

Words not so good at award ceremony

One of his friends came to Topeka to give Sen. Tim Huelskamp an award last week.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, named Sen. Huelskamp, a Fowler Republican, as a "Hero of the Taxpayer."

Though it sounds like something out of the old Soviet Union, it's really a nice honor for a conservative legislator. While on the podium, though, he made some comments about Republicans and tax increases that drew a reporter's attention, and the result was not so good.

"Republicans who vote for tax increases are like rat heads in Coke bottles," Mr. Norquist said. "They don't just hurt themselves; they damage the brand."

Of course the reporters had a field day. Sen Steve Morris, who has the next district over, allowed as how he had voted for a couple of tax increases over the years. Morris, a conservative of sorts, is president of the Senate, and a man of some influence.

Rep. Bill Light of Rolla said he had voted for tax increases for highways and schools over the years. He thought they were good.

Nothing like offending potential allies to get a session rolling. Sen. Huelskamp has been a leader of conservatives in the Senate, especially since the untimely death of Sen. Stan Clark. He has been leading the anti tax forces, and he deserved the award.

He didn't deserve the notoriety that went along with Mr. Norquist's remarks. What an ugly phrase. Graphic and to the point, but tasteless.

And, whatever true believers say, there are times a tax increase is appropriate. Not many perhaps, but they exist.

Kansas spending has grown, in real dollars, more than four times in 40 years, though. We've had quite enough tax increases over that time, thank you very much.

And while his heart was in the right place, Mr. Norquist wasn't doing his friend or the antitax movement much of a favor talking like that.

Call a spade a spade if you must, Mr. Norquist, but leave the rats out of it.

The effort to control state spending and end the constant stream of tax increases is too important to be left to the careless and the loudmouthed.

With the state Supreme Court trying to establish a right of unlimited school funding, the entire state budget is in peril. We need all the help we can get here.

Memo to Sen. Huelskamp:
Find some new friends.

— Steve Haynes



Mountain vacation is relaxing

We're on vacation," I said. "I'll do it. I'll do it. Don't bug me." This was my reply to Jim's insistence that I "better get my column" written Sunday.

He knew we had plans for early Monday morning (my usual day to write this) and there would be no time then.

After my third or fourth delay tactic, he said, "I'm going to start calling you Procrasta."

"Who's Procrasta?" I innocently asked. "Carrie Nation's first cousin," he shot back. "You know, Procrasta Nation."

If he weren't so darned funny, he'd really tick me off. But when he pulls stuff like that, all I can do is laugh.

We're spending three of the loveliest, laziest days we've ever had in a house in the San Luis Valley in the mountains of southern Colorado. When my editor and her husband moved from Creede, Colo., to Kansas, they kept their house here. They retreat to it several times a year and make it available to friends who want to make the nine-hour drive.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



This year it worked out that we could take advantage of their generous offer. We arrived late Friday afternoon and found everything just as promised. A diagram of the circuit breaker soon had power to all appliances and the hot tub. We even had tickets to the local theater, where we saw a very professional stage play.

This is no rustic little cabin in the woods. This is a lovely log house with all the conveniences and accouterments of home. We brought our own groceries and had some lovely meals dining *alfresco* on the front porch. Jim fixes breakfast and we eat that at the dining room table looking

out a large picture window at the mountains surrounding this little town that was once a bustling mining camp.

Easy chairs in the living room have their own picture window strategically placed, I'm sure, to watch the antics of hummingbirds as they jostle for position at the sugar water feeder hung outside the window.

There is a little mountain church just down the road. We went to Sunday school and church this morning, stayed for a potluck dinner, came "home" for a nap and went back for evening services. It was a good day.

Tomorrow, we plan to ride a narrow-gauge steam train on an all-day excursion.

The next day it's back home. Back to the routine, our jobs, our friends, our family. This was our first real vacation to somewhere other than Mexico to build a house, to somewhere for a business meeting, or to visit one of our kids.

I think three days is probably the maximum amount of time we could "do nothing." But, oh my, it's been great while it lasted.

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Book brings back fond memories

As I sat down at the beauty shop to wait my turn for a haircut last week, I noticed the library cards on the table next to me. They were lying next to a Nancy Drew novel.

Boy, did that bring back memories.

Summertime in the 1950s and '60s meant swimming and reading.

There were a few summer recreation programs for kids where I grew up: cutting construction paper and using glue at the city park shelter house on Saturday morning. But there was no swim club, no softball for young women and no air conditioning in the homes in our neighborhood.

Mornings were for chores — dusting, sweeping, laundry and gardening. Swimming lessons did take up mornings for two weeks during late June or early July, but the rest of the time was ours.

We lived a long way from the pool and the best way to get there was our bikes. We could walk, but we could never decide whether it was better to go with or without our shoes. If you wore your flip flops, you ended up with blisters between your toes and if you left them home, the hot tar

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



on the streets burned your feet.

By 2 or 3 p.m., however, we were headed home. Polio was still a problem back then, and our mothers were sure that you got it at the pool on hot days.

The Carnegie Public Library was on the way home, and my library card got used almost every day. Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys were favorite fare. I was also partial to seafaring tales of youths who ran away and became cabin boys for Drake or Raleigh.

I would lay on my bed in my underwear with a fan running full blast and a lemonade at my elbow and delve into other worlds as the temperature climbed into the 90s and 100s.

These days, we're told, youngsters sit

in air-conditioned comfort and play video games by the hour.

I'm sure that happens a lot. Still, I watch the kids heading for the pool on the other side of town and they don't look any different that we did. Some are wearing flip flops and some are hopping along barefooted.

Then, there are the books.

It's good to know that Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys are entertaining another generation of youngsters, even if the books are looking a little ragged.

As I traveled around the country a couple of weeks ago, I saw dozens of youngsters with their noses in the latest Harry Potter book. J.K. Rowling is a good writer, and her tales of mischief and mayhem at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft have many a video gamer with their nose in a book.

It reminds me of high school, when every boy had one of Ian Fleming's "James Bond" paperbacks in his back pocket. I don't think those last couple of Harry Potter books are gonna fit in a pocket, but I bet a lot of them can be found in backpacks this fall.

Energy bill will be good for Kansas and the environment

Congressman Jerry Moran lauded the expected passage of an energy bill that would require historic levels of renewable fuel use.

Under an agreement the Energy Policy Act of 2005 would require petroleum refiners to use 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, by 2012.

"The use of more grain-based fuels is good for the environment, as they burn cleaner, good for Kansas farmers, who will have additional markets for their crops and good for the Kansas economy because of additional jobs and revenue," Mr. Moran said. "Because of the use of

ethanol, a gallon of gas is already estimated to be ten cents cheaper, and corn prices could increase by more than ten percent. This energy bill has been a long time coming, and the American people will benefit from its passage."

Also included in this comprehensive energy legislation are incentives for more domestic oil production, as well as investments in the country's electric transmission capacity in order to reduce the danger of blackouts. Other provisions call for additional use of solar energy and incentives for hybrid cars and hydrogen use.

"In addition to being an economic boon for our state, this energy legislation works

to lower the costs of fuel for cars, homes and businesses and will reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil," Mr. Moran said. "For far too long, we've been relying on other countries to supply our fuel. Finally, we can depend more upon our home-grown products and energy sources to meet the needs of the American people."

As a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee, Mr. Moran has long been an advocate for incorporating a greater use of renewable fuels derived from agriculture commodities into a long-term energy policy.