

## Things to consider about flag burning

Before you get yourself all worked up over this flag burning thing and end up looking like a pretzel, please hear us out. Bear in mind that we wore the uniform of the United States Air Force as an active member four years and active reservist another four years before being officially discharged in 1963.

We love America. We love everything the American flag stands for. And we still remove our hat and place it over our heart when the flag passes by at parades. When the flag is raised to the sounds of the national anthem we place our hand over our heart.

At other times we reflect on the meaning of the American flag. First to come to mind is freedom — of speech, in its many forms. And ironically one of those freedoms would be to burn the flag. Only in the land of the free would this situation prevail.

No, we wouldn't burn the flag of the United States of America. There are, however, times when we should. When it becomes torn, soiled, weather weary. There are proper ways to dispose of it.

But all that said, we still have a problem with OUR flag.

We bought one a few years ago when it seemed like everybody in America was showing its support and pride. We brought it home, took it out of its wrappings and as we attached it to the pole that came with it, we noticed a small sticker on the bottom edge of the flag. How disappointed we were to find that the sticker attached to the flag contained this notation: "Made In China." We didn't display that flag.

Then we wondered: if the flag of this great nation is our most prized possession, why then, is it, that we don't have companies in this great nation that make the American flag?

Maybe we do have companies that make flags, but probably for other countries. That's sort of the way things are playing out in this day and age of global hugging.

But, you might say, it's what the flag stands for, not necessarily who makes it. While that may be right, there's just something in the mix that doesn't quite ring true.

Something to think about. Or debate over morning coffee.

Since the purchase of that "made in China" American flag, we have, thank goodness, found a few businesses that sell the U.S. flag carrying the notation, "Made in the U.S.A." That would make Betsy Ross smile!

—Tom Dreiling

## Nothing like a small town

There is something very special about the summer nights in a small town. As I sat at a Little League game of my grandson's recently the sounds and smells reminded me of the differences of small town life.

The night air held a twinge of dust from the fields mingled with the rapidly accumulating storm clouds in the distance and the promise of moisture they held.

The sounds seemed almost like waves as they crescendo during an exciting play. When that subsided the background noise of kids splashing at the pool, the sound of plastic picnic ware clicking together and the distant banter of three kids riding their bikes all added up to a peaceful night in a little town with all American kids.

I remember as a child the excitement when the first lightening bug appeared. We would catch it and "squish" it on our finger pretending it was an expensive ring or we would catch several and store them in a Mason jar to be the lantern for our tent. This was before I became environmentally awakened.

The distant whir of a lawnmower and the pulsating sounds of a sprinkling system add to the picture of small town life. Sometimes the squeal of a child is interspersed with the sprinkler sounds as a

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



child darts around to avoid becoming the drenched "rat" of the neighborhood. Some may say, you don't hear those sounds in the city?

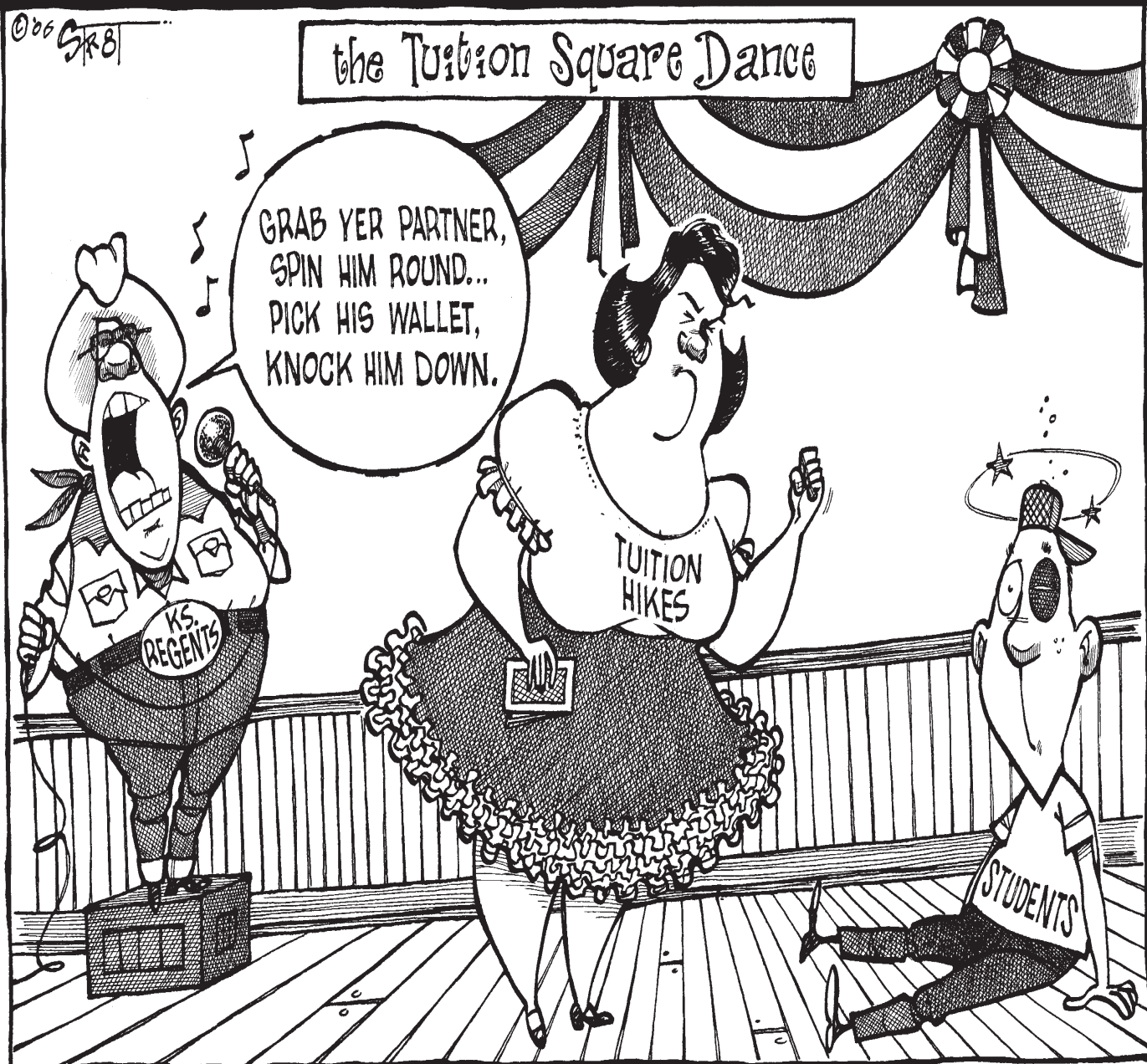
Do city folk not mow their lawns or water them?

Of course they do, but in the city the sound of traffic is always a backdrop to other sounds.

And, if you have that kind of traffic the smells are not of freshly mown grass or gathering dirt and soon to arrive rain, the smells are of fuel and smoke.

Perhaps the real treasure of small town summer life is the freedom you have. You can ride your bike until the streetlights come on; if it starts to rain, someone you know will come along and throw your bike in their pick-up and take you on home.

And they'll know if you won or lost your game.



## Those storm clouds produced... Taylor!

In the blink of an eye, we have gone from being independent, free-wheeling, do-it-on-our-schedule, semi-retired, long-distance grandparents to hands-on, responsible, make-sure-we-get-to-bed-on-time grandparents.

Our seven-year old granddaughter, Taylor, arrived Saturday evening and suddenly our house has little girl pony-tail holders, flip-flops, bathing suits and coloring books from one end to the other. An occasional table we normally use to stack video tapes on becomes her play table and pillows and blankets on the floor become her bed.

She was delighted to find she still fits in the little rocking chair we have had for her since she was two. And, she always enjoys re-hearing the story about how her mother used to use the foot-stool we keep in the bathroom. It is painted red with a verse on top that reads, "This little stool is mine, I use it all the time. To reach the

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



things I couldn't, and lots of things I shouldn't."

Taylor has always had a sense of humor, but this year she has turned into quite a joke-teller. Jim was driving us home from church when she asked, "Pa-Pa, have you heard the one about the three little pigs that went out for lunch?" She delivered the punch line with such aplomb and deadpan delivery I thought he was going to drive off the road, he was laughing so hard.

There's a huge difference between last summer's six-year old and this summer's seven-year old. Her mother warned me

that she has been asking lots of questions about where babies come from; especially the "how" aspect. Her mother used to ask me some questions that made me catch my breath and I imagine her daughter will do the same. One thing I did learn with kids is to be certain of what they are actually asking. When a child asks, "Where did I come from?" you want to be sure that they aren't asking if they came from Chicago or Cincinnati before you launch into the "birds and bees" monologue.

Her fascination with babies is often revealed through her play. I was filling water balloons when I tied a "bubble" into the knot.

In her imagination it immediately became a baby. So, my assignment was to make knots with babies. I got pretty good at it.

I make no apologies, but the next four weeks will be an epilogue of "Life With Taylor".

### FROM THE MAILBAG

## There is a down side to this highway rebuilding project

To the Editor,

First, the good news: the Department of Transportation recently rebuilt the "old" roadbed from here (my place which is 6 miles plus 1,000 feet west of Norton on US-36 hiway), and they done a superb job! Everyone likes it.

But from here (my place) west on US-36, they are building a new road, abandoning the old roadbed 100 percent! They have taken virgin soil from every quarter

from here to Norcat — all of these are "short" quarters from now on. This has devalued every quarter! Of course they did compensate us, but not near enough.

The grades are long, but not steep, on the old road. It was nothing bad even for big trucks.

Now is a good time to come and see what they are doing!?

What and why did they do it?  
1. Is it a skyline drive to Norcat?

2. A long, full scale drag race track?

3. A diversion ditch to bring the Missouri river down from Montana?

Remember: the draws and creeks are all dry!

Recently all new communication lines and REA had to be moved!.

Yours truly,

A taxpayer and lifetime citizen  
of Garfield Township  
Virgil Wegener

## Time, love, prayer and family: those are the answers

To the Editor,

I grew up the eldest of three siblings in a bi-racial family. My dad was Iroquois Indian. At the age of 20, I found myself pregnant and single. It was then that my parents told me that my dad "wasn't really my dad." They thought I would hate them for keeping it secret all these years. I didn't hate them at all. (Although I was disappointed to find out that I wasn't Indian!) I loved my dad even more. I realized he loved and raised someone else's child all these years. I've never referred to him as my "step" dad and never will. I've never referred to my siblings as my "half" siblings and never will.

After dad passed away, my mom gave me the letters he had written her when he first found out about "me." In them he describes me as "his little Robin." He loved me from the beginning for my mother's sake. Those letters are one of my most treasured possessions.

My husband met me while I was a single

parent of my baby girl, Ladona. He loved us both. We married six years later. He's always been her only "daddy." Steve's mom, my mother-in-law, took Ladona and I in with wide, open arms and heart. Twenty years later, Dorothy now opens her heart and arms to our two, soon to be adopted children. Love like that heals.

I know many families in Norton that are on their second, third and some even fourth marriages. The children from these broken homes are confused, angry and scared. I've seen many "step" parents love these kids that are not their own. Kudos to them. They are an inspiration to us all. But there are just as many, if not more, that struggle to love other people's children.

I do not under estimate the complexities and difficulties that the parents themselves are facing. However, I do know that it is possible to love other people's children, even as your own, despite those problems.

Time, love, prayer and family are the

answer. Be patient with yourself and the kids as you are being knit together as a cohesive family. Love them for who they are. Accept them where they are at. Help is as close as a prayer away. Only the love of God in our hearts can heal the pain and bring hope.

Get involved with family and friends and people of faith that can hear you out, encourage you and "rescue" you from time to time so that you can regain focus, purpose and determination. And please keep hope.

Know that though the road is hard, the kids are worth the effort. Not only will they grow up with a better sense of self and worth and wholeness, you will reap the great reward of their love and a life-long relationship of goodness and satisfaction.

In the end family isn't about blood, but about selfless, sacrificial love.

Dedicated to "M."

Robin Somers  
Norton

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