

It's hard to know what you would do unless you're on the jury

So, Michael Jackson walked. The jurors just couldn't find a smoking gun. They said they looked hard and long. The state failed in its argument. The defense said all the right words. Maybe it was because of a prosecutor who was hell-bent on finding Michael Jackson guilty. A prosecutor whose apparent full-time mission was to toss Jackson's fanny in jail. Over zealous, would be the term. Too, we television viewers were spoon-fed what those so-called "analysts" wanted to feed us. And if you watched many of them, they, too, couldn't agree on what they witnessed in the courtroom. Which is one of the reasons we were in hopes that the judge would have let the Jackson trial be as public as was the O.J. Simpson trial.

But that didn't happen and consequently we didn't know what evidence the jury was privy to as it moved toward deliberations. Another example was the actor Robert Blake murder trial. If you believed what the analysts were telling us, there was little hope that Blake would walk. But he did.

I (the publisher of *The Colby Free Press*) sat on a jury some years ago. It involved a student and a popular couple in that community. The student hit the couple with his car one night as they were walking along the street. Early speculation was that the student would be justly punished. After all, the couple suffered serious injuries.

But after a few days hearing all the evidence, the jury concluded, during its deliberations, that the student did nothing wrong. He was not guilty of anything. The couple, however, the jury concluded, didn't take steps necessary to protect themselves. They walked in the street, at night, next to a sidewalk. Their clothing did little to warn motorists of their presence on the street.

Going into the case, however, all I had to go on were reports carried in the newspaper. It didn't sound like an open and shut case to me. But coffee drinkers prior to the trial were quick to condemn the student. "Probably speeding." "Maybe beered up a little." You know how coffee shop drinker-juries deliberate.

Sitting in the jury box and watching and listening to all the testimony is a real eye opener. You know your responsibility and that responsibility takes on a more pronounced tone. You hear BOTH sides of the story. You hear closing arguments from BOTH attorneys. We saw both parties involved. We listened as they took the stand.

Then we retired to the room — the jury room. After frank discussions, we all arrived at the same verdict — not guilty. But had I listened to the coffee jurors, the young man would have been launched by missile into outer space.

So, we are back to the Jackson jury. They saw and heard something we didn't. They looked for the smoking gun. It wasn't there. I thought, in the end, he would be found guilty as charged. But he wasn't. Not in this particular case, anyway.

— Tom Dreiling

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday 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

Office hours:

8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

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JEFF PARKER

A nightmare by another name is a bus

Summer is officially open. We planted our tomatoes this week end.

Jim brought home about six healthy-looking plants more than a week ago. They promptly went into a limp, dehydrated wilt. A drink of water would restore them for a time, but I had to keep a close eye on them or it would be "droop-city" again.

While I took an extended Sunday afternoon nap, Jim made me look bad by readying the tomato bed. He likes to dike the edges so we can flood it and not have to water so often.

We're also getting some cottonwoods started in the same bed, so it might take more water. Jim transplanted the seedlings last year, and most seemed to have wintered all right, even achieved some growth. We've had pretty good luck transplanting wild "ditch trees." They may not be the "cottonless" kind, but they are such a stately tree.

We're trying something new this year: peppers. I don't know what kind of peppers they are. I think someone gave them to Jim. I can't imagine him buying bell peppers, since he can't eat them anymore. He can eat the "hot" kind, but if they're hot, I can't eat them. Looks like only one of us is going to be enjoying peppers, whatever kind they are.

—ob—

Recently, I had an experience I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

You know I took my granddaughter, Taylor, back to Texas after her annual summer visit. What I didn't mention last week is she and I rode to Dallas with another daughter, Jennifer, and her daughter, Alexandria.

Jennifer had classes to attend for her job and the timing was right for Taylor and I

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



to ride down with them. The only catch was Jennifer had to stay longer than I could be away from my job.

So, I decided to ride the bus home. Don't get me wrong. Bus companies do the best they can. And it is an economical way to travel. But, if I ever, and I mean EVER, think about riding the bus again, just take me out and shoot me.

Not only was the automated "help" line not helpful, it was downright exasperating. After several attempts with non-English speaking agents and multiple tries with the help-line, I thought I was close to purchasing a ticket when, oops, "Sorry, our reservation computer system is down. Try again later." Click.

Perseverance paid off, finally. I had my ticket and was ready to roll.

Kara took me to the bus station, where we waited and waited. Forty minutes later the bus pulled up, the driver helped load my luggage and we were off. Every row of seats had at least one person, so I asked if I could sit with a kind-looking woman close to the front.

Kathryn and I kept up a lively conversation about recipes, jobs and children, which helped pass the time. In Oklahoma City, the man behind us was getting off. Kathryn and I agreed I would take that seat so we could both be more comfortable. Wrong. About 15 more people boarded and now every seat, including the one I

had just vacated and the one beside me, was now occupied.

My new seat mate was a Hispanic man named Martin Flores. I asked him, "Habla Ingles?"

He responded, "No, habla Español?"

"Poquito," I answered. Translated, that means "a little." Which was more false than true. My Spanish is pretty limited to phrases associated with our mission work building houses in Mexico. You know, "Where do you want your windows (or doors)?" Stuff like that.

Somehow, though, I established he worked in a restaurant in Ardmore, Okla., and he was on his way to visit his parents in Washington state. After looking at the ream of tickets he held for all his transfers, I realized poor Martin would be on the bus for days. I made sure he was on the right bus when we all had to transfer in Kansas City. Sure hope he made it to where he was going.

My next seat mate was a handsome, muscular man named Chris who was on his way to Los Angeles. He was a carpenter and wanted to get a job building sets for Hollywood movies. Hope he realizes his dreams, too.

I was lucky enough to get off the bus in Junction City and ride the rest of the way with my brother Bill, who was going to the farm that day. After a sleepless night on the bus, I wasn't much of a conversationalist.

The next morning, I awoke to a stiffness like none other I had ever known. An appointment with my massage therapist was my only hope.

She rubbed and oiled and massaged. It felt so good, the bus ride was almost worth it.

Almost.

The fight against age can be amusing

Things are sagging a bit more than they once did, and I'm trying to fight both age and gravity.

Since I've been losing weight, I've spent a lot more time reading magazine and newspaper articles about toning your muscles, keeping in shape and eating the right diet.

I have clipped so many articles from papers and women's magazines that if they tip over on me in the middle of the night, I could be crushed or smothered.

I spend long minutes in the bathroom each day reading all this wonderful advice, then walk out and mostly ignore it.

I did buy some weights. My youngest daughter said I should have some two- and three-pound weights, so I went to the store and found that they had dozens of five-pound weights, one three-pound weight and no two pounders.

I bought one five and one three. I figured I could use the weight on one arm and then on the other. Then I got the bright idea of putting the three-pound weight in my car and pumping iron while driving.

My family and a friendly police officer frowned on this exercise, however, so the weight mostly keeps the ton of papers in

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



the back seat from blowing around.

I bought a big rubber band a couple of months ago, and as soon as I figure out the instructions, which are written in three languages — none of which is English — I will start to use it. Maybe.

I have started to try some of the suggestions, too.

An article in the *Woman's Day* suggested that to keep mentally alert, if you are right handed, brush your teeth with your left hand. It's tough, but possible.

Then I picked up some suggestions from a column in *The Denver Post*, which gave nine simple ways to fitness.

Tip No. 3 said balance is important. Many hip and knee injuries are caused by poor balance, it said.

To solve this problem, it suggested that

you stand on one foot while brushing your teeth.

I liked that one. It was easy, simple and required no incomprehensible instructions or extra time.

I tried it.

There I was, ready for my shower, balancing on my right foot while making horrible faces at the mirror as I tried to make my left hand brush my teeth.

Steve walked into the bathroom and stopped for just a couple of seconds. He slowly backed out and softly closed the door. I don't think he even wanted to know what I was doing.

I found another tip in a magazine the other day. It suggested deep breathing. You breathe in really deeply through your nose, then you exhale slowly through your mouth.

The article said you could do this while brushing your teeth.

