

No one can tell what a judge will do

What has President Bush done? He appoints a conservative judge to the Supreme Court, and the Democrats can't think of anything bad to say about him. Do they know something he doesn't? The Dems were expecting another Robert Bork, the Reagan nominee they railed at and eventually blocked. What they got was something very different, a Washington insider with friends everywhere and few enemies. In the current mood, he'll sail through the Senate. It's not that the Dems won't try to find something. Ted Kennedy is looking. John Kerry is suspicious. But mostly, it's sweetness and light. Can you believe that? "John Roberts has had an impressive legal career," says Minority Leader Harry Reid. "By all accounts, he is a very nice man. Nice man. Sen. Joe Lieberman says Roberts is "a credible nominee." Even ultraliberal Barbara Boxer of California says, "He's a very affable individual." Affable? Democrats, talking about a Republican judge? Maybe they figured out their constant blockade of Bush judicial nominees was not only hurting the country, but their image? No matter. The truth is, no president or senator knows what is in the heart of a prospective judge. Many have disappointed their would-be masters. A federal judge, once in office, sits for life. He or she answers to no man, save a higher court, or as a lawyer I once knew was fond of saying, "Federal judges talk only to God, and then only to give advice." Once elevated to the Supreme Court, there is no higher authority to guide the justices. They are gods of the legal world. Their conscience and the body of law are their only guides. Like all lawyers, they draw selectively on the law to make their points. And often, that point is not what the man who appointed them perceived. Any president who thinks he knows how a judge will vote five years from now is kidding himself. Like any hiring decision, appointing a judge is fraught with dangers. Unlike hiring an attorney general or a secretary of state, you get just one chance to influence a justice, and they are on their own. It's a scary proposition, but the system has worked well over the years. Here's luck to President Bush and to Judge Roberts. Both will need it. — By Steve Haynes

Legislation might help with the bill

Congressman Jerry Moran announced this sponsorship of legislation designed to pay the federal government's obligation to special education. The bill would incrementally increase the amount for special education until the government pays its 40 percent share, by 2010. "The lack of adequate federal funding places an unfair burden on local school districts struggling to meet the education needs of all students, including a growing number of students with special needs," Mr. Moran said. "As Kansas struggles to come up with court-ordered state funding, the federal government needs to make sure it is doing its part. This legislation would set an achievable deadline by which the government would have to fund special ed as originally promised." Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, passed in 1975, the federal government agreed to pay 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities, however, it has never fulfilled that obligation. Since coming to Congress, Mr. Moran has worked to almost triple federal funding for special education, from 7.3 percent in 1996 to 18.6 percent in 2005. This legislation would gradually increase payments over the next five years until it reaches the promised 40 percent. "Despite the shortage in special education funding, Kansas has great schools and does a tremendous job teaching our children," Mr. Moran said. "It's long past time for the federal government to fulfill its commitment to our dedicated special education professionals." The congressman has been an advocate of Kansas education, voting against the No Child Left Behind Act for fear it would place unnecessary restrictions on classrooms. Since its passage, however, he has worked with state and federal officials and has sponsored legislation to provide teachers and school districts with greater flexibility in complying with the law.



The 'small stuff' adds up quickly

You know the saying, "Don't sweat the small stuff, and it's all small stuff." The trouble is, a whole bunch of "small stuff" makes a big old pile.

For years, we got our news off a dish and our network affiliates were in places like New York and Tennessee. It was a disadvantage when trying to get a weather forecast. We got The Weather Channel but it tends to focus on more populated areas. If they mention a thunderstorm in western Kansas, you know it's a major event.

The *Salina Journal* was delivered every day and we enjoyed MSNBC for news analysis and laughs.

We now have a new dish package that does not include MSNBC and I thought we are too far out in the country to get the paper delivered so we have been in sort of a news vacuum.

Not necessarily a bad thing. When we want to check the weather we use the computer — if a thunderstorm is not too close. Our modem once got fried by lightning through the phone line. We found out after that unhappy experience they sell surge protectors for phone lines. But do they really work? I don't want to find out.

The electricity goes off with every lightning strike here.

My new job is resetting the time features on the microwave, phone, VCR, stove and alarm clocks.

The dish people suggested we get surge protectors for their boxes. It seems to me

Back Home Nancy Hagman



that surge protectors could be built into appliances, phones and computers.

Do the electric companies and electronics manufacturers get a kick-back for every surge protector sold?

Happy day — I discovered we now get local network affiliates on the dish.

We don't get any Kansas stations but we get Nebraska. If the weather looks threatening I find a Nebraska station. They have excellent weather coverage for this county (I think it is still in Kansas.)

More good news — This week the *Salina Journal* called and offered us home delivery.

"But we live in the country," I said. The salesperson asked, (and I am not making this up) "What country do you live in?"

Wow! Does the *Salina Journal* deliver in other countries?

"We live in the U.S.A., Kansas," I said. (I think I live in Kansas, or maybe Nebraska?)

"Oh, I mean which city?" she replied. She proceeded to quiz me about whether my neighbors got the *Salina*

Journal. I really have no idea. I don't think she quite had the idea of how "country" the country we're living in is.

However, she was certain that we could get home delivery since we were on her call list. I haven't gotten a paper, but then I haven't given them any money, so we'll see.

I hope we get as good a delivery person as we had before. They always petted the dog, sometimes fed her when we were away, and left the paper on the front porch.

Probably it won't be the same — nothing ever is.

I told them to put the account in the husband's name. This was probably a mistake. He is named for his father who died about 16 years ago and yet his mother is getting our mail because it doesn't say Jr.

Arghhhhhh. I'm living proof — it is the small stuff that drives a person over the edge.

But, I am going to be informed when I go — with the *Salina Journal* (maybe) and Nebraska news and weather for sure.

I can even get a traffic report when I check the weather online.

I tried it in case there are a lot of people being driven over the edge. Of course, living where we do it's bound to be a short trip. Still, I want to get there before the crowd.

All they showed was a map for this part of the country. There was no traffic at all. Somehow I am not surprised.

Life's lessons teach us about living

Hospice

Services, Inc.

By Sandy Kuhlman with excerpts from an article by Dr. Ira Byock

Lessons learned from terminally ill people — about the importance of attending to emotional affairs and leaving nothing essential unsaid — have much to teach us.

This is the message of Dr. Ira Byock in his book *The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living*.

"Please forgive me. I forgive you. Thank you. I love you."

These are the core wisdom of patients and families served by hospice.

In 1978, when Dr. Byock began working in hospice, it was a movement striving to relieve pain and suffering in the dying. He was not expecting to see positive experiences among those served; but that's what he observed.

"When physical and emotional suffering was alleviated, people were able to focus on the things that mattered most. So often this involved expressions of forgiveness, appreciation and love to key persons in their lives," he said.

"My awareness of 'The Four Things' evolved over years from listening to patients and their families and from discussing cases with many other experienced caregivers," recalled Dr. Byock, founder of the Life's End Institute, Missoula, Mont., and Director of Palliative Medicine at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H.

"The Four Things" seem so simple, yet so many families find the advice valuable. The four things emphasize that expressing forgiveness, gratitude and affection to

people is wonderful preparation for saying good-bye.

"As a physician, I began to realize that there was practical wisdom in these statements," Dr. Byock said. "Like many people in the field of hospice and palliative care, my professional work was having a positive impact on my own life. I became more mindful of keeping my most important relationships complete, so that if I died at any time, there would be nothing left unsaid. I apologized more quickly and fully and would take time to clearly express gratitude and affection to the people I love."

Hospice workers are familiar with the powerful, life-altering transformations that can occur during the stressful and often emotionally charged experience of living with incurable illness.

Although hospice staff and volunteers often assert that hospice is about living — that message has been hard to convey.

The public's concept of hospice remains tethered to death. As a result, many

persons resist accepting hospice until they are literally on the brink of death — frequently too late to benefit from all it has to offer.

All of us can benefit from the hard-earned, hopeful lessons of people who have faced the end of life.

It is never too soon to ask or offer forgiveness of the people we love, to thank them or to express our love. None of us knows what lies ahead. Each of us can mend, nurture and celebrate our relationships — which are, after all, our most precious possessions.

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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