

Doing more with less is water's picture

Kansas needs to make a lot of decisions about water, and not all of them involve issues in the state's control.

Kansas farmers pump more water out of the Ogallala aquifer underlying the western plains than nature puts back, drawing wells down each year. Eventually, there won't be enough water to grow irrigated corn out here.

The big question is, should we slow down now, and make the water last? Or wait until we have to?

Water in western Kansas river basins, including the Republican River drainage in our northwest corner, isn't adequate to cover current uses, especially irrigation wells in the so-called streambed aquifers. (These are separate from the Ogallala.)

The state isn't giving out new well permits, but our use is more than interstate compacts allow. Nebraska farmers below us do the same.

Kansas is suing Nebraska in the U.S. Supreme Court to get its fair share of water from the river. Where does that leave north-west Kansas farmers?

There is water in most of our federal reservoirs, but less every year during the turn-of-the-century drought. All of the lakes out here in the northwest have fallen during the current drought.

Already, irrigation is losing out at these lakes, designed more than a half century ago as "multiple use" facilities. Recreation, cities, storage and industrial use seem to win out.

Back in eastern Kansas, though, the reservoirs are being sucked down to perpetuate the folly of barge navigation on the Missouri River. Relentless releases designed to bring the river up just a few inches draw down lakes which have become vital to the Kansas economy.

Over the years, the Army Corps of Engineers has deepened, narrowed and straightened the river channel to help move barges. In dry times, that's not enough, though, and the Corps calls on Kansas water.

Who benefits? Barge operators, mostly. Grain and other commodities moved on the river could be moved by taxpaying railroads and existing highways rather than using federal dollars to dredge and straighten the river.

The deep, fast flow barge operators threatens fish and other river life, with little benefit to anyone in this state.

We're not alone in this. Nebraska and Dakota economies depend on federal reservoirs, too. Many people up there want their lakes left at levels that promote recreation. Drawdowns to promote barge traffic can leave boat ramps and marinas high and dry, driving off boaters and fishermen.

All across the plains, farmers face the same decisions about wells and irrigation. There's not enough water anywhere.

The right thing to do is to maximize the resource, which means using water well and wisely. Knowing what that means isn't always easy, but one thing is for sure:

In the future, we'll all have to do more with less. — Steve Haynes

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Share your thoughts with a letter

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Season's change doesn't end struggle

This little cold snap had us grabbing for the covers. My cold-blooded husband was ready to dig out the electric blanket. Jim and I are very much alike in many ways; however, we seem to be diametrically opposed in our internal thermostats.

He is hot when I am cold and I am hot when he is cold. We can never seem to find a happy medium.

Furnace or air conditioner adjusting is a constant with us. As we get older I can only see it getting worse. One or the other of us will always be bundled up.

-ob-

Our daughter, Jennifer (Alex and Ani's mom) called the other day. Her best friend in San Antonio is a native Texan and operates under the theory that "nothing is too big" in Texas. Big



Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



houses, big cars and big hair — that's the Texan way.

You should see the headband Deborah found for baby Aniston. It has a bow on it about as big as Texas.

-ob-

The house is progressing, nicely. To the untrained eye I'm sure the goal of us moving in six weeks looks like an impossibility. But, I can tell that things are happening.

The bathroom is all but done; the kitchen countertop and wall ovens are about all that remain in the kitchen; and then, it's into the new family room.

My dreams of having it all done before

we move in have been set aside. Just enough to make it livable is the goal for now. The rest will come later.

-ob-

We make our car payments to our friendly, family auto mechanic. And, lately, my car has taken up residence at his garage. Our kids keep telling us to get rid of it, but we're not ready to do that. I'm convinced the old girl has another 100,000 miles in her.

A new vehicle would be nice, but, really, do we need all the bells and whistles. I just need the pistons to go up and down and the wheels to go 'round and 'round.

-ob-

Talk about a late bloomer. Our tomato plants have only produced two slicers all summer. But, now, when it's about time to frost, we're getting tomatoes.

Probably not enough to can, but we still might get some fried, green tomatoes this year.

There's no middle ground with fried tomatoes: you either love 'em or hate 'em.

FROM THE MAILBOX:

Woodyard's column draws 'Amen' from reader

To the Editor,

"Amen" to Mary Kay Woodyard's article about our children, *Norton Telegram*, Friday, Sept. 15.

It was an insightful piece on common sense parenting. Parenting our children has been one of the most deeply satisfying, joy filled and growing experiences that I have ever known. Parenting is a God-given right and responsibility. I firmly and loudly disagree with the philosophy that "It takes a village to raise a child." It isn't biblical. And it is a dangerously socialistic, political philosophy. It is my job to lay down my life for my family...to love and honor them above all. It is to fulfill the role of parent, provider, educator, and Christian example with all wisdom, grace and sacrificial love. To default in my responsibility is to allow the right of parenting to be eroded and taken over by the state and its various institutions.

We see this erosion in our society today. When parents, as a society, are given over to being irresponsible parents, the state and other institutions will take over. Because, somebody must take care of the children. Having been a foster parent, I have seen this first hand. S.R.S., the public school system (as an agent of the government), mental health services, doctors and a legion of other specialists have stepped in the gap as the primary care givers of children whose parents were deemed negligent or abusive. They need to be because somebody must advocate on behalf of our nation's children.

Though that is the extreme result of

parental neglect/abuse, rights of parents continue to erode because parents have, to various degrees, neglected their responsibility to fully parent their children.

So, please, this is a plea to parents everywhere, to never underestimate your responsibility and rights as your children's parents. I understand the complexity of 'issues' in families that require much help from outside resources. That is what those resources are there for. However, they cannot replace you as the parent to your children.

I want to encourage even the most 'weak' or 'unconfident' or 'overwhelmed' parent that there is always hope. I believe God gives us the wisdom, the grace and 'know-how' to become our children's most loved persons on the face of the earth. Faith in God is important. So is becoming informed. Learn from books, seminars, and especially people you know that have been good parents to their children.

Then, s-l-o-w-d-o-w-n, pause and listen to your children. Get to know them. Cut out activities that are robbing your family of precious 'still moments' of learning together and delighting in one-another's company. Figure out who you are as a family. Every family is unique. Each family has its own 'flavor' based on the combining of the individual member's personalities. I believe every family has a goal, or mission in life as a family. Together, discover those goals. It's fun, frustrating and altogether a memorable and character building experience.

Whether you homeschool or not, you are your children's teacher and mentor. Our children learn from us. They become like us. This, in itself, can be a very frightening, sobering thought! Try to see yourself through their eyes. God, in his divine sense of humor, can reveal character flaws in you simply through listening to your children's concerns, and criticisms of you. However, you must cultivate an atmosphere of love (not fear) and acceptance of all their concerns without retribution so that they will allow themselves to be vulnerable and truthful.

No one ever 'graduates.' I continue to learn with my children, even as I teach them. I choose to become knowledgeable and informed about all aspects of my responsibilities as a wife, parent, educator, cook, dietitian, first-response doctor, nurse, household administrator and best friend. Learn to wisely connect with 'knowledge' through churches, the library and the internet and especially to people.

The very best advice I could ever give to another parent is *enjoy your children, delight in them, see God's unique fingerprint in each of your children.* As a Christian, God will give you the grace to fulfill this task with joy, love and peace in your family.

Families are a gift from God. Let's not abdicate our rights as parents to the state due to our passing off this responsibility to other institutions.

In flight,

Robin Somers
Norton

Don't forget Friday is 'Thumbs Up... ' day