

## Fire made all other news seem ho-hum

The situation involving Israel and Lebanon gets bloodier by the day. The situation in Iraq is at the boiling point. Iraq's prime minister came to this country this week with a suitcase full of positive news. Talk about living in a fantasy land. Republicans, especially those up for reelection this year, continue to distance themselves from President Bush. Talk about gutless politicians! The latest war in the Middle East has taken the spotlight off North Korea. Look for that country's applauding (isn't that all we ever see him do on television?) leader to put up a few more missiles to get the spotlight back on his stage. Gas prices have gone over the \$3 mark.

Now, let's bring this down to the local level. What has Norton been talking about since Monday afternoon? None of the above. No, Norton's residents have been talking about the devastating fire in the heart of the downtown area. As sad as the situation was, there was relief to learn that no one was injured and no lives were lost. There is always that concern when such a tragedy strikes.

What seems problematic on the national and international scene is eclipsed when something happens to hurt the community. The fire was that something. It wasn't unusual to see tears in the eyes of many of those who could do nothing but look on as the clouds of thick, black smoke and those frightening huge red flames shot out of the windows and roofs of the two buildings consumed.

Things like that hurt. Deeply. Those buildings stood at those locations longer than anyone standing there watching their demise. It was like a personal loss. You saw those structures day in and day out. They would always be there. But on the afternoon of July 24, 2006 they were no longer.

People were high in praise of the work of the local fire departments, and those from around the area that responded. On an afternoon in which the temperature was well above 100 degrees, these volunteers did all they could. And we knew they were giving it their all. Firefighters put their very lives on the line when such calls summon them to the scene. And ironically this was probably the first time many people who call Norton home saw the make up of their fire department. They quickly learned why firefighters are called heroes.

And on scene to do what they could were volunteers armed with bottles of water, ice, juices — things needed to keep those fighting the flames from dehydration. That was a lot of work, a lot of running. But they had a role to play and they played it perfectly.

Emergency Medical Services stood by to render assistance to those who were weakened from being exposed to the heat. The city's police department, the sheriff's department, highway patrol, Kansas Department of Transportation, all had a positive hand in this daytime nightmare.

And of course there were others standing by to help however needed.

In the midst of such tragic experiences, the character of a community shines through. And it certainly did in an exceptional way in Norton, Kansas on Monday of this week.

Stand proud. All of you.

— Tom Dreiling

## Thumbs Up to ...

✓ **The firemen** who helped with Monday's fire. Also to **Chief Mitch Jones** for doing a terrific job of keeping everything organized. They're all volunteers and don't have to do what they do. (called in)

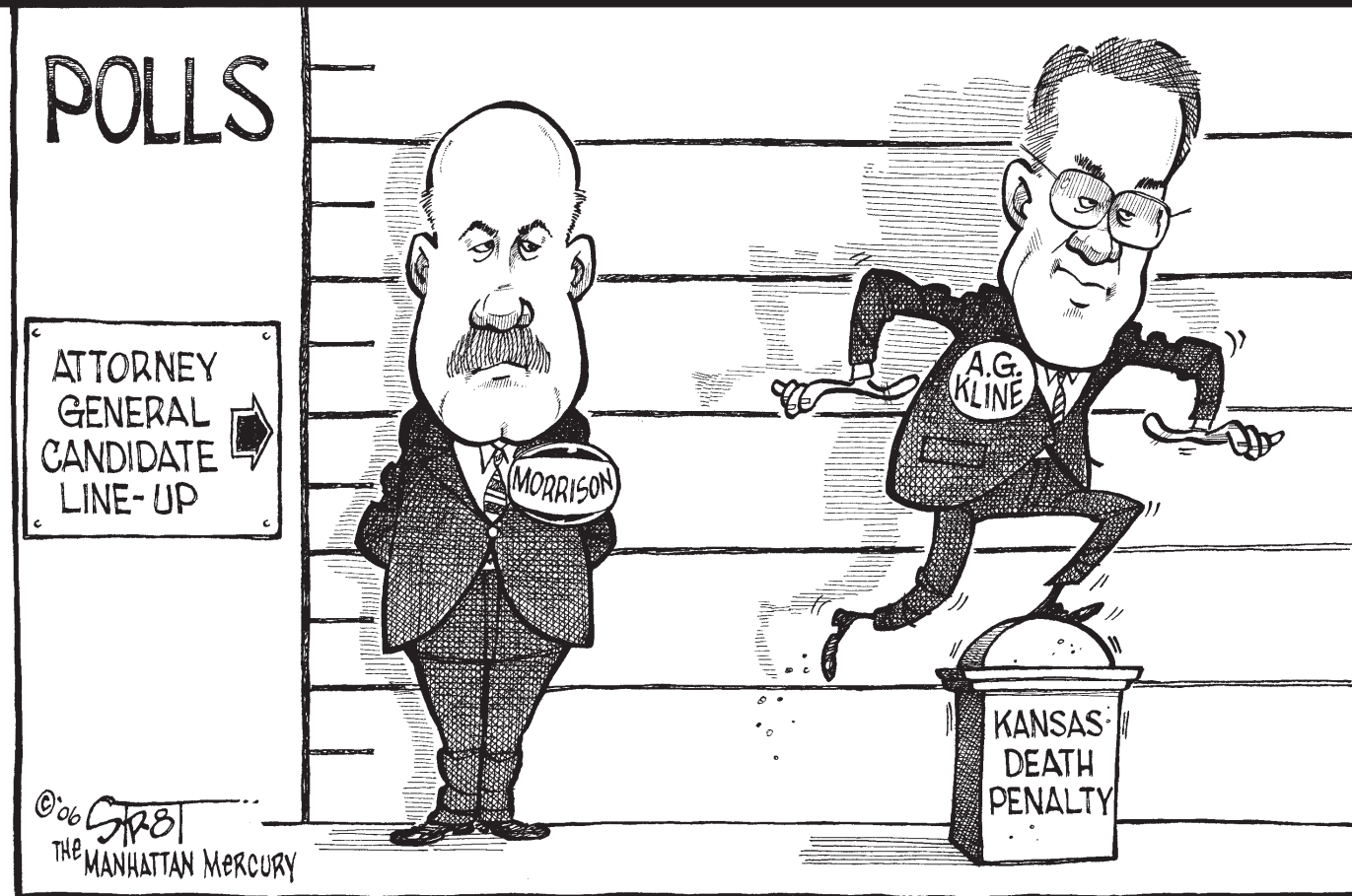
✓ **Doug and Doris Johnston**, on your 60th wedding anniversary. (e-mail)

✓ **Keith and Karen Hilburn**, on your 50th wedding anniversary. (e-mail)

✓ **Harold Achey and Connie Dale**, on your new positions at the Andbe Home. (e-mail)

✓ **Helen McVay**, on your 75th birthday. (e-mail)

(To submit something for this column, e-mail tom@nwkans.com, fax (785) 877-3732, call 877-6908 or 877-3361, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks, for your participation.)



## Just a reminder that the decision is yours

Tuesday, Aug. 1 (already?) is primary election day. While there are no races locally to stir the dust, there are some on the district and state level that should help bring out voters. One of those races is for the District 5 Board of Education seat currently held by controversial Republican incumbent Connie Morris of St. Francis. She is being challenged by Sally Cauble, a Liberal Republican (that smacks of an oxymoron *liberal Republican*?). If you followed Connie Morris' first term on the state board, especially her comments and her travels, you then know why some restless Republicans found a candidate to challenge her.

I don't know where Connie Morris has been this primary election season, but I can't recall bumping into her anywhere. I hope she isn't taking "her territory" for granted. I haven't run into Sally Cauble either, for that matter. The winner will go up against Democrat Tim Cruz of Garden City in November.

It's been a lot of years since the Republicans had a field this large seeking to win the primary race for governor to challenge incumbent Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in November. Seven names appear on the ballot. It's anybody's guess as to who will walk away the winner on Tuesday. You can pick from the following: Jim Barnett, Ken R. Canfield, Rex Crowell, Dennis Hawver, Robin Jennison, Timothy V. Pickell and Richard "Rode" Rodewald.

Ron Thornburgh, Republican incumbent Secretary of State, is being challenged by Kay O'Connor. Sandy Praeger, Republican incumbent Commissioner of Insurance, is being challenged by Eric Carter. It's not all that common to see Republican office holders facing primary challenges.

Even the Democrats have a primary race, this one for the office of Secretary of State between Robert Beattie and

## Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



David Haley. Sometimes the Democrats have problems finding candidates, period. And to have a primary race is...well, promising.

Go vote.

In the year 2006, the Lord came to Noah, who was now living in the United States, and said, "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me."

Build another Ark and save 2 of every living thing along with a few good humans."

He gave Noah the blueprints, saying, "You have 6 months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard - but no Ark.

"Noah!" He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?"

"Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed a building permit. I've been arguing with the inspector about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbors claim that I've violated the neighborhood zoning laws by building the Ark in my yard and exceeding the height limitations. We had to go to the Development Appeal Board for a decision."

"Then the Department of Transportation demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the

passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it.

"Getting the wood was another problem. There's a ban on cutting local trees in order to save the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but no go!

"When I started gathering the animals, an animal rights group sued me.

"They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space.

"Then the EPA ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood.

"I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Human Rights Commission on how many minorities I'm supposed to hire for my building crew.

"Immigration and Naturalization is checking the green-card status of most of the people who want to work.

"The trades unions say I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only Union workers with Ark-building experience.

"To make matters worse, the IRS seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species.

"So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this Ark."

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?"

"No," said the Lord. "The government beat me to it."

(Thanks to Liza Deines for sharing.)

-td-

Have a good weekend. Remember to join the growing crowd going to church.

## FROM THE MAILBAG:

## Word 'values' is obsolete, let's use 'virtues' instead

To the Editor,

I would like to respond to your solicitation about "values." That word is obsolete since everyone has their own definition, and that definition is always undergoing change. It is a non-descript word. A more useful substitute word is "virtues." Virtue always has a good and warm connotation. In our society a virtue that tops the list is "generosity" and its related pal "selflessness".

As a former probation officer, I had the opportunity to study human behavior in its basic form, including self-evaluation. Any person who has conflict with criminal law usually has at least one negative virtue. That would be a deficiency of selflessness or generosity. Likewise, anyone who practices this virtue is highly admired.

When a son or daughter brings a new friend home, parents subconsciously evaluate the new person for their selflessness traits. This is the first thing we really need to know about future in-laws.

One of the best things about living in small communities is the abundance of generous citizens. There are many unnoticed and unidentified people in our community who give their time and money to help others. One of the cures for depression and disordered character faults is the practice of giving. Giving exalts the soul and gives one the feeling of worth and

self-confidence.

As a counselor I kept statistics by asking 12-30 year-olds if they knew the "Golden Rule." Less than 10 percent of the offenders knew the Rule, and they often failed to understand the nuances of the Rule. The Golden Rule is not the exclusive property of the Christian reli-

gion. It was taught by Confucius and Aristotle long before Jesus came upon the scene.

So, when I hear the term "values," I smile and wonder what definition that person currently uses.

Ted Hanchett

Norton

## Through it all the tree is still standing

To the Editor,  
"And the tree still stands"

The much disputed city pear trees have shown their tenacity to remain a permanent fixture of downtown Norton.

Amid the blazing fire that burned down "The Collectables 36", the corner pear tree just a few yards from the store saw the end of the destruction with boughs still reaching up towards the sky, defying nature's scourge. It did not burn down. It did not fall down and threaten the next block. Though somewhat scorched, it remained tall and proud.

In every act of disaster, war and chaos a story of hope and the will to live is happening. This is God's gift of encouraging

our faith in the midst of the worst of our lives.

Though we grieve the loss of a familiar business and a downtown building, we thank God for the possibilities of tomorrow's rebuilding and renewed life as we see the tree still standing.

If we all look hard enough, we'll see that blossoming pear tree in the midst of our own disappointments, failings and heartache. Like this pear tree, may we look up, arms outstretched towards the heavens as we look towards God our Savior who brings hope, healing and restoration.

In flight,

Robin Somers

Norton

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