

Talking can solve a lot of problems

The Norton County commissioners and the rural fire department are not fighting. They don't even disagree. However, they also forgot to talk to each other. While the rural fire department was quietly going about trying to get a grant for a fire truck that could be used to fight house fires, county commissioners were worrying because they saw houses being built without adequate fire protection. No one was wrong and no one was in the wrong. However, when a commissioner complained that the rural fire department needed a bigger truck than it was asking for in a grant the county was helping with, firemen took exception. "Hey," they said. "We've been trying to get that type of truck for three or four years. Don't get on our case. We're doing the best we can, and in the meanwhile we need these smaller brush trucks too because 90 percent of the blazes out here are grass fires."

The commissioners were taken aback. They hadn't meant to offend anyone. They just wanted to be sure that homes, businesses and churches in the rural area were protected. They even asked if they could help get a new truck if the much-requested grant didn't come through.

Sometimes, we get caught in this trap. We know we're doing a good and noble thing and we don't understand why others don't see that. But we've never explained what we do.

We're not talking about bragging here or even puffing up something that has no substance. We're talking about telling people how things work. What people do. Who's in charge of taking care of things.

It's really a lot of talking to each other and a little public relations work.

Some agencies, like the hospital, do a lot of public relations work. They know that their business and livelihood depends on the good will of their patients, the doctors and nurses, county officials and the community.

The schools also set good examples for public relations. They put ads in the papers at the beginning of the year to say what's happening. They send notices home with their students. They call parents when necessary. They use every means to tell people that their students are doing a good job.

But it's harder for a volunteer organization like the rural fire department to do public relations. They don't have the money for advertising nor the people for press releases. What they can do is stop by to visit with the commissioners now and then — just to talk.

The fire departments are not under county control. They have their own boards and taxes. However, a visit every six months to a year with the commissioners could well produce a bounty of good will and a little more understanding all the way around.

The firemen shouldn't wait until they're mad to stop by again. — Cynthia Haynes

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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.

People offer help to those in need

It's easy with all the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina to focus on the inadequacies of our system and to overlook the benevolence of individuals in our country.

While government is busy trying to find someone to blame, groups of individuals have come together through schools, churches, clubs and private companies to help.

The losses are devastating and the stories coming out cause emotions ranging from overwhelming sadness to full-blown anger.

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Not only are people's homes gone, but also their jobs and livelihood.

Some communities have welcomed thousands of families into their cities. Other

communities have adopted a single family. Still others have sent clothes, food and money to ease the pain of the situation.

A catastrophe such as this reveals a great deal about our country and who we are and what we value.

It was evident as cities created a place for families that we are not a nomadic society. Having a place to call our own, no matter how small is critical to our feeling of freedom.

It was noted how quickly many were out looking for jobs in their new community. But perhaps, most importantly to me, was the desire for our children to return to school.

A democracy hinges on education and the emphasis exhibited in relocating children into a new school system reflects this.

And with this education hopefully will come a knowledge greater than academic.

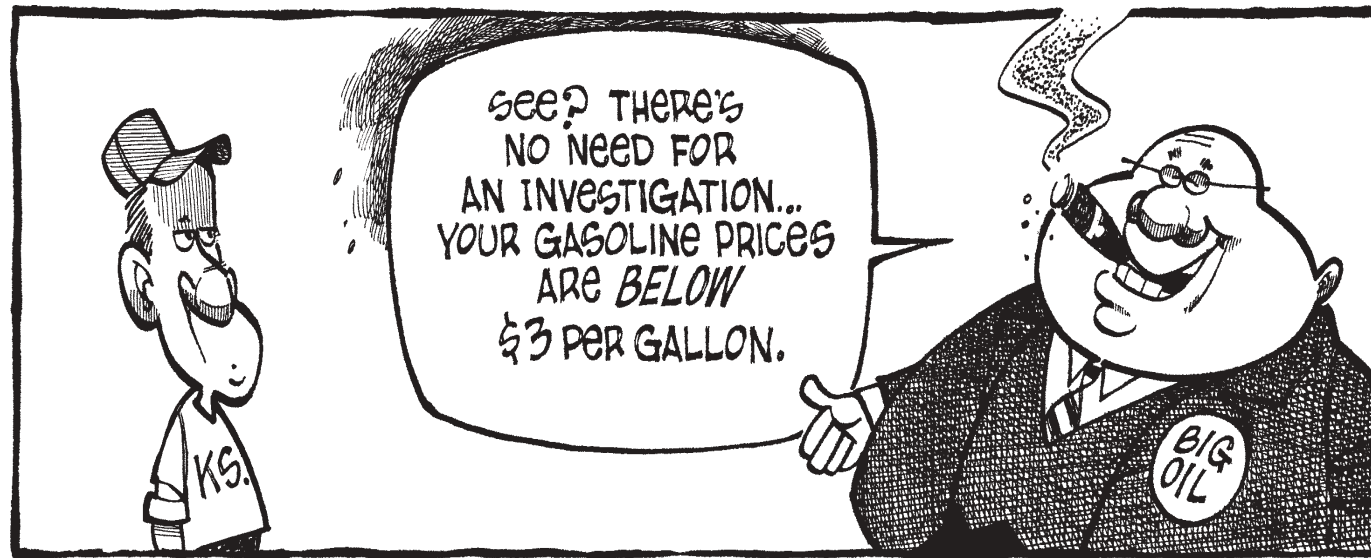
I've heard some talk about "those" people after viewing the pictures of looters and hearing the stories of violence in the confined city of the dome made up of 23,000 individuals.

Every community, even ours, has an element of lawlessness.

"Those" people have their lawless elements, but they also have hardworking, caring people. They have people who function on the very edge, needing help daily from others.

"Those" people come in all colors, shapes and economic levels. But, they are individuals as well.

I am thankful for a country of individuals who can look beyond the screen and see each person in need and reach out to help.



A 'clean sweep' has helped the garage

This is my absolute favorite time of year. Crisp, clear mornings. Slightly cool, yet warm-in-the-sun days. And nights just chilly enough to need a blanket.

If there were someplace on earth where it is like this all year 'round, I would move there. But since there isn't, I'll just stay in Kansas and enjoy it while it lasts.

—ob—

Jim is a hard-working man. Almost always, he has another job lined up before he finishes his last one. Therefore, he's usually on a dead run.

He'll dump his concrete tools off in the garage, load up carpentry tools and take off. Next time, he'll dump the carpentry tools and start working on a windmill.

Consequently, over the years, things got a little disorganized. When I suggested Jennifer and I could help him get organized, it struck fear in his heart because he translated "organized" into us throwing his stuff away.

We assured him we would not discard

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



anything without his approval.

"Fair enough," he said, and the deal was struck.

For more than a month, we had been planning a "clean sweep" day. Saturday would be THE day. Maybe I should have called it GTGCO Day — that's Get The Garage Cleaned Out Day.

I knew Jim was going to be sensitive about his "stuff," so to lighten the mood, I made signs for the back yard. The morning of GTGCO Day, I sneaked out before the sun came up and nailed them to trees, hung them from the gazebo and propped them up in rose bushes.

Unlike the signs on the television show that only distinguish between "Keep," "Sell" and "Trash," these were signs that designated the different categories into which we would sort things. I had "Electrical," "Automotive," "Tools," "Plumbing," "Wood," "Misc." and, of course, the ever-dreaded "TRASH." He thought it was funny, but it really did help us keep things sorted.

Now, Jim kind of drags his feet on a project like this, but once started, he's like a machine. He won't quit. I was proud of him. He threw away lots more than I thought he would or could. He's building shelving units and a big, solid work bench with a metal top, just like he always wanted, and lots of storage space. I know he appreciated our help, and I know he'll be even more productive in his new space.

I have an admission to make, though. I had an ulterior motive in all this.

Now, I can park my car inside.

Travel-time outpaces home-time

If I stayed at home, I'd want to travel. Since I'm on the road all the time, I'd like to stay home.

Steve and I figured that we were going

Open Season Cynthia Haynes



to be in five beds in six days.

Last Wednesday, we headed for Concordia to see my mother and go to a funeral, then on to Lawrence to see our son.

We spent the night at the Springhill Suites in Lawrence and took our daily walk along the levy of the Kansas River. The levy in Lawrence looks good and the river runs placidly until it hits a dam right above our hotel. The spill over the dam is quite a show.

On Thursday, we headed toward Kansas City to get some barbecue for lunch. Ribs and barbecue beef are some of the things we miss from our former lives as city dwellers on the Kansas-Missouri line.

From Kansas City, we headed west and south to the Lake of the Ozarks, our final destination. We were there to represent the National Newspaper Association at the annual Missouri Press Association meeting.

We spent the next three days and two nights at the Four Seasons Resort on the lake. I'm not complaining, mind you, but the Lake of the Ozarks is a much cooler place for a convention than the Holiday Inn in Topeka or Manhattan, which is where the Kansas Press holds its conventions.

On Saturday, we said good-bye to our friends in Missouri and headed back towards Kansas City for another round of

barbecue. After a late lunch, we made the run across Kansas. We finally got home about 10:30 Saturday night and it was good to sleep in our own bed after three days of travel.

Sunday morning after church, we made lunch, but when we started to clean up, the garbage disposal choked and started spitting stuff back into the sink. Steve accused me of putting too much vegetable matter down the drain, and since that was true, I told him it was his fault.

However, when I went downstairs to run a load of clothes, I found that the sewer was backing up. We didn't have a big problem, yet, just a pool of dirty water around the drain. However, it wasn't going down, and any additional water down any pipe in the house would cause the water around the floor to rise.

We figured we couldn't do any more dishes or clothes, flush the toilet or take a shower. Since it was Sunday and we couldn't find a plumber who would answer his phone, we decided to spend the night at the LandMark Inn. We needed showers after working around the house all Sunday afternoon.

Monday, the plumber came and we were back into our home and bed, if only for a night.

Tuesday we were slated to leave for Milwaukee for the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

That's one night in Lawrence, two at the Lake of the Ozarks, two non-consecutive nights at home, one at the LandMark and several in Milwaukee.

I love to travel and I really enjoy going places and meeting people, but I'm going to be ready to be home for awhile, let me tell you.

With running water, of course.

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