

Kansas roads shouldn't be closed to local traffic

A policy aimed at easing the plight of motorists stranded in Colorado storms is causing problems for people who live in — and need to get to — places in western Kansas.

When roads are closed in Colorado, officials there ask Kansas authorities to block traffic where there are hotel rooms to handle them. That makes sense, properly applied.

When they close the roads, though, they close them. And that means that wherever there are motel rooms left, that's as far west as you can go.

I-70 has been closed as far east as Hays or Colby when there were no road problems in Kansas. Mail, newspaper deliveries for those of us further west were stopped along with through traffic.

People who live in far western towns couldn't go home. People with business out here couldn't get through.

Not because of the weather. Not because of the danger. But because the guys manning the barricades, state troopers and state highway workers, didn't want to separate the local traffic from the Denver bound.

This is too high a price to pay for solving Colorado's problem. It's good that Kansas can cooperate. No one wants to see hundreds of people stranded in Burlington or Limon or some other places where there are no beds or shelter.

But Kansas towns and Kansas people shouldn't have to pay the price.

State highway officials say it isn't supposed to work this way. Local traffic is supposed to go through. In practice, though, troopers and highway crewmen manning barricades in Colby and Goodland just block the road. They don't ask where people are going.

On lesser routes, they just put a sign up and go home. Gates are locked at some entrances to the freeway. And a locked gate won't allow anyone on, local traffic or no.

Now some county commissioners are questioning this policy. They wonder why they are helping to keep people off their roads when it's safe and reasonable to travel west in this state. They don't close county roads when it snows here, so why block them when it snows in Colorado?

It's about time somebody spoke up against this poorly implemented policy.

If we can't separate local traffic from through traffic, and allow people with business in Kansas through, then Kansas roads ought to stay open.

It'd be better to let the through traffic pile up in Colorado than to stall commerce on this side of the border when it's not necessary.

We'd hope for a sensible compromise, allowing local traffic to move where it needs to move, but if that can't happen, then let's keep our roads open.

If the weather here gets bad enough, we can close the roads. But when the problem is in Colorado, then why keep Kansans behind the barricades?

— Steve Haynes

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Hello Mexico, it's good to be back

After 13 trips to Juarez, Mexico, you would think we'd have it "all together."

But there we were, the day before our scheduled departure, with luggage and tools strewn from one end of the house to the other.

We both tend to overpack and I began to fear there wouldn't be room in the van for the other eight members of our team.

My brother Bob was the 11th member of the team, but he drove down separately, so we didn't have to worry about him.

We are small in numbers but determined to build the best house we can. We know "our family" consists of a father, Raphael; a mother, Alma; and their 6-year-old son, Kevin.

Right now, I'm sitting in the fellowship hall of the church where we're staying in El Paso. Hate to admit it, but I forgot all about this column until everyone was settling down for the night.

I'm writing in longhand on the back of an old letter. It's a far cry from my computer, which lets me go back and fix mistakes. Sure hope the typist can figure out my penmanship.

We have laughed so much this trip, I think my eyes are permanently "squinny." There are some funny people on board, but we even laugh at the "groaners."

When my oldest daughter, Halley, was about 10, she asked me, "Mom, can you be a Christian and still have fun?" This

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



group is living proof that you can have fun — lots and lots of fun.

Here's the run-down on this team: a farm wife/nurse, a minister's wife/medical office employee, a government employee, two retirees, a cabinet maker, an accountant, an Army Reserve soldier, a postmaster, and Jim and me.

Everyone else is sleeping — and I should be. Tomorrow is a big day. We pour the foundation of the house and that is hard, hard work in anybody's book.

Our church families and friends have been so kind to us, meeting every need we had, both financially and physically. One lady brought us warm cinnamon rolls the morning we left, plus a bucket of sausage gravy. We already ate the rolls, but some biscuits will be put with that gravy and we'll have breakfast. That's just a few hours away, so I'm turning in.

Now I lay me down to sleep...

We need to learn to let anger go

A family was getting ready to celebrate the 100th birthday of their mother and grandmother.

They sent out invitations and asked the recipients to send letters, photos and accounts of their memories to be assembled into a memory book and presented to the woman.

A niece told my daughter that her family was estranged from that family. They claimed the same hometown and the cousins were the same ages. However, the fathers (who were brothers) had an argument about 65 years ago.

Her memory (and she was very young at the time) was that once the children had attended the same township school.

Then the county school superintendent came to the families and said it appeared theirs would be the only children in the school that year. Rather than hire a teacher for four or five children they gave the families a cash settlement for transportation expenses and closed the school.

One brother decided to send his children to town and one sent his to a neighboring township. The family sending children to town had further to go and thought the money should be divided proportionally. The other brother thought each family should get half.

"This is what I remember," the woman said. "Our families never recovered from that rift."

Sad story, but it explains a lot of things. Those men were my Dad's brothers, long since dead.

It seems almost silly that something like this could get so far out of hand.

To put it in prospective it happened as

Back Home

Nancy Hagman



the Great Depression was ending. These families had been through hard times.

When my dad graduated from high school in the '30s, he and another unmarried brother left Kansas.

The taxes were due on the family farm. They told the brother living there if he wanted it, and could keep it, it was all his. Daddy told me he felt badly about leaving because he thought they would starve to death.

When we are children we see our families as the norm.

We spent more time with one uncle than the other. But we were very close to the other's son and his family. I wonder if my parents knew of this.

My Dad was the baby of the family and was living in another state. My cousins are a generation older. Their children are more or less my age. The dynamics of my extended family might have been strange but it was normal to me.

After hearing this story I have been pondering how things might have been and the things I get angry about.

It is absolutely human to be angry. I don't know how to stop it.

Still, after awhile anger becomes a choice. We can keep it or we can let go.

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