

The federal deficit is out of control

Everyone hates the federal budget deficit, but nobody does anything about it. The deficit, fueled by war costs and ever-rising "entitlements," is out of control. Congress is incapable of acting, it seems. The deficit this year is lurching toward \$580 billion. Total debt is now \$8.1 trillion dollars. Only war and welfare cost more than the burden of this debt. Interest on the national debt will be \$356 billion this year, larger than the budgets of all but two federal departments: Defense, and Health and Human Services. Time was when Democrats pushed to spend more every year, and Republicans tried to cut the budget. Then the Republicans got in power, controlling the White House and both sides of Congress. They cut taxes, but not spending, gambling that higher incomes would more than make up for the tax cuts. It worked, but guess what? Spending still rose faster than income. Now it's the Democrats who call for a balanced budget while Republicans deliver record deficits. Why? They don't mean it. Democrats still want to spend. They don't have to make the Republicans look bad, though. The GOP has done that to itself.

Given the chance to show some leadership and do something about the national debt, the Republicans ran the other way. Only Bill Clinton posted a balanced budget. Not Ronald Reagan. Not George W. Bush.

To be fair, Clinton came to power during an unprecedented boom. Tax money rolled in faster than Congress could spend it. George Bush inherited a failing economy and plunging tax revenue. He did what he promised and cut taxes. Then a couple of wars sucked up the money his economic moves generated.

And with Republicans in power everywhere, the country has its worst deficits, its largest debt and its worst trade balance ever. Some legacy.

What happens next? Federal spending is out of control. No one in Congress will vote to cut any program, because every program has its pressure group.

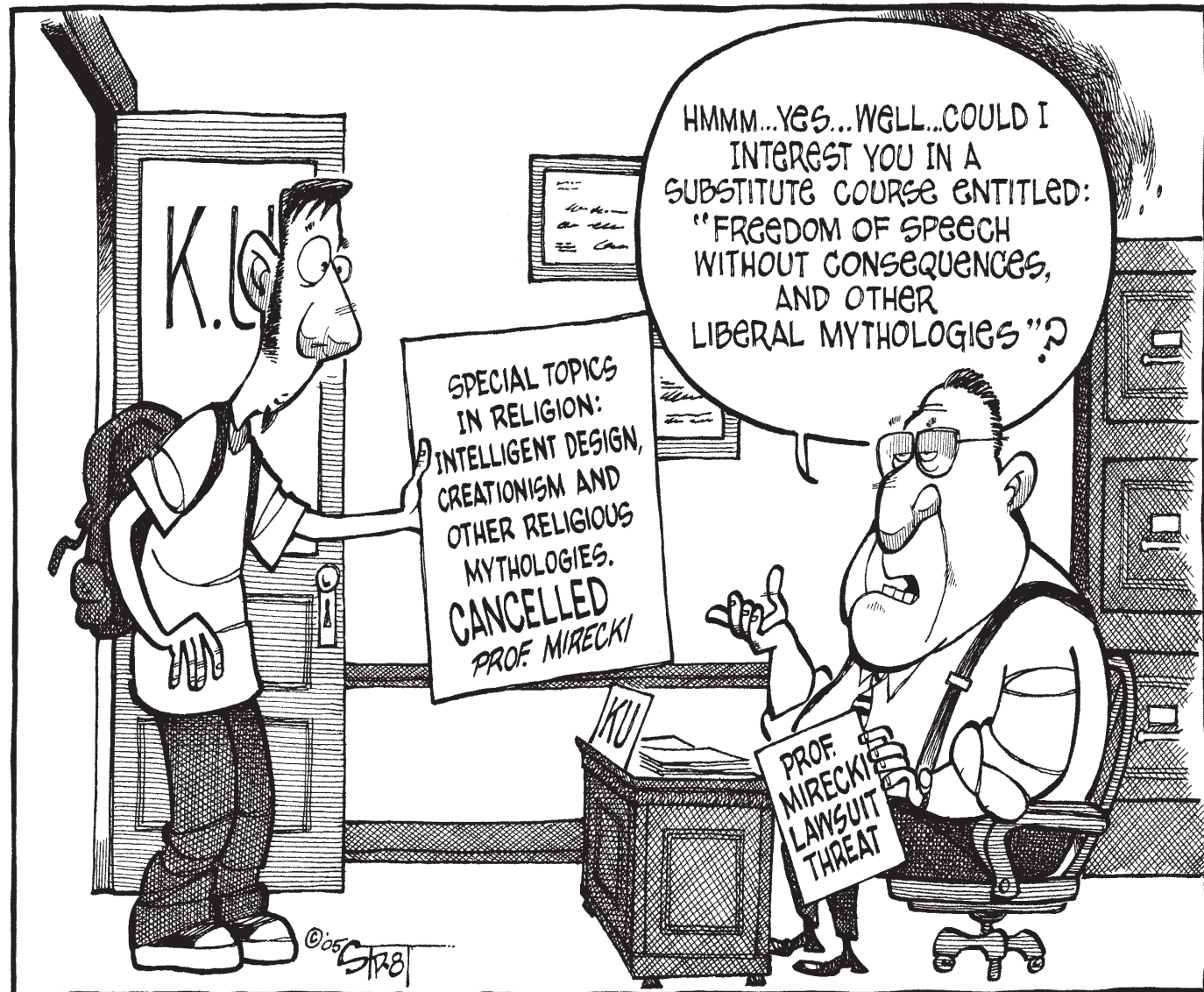
We all have our favorites. Some day, though, Social Security will collapse. Mr. Bush is right about that.

Some day, the debt will grow so large we won't be able to pay the interest.

Other countries will stop loaning us money. Some day, this country is going to be broke.

The way things work in Washington, no one will make a move until it's too late. Not a pretty picture, but there's nothing on the horizon to suggest it won't happen that way.

— Steve Haynes



Holiday helicopter lands in Norcatur

Last week, at least two people gave me great ideas to include in this column, which I really appreciated. Problem is, right now, I can't remember either one.

Which reminds me of the guy who was talking to his preacher about life after death. The preacher said he should prepare himself for the hereafter.

The guy said, "Oh, I don't have any trouble with that. I go from the kitchen into the front room and say to myself, 'Now, what was I here after?'"

—ob—

This was a good weekend. My brother Dick and his wife Donna celebrated their golden wedding anniversary Saturday.

I remember their wedding day vividly because I was one of the candlelighters. Donna's little sister, Cheryl, was the other candlelighter. We had brand new, satiny-looking dresses and wore little wrist corsages. Our mothers must have put the pin-curls in extra tight because, in the wedding pictures, we both looked like we had Brillo pads on our heads.

I was 8 and I thought my brother was the best and I thought Donna was the most beautiful girl in the world. Guess what? I still think that.

If ever there were two people who per-

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



sonified the ideal marriage, it would be Dick and Donna. I'm sure they've had their moments, since they are human. But, as parents, they've been a unified front to their three sons; as a couple, they've always been considerate of each other; and as individuals, they have exhibited honesty, integrity and Godly values.

Their legacy will live on in the lives of their children, grandchildren and now a great-grandchild, Payton Jean Kelley.

—ob—

If you drive by our house, you'll see Jim's latest masterpiece. He has been "building" a helicopter in his mind for years. This was the year it became a reality.

With metal rods, wire, an old gas tank, a swivel seat from a fishing boat and several sets of twinkle lights, an almost full-size helicopter has "landed" in our front

yard. The lighting system that makes the blades "turn" was an engineering nightmare. He wired that thing about six times before he finally got it to work. During the first five attempts, a connection would short and "fry" his control box.

In exasperation after the third fifth blow-out, he said, "That's it. I'm doing this one more time. If it doesn't work, I quit."

Thank goodness it did. I'm not sure how many strands of lights were sacrificed for this project, but it was worth it. He even stuffed a red sweat shirt and red sweat pants for a body, propped a "head" with a beard and sunglasses on top, and set Santa at the controls.

—ob—

Like a lot of people, I'm caught up in the mad dash to finish my Christmas shopping. I've managed to take on too many projects for the time I have available. Still, I know my kids and friends will accept my offerings with love. Even though I didn't get my peanut-butter balls made, it will still be Christmas.

—ob—

So, from my house to yours, Merry Christmas.

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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, 215 S. Kansas, 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



Sheets hold special place in heart

Open Season Cynthia Haynes



In the comic strip LuAnn, the main character donates her favorite stuffed animals to a drive for needy children. Even though she is a teen-ager, she is a little bereft without her old friends.

I'm sort of in the same boat. Even though I'm 57 and all of my stuffed animals still adorn the ledge along the stairway from the kitchen to the basement, I've given away something that had a lot of meaning and sentiment for me.

Sheets. I gave away a bunch of old sheets.

And they were hard to give up. They have been stored in a laundry basket for the past year. Before that they were in a drawer. In several drawers, if fact, in several homes in two states.

I said these were old sheets. They are older than my son.

Before Lacy was born in 1980, we bought a new set of white sheets for youngest daughter's bed.

Together, the girls and I decorated the sheets with the names of the family. There was Stephen Coleman, Cynthia Anne, Felicia Mary Pilar, Lindsay Ellis Anne and the baby.

Back in those dark ages, you didn't know what you were getting until you got it, so we had two names for the new, as yet unborn, baby. We put both on the sheet —

Lacy Coleman if he was a boy and EllaMarie Coleman if she was a girl. Lacy Coleman was Steve's father's and grandfather's name. Ella was his mother's middle name and Marie is my sister's middle name. We used wax crayons and I pressed the names in. After all these years, you can still read the names of my children on that set of sheets.

When I went into labor for the third and last time, I used one of those new-fangled birthing rooms. Instead of moving from the labor room to the delivery room, you just did everything right there.

I was nervous. My second child had been an easy birth, but the first had been hard. What was I thinking about, changing things? I'd just figured out how this was supposed to be done.

The delivery chair had yellow-flowered sheets on it., the same pattern as on the

sheets of my 6-year-old daughter's bed. Those yellow flowers seemed to remove all my worries and fears — after all, they were part of home, part of comfort and love. Our son's birth was the easiest of all.

It was hard to give away those sheets, but these were not doing me any good. I still have the memories and someone else might have a use for them.

My sheets went to the Haven, a new hospitality house for families of prisoners at the Norton Correctional Facility. When a husband and father is in prison, there is usually little money to spend on motel rooms for a visit. Families need someplace to stay. The hospitality house charges small fees and operates on donations and volunteer help.

I don't know how long 25-year-old sheets will last, but they'll help get things started and some of the other sheets I donated had fewer memories and a lot fewer years on them.

Blankets and bedspreads are still needed, as are games, books, toys and family video tapes.

If you would like to help, call Jim Rowh at (785) 877-3610 or Carolyn Plotts at her home in Norcatur, (785) 693-4544 or at work at (785) 877-3361. Donations can be left at the newspaper office.

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