll live at 11102 E Road.

This may be easy for some, but it will be costly for many; they'll need new stationary, business cards, you name it. Just getting your address changed with all the people who send you bills, magazines and the like can take months. And after a year or so, the post office just stops delivering mail with the old address.

Then there'll be the cost of road signs, about 900 of them, plus posts and hardware, and annual maintenance for the ones which are stolen, knocked down or wear out.

The real question comes down to this: Do people want to change their addresses and get the benefits of the new system, paying the cost, or do they want to tell the city bureaucrats foisting this thing off on rural communities where to stick it? Norton County, so far, has it both ways: The county lettered and numbered its roads, but the commissioners have never approved the address plan. Signs have been up for a couple of years, but the addresses have never been approved.

What will the federal and state bureaucrats do? No one really knows. Maybe they will cut some grants off. Maybe not. Folks, especially those who live in the country, need to make themselves clear about what they want.

— Steve Haynes

WRITE:

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Some 'stuff' is more than just junk

I've created a monster, and as I told Jim this morning, "Don't worry, it's worse than it looks." Wait a minute. That doesn't sound right, but I'm afraid it's true. The house looks like a bomb went off. Last week I decided that with my granddaughter Taylor coming for a visit, I needed to get the spare bedroom in order. It had become quite a catch-all and needed to be "mucked out."

As with any big job, the hardest part is getting started, but early Saturday morning found me hauling boxes into the front room at a brisk pace. That wasn't so bad. Next came the clothes. Good a time as any to sort winter from summer. I went one step further and sorted out things I haven't worn in years, namely T-shirts. That done, I was encouraged to start a box of "stuff" to take to Mexico on our next trip. Digging deeper into the recesses of the closet, I kept finding more and more "stuff."

I feel really good about all that I accom-

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



plished, even though it's far from being done. Trash is in one pile; old pictures in another; clothes and "stuff" for Mexico in yet another. All that remains to be done is to re-pack what's left and figure out how to get it back into the closet. Part of what happens in a clean-out project like this is you re-evaluate your priorities. Lots of the stuff in that closet were things I had claimed after Mom died. Things that I couldn't bear to part with six years ago, but aren't nearly so important now. After all, they are just things. I can remember my mother just fine without

every scrap of paper, every letter I ever sent her, or the card from every funeral she attended. I still kept plenty. One thing I couldn't pitch was a packet of letters my parents wrote to each other, some before they were married, some after. The ones written to my dad while he was away from the family picking corn in Nebraska during the '30s were especially poignant. "When ARE you coming home?" my mother wrote. "I sure hope you can send some money soon. There's a lot of us here and I need to get a few things." I had to laugh at one letter where she admonished him to stay away from that "redheaded schoolmarm." And, I had to cry when she signed one letter, "Sending all my love to you and expecting to receive yours in return." The closet and room are clean now. It was a job, long overdue and I'm glad it's done. Taylor will never know how hard Grandma worked to get ready for her.

Church does lots of great projects

My husband thinks it sounds harsh but, when asked, I have told people I am not joining a church after we move. Not that I have anything against church but, if you go too frequently, they start asking you to do things. I got rid of all my volunteer jobs last summer (except alumni association, which I'm done with May 28). And I don't miss any of them. But I will miss our church. It is small but we do some neat things.

The most recent newsletter tells us we raised money to build two houses in Sri Lanka for tsunami victims. Individual donations and some meals with a freewill offering accomplished this. So really it ended up being a project not only for the church but also for our community. There is a lot to be said for a small town. A project that really captured my imagination was a baby layette project (also for the tsunami victims). This project is ongoing — there are always babies, but at this time the layettes just happened to also be going to Sri Lanka. Anyway I thought how wonderful it would be to provide a layette or two. So I clipped the list and went shopping. I learned some things and so did my family. I did some shopping for the items with one of the daughters in tow. "Cloth diapers!" she exclaimed. "Do they even make those?" I assured her they did, but guess what — the store we were in did not carry them. Purchasing these very basic items was harder than you might think. The items were not to have decorations that could be construed as religious or patriotic as these mothers are probably not Christian and certainly not American. And there is the issue of how "basic" the items were. Have you been to a baby shower lately? How many new American moms would feel they were adequately providing for their babies with six cloth

Back Home

Nancy Hagman



diapers, a sweater, a couple of tee shirts and sleepers? De we know how blessed we are? I have not purchased baby clothes in awhile so I also experienced a little sticker shock. One item requested was a sweater that opened in the front. It was very difficult to find such an item by itself. You might find one in a gift set with other items or something very expensive by itself. I purchased most of the things locally. Sure made them wonder at Pamida. (Who's having a baby?) But there was one thing I could not find — diaper pins. Perhaps Pamida was out because they did have diapers. Our pastor and his wife (the Kersensbrocks) had agreed to pay for mailing the layettes. I was tired of having the stuff around my house so I took it to the church and ex-

plained to Jane that I just couldn't find diaper pins. Later I was able to get out of town to shop and found one very plain style of diaper pins — whatever happened to the cute little yellow ducks and whatever? I guess I am living in the dark ages. But finally I had completed two layettes. Meanwhile, this idea got into Shelley Ellis' head and heart. Shelley (who works at Rural Telephone) got a layette drive going at work. Altogether 52 1/2 pounds of layette items were collected. While Jane admitted this was more than she anticipated when offering to pay the postage, she was overjoyed to be able to pack and send these things. Now I am told Janet Porter is checking into how we can provide a boat for a fisherman who lost his boat and his livelihood in the tsunami. This will be the Vacation Bible School project. What a great idea. This is church at its best. People taking action to make the world a better place. I am sure you know of many similar stories at your church. There are many more instances in mine. So maybe I will find a new church. I believe "we are saved by grace not works" — but why not pass on the joy one gets from doing the work?

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