

There was some good news hidden in the pile

Older Americans, trying to make ends meet with their Social Security checks, had a little bit of good news a few weeks ago that was, unfortunately, overshadowed by Britany Spears' nasty doings, separations and divorces of Hollywood role models (that's an insult), rap singers that break the law almost out of habit but never seem to get any time in the clinker, notables with their new born babies who apparently, somewhere along the line, forgot the "m" word, as in "marriage," and sadly the litany goes on.

But in between all of those reports that deserve back burner status, but for some reason we are told it is news (sure!!) was a real story. The Social Security Administration announced that the benefit increase for 2007 will be 3.3 percent. That's good news for the 53 million people who receive Social Security or Supplemental Security Income. The increases are automatic each year, based on the rise in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers*.

The 3.3 percent Cost-of-Living Adjustment, better known as COLA, begins with benefits that nearly 49 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2007. Increased payments to more than 7 million Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries begin on Dec. 29.

Millions of retired Americans are trying to get by on Social Security alone. That can sometimes pose a problem when you consider Social Security checks vary from \$500 a month (maybe a little less) to around \$1,500 (maybe a little higher). So, any kind of an increase is appreciated.

How long can those depending on Social Security expect to receive checks? They are in no danger. The new baby boomers should be pretty safe, too. But the kids of the baby boomers might see changes when their time to retire comes along.

If the government would keep its hands out of the Social Security cookie jar, there would be no need for concern. But because Social Security seems to underwrite more stuff than you could ever imagine, it is easy to understand the concern for future beneficiaries.

But like they say, something is better than nothing. In 2007 that *something* will be a 3.3 percent increase.

—Tom Dreiling

Thumbs Up to . . .

✓**The Norton Junior High Band**, on your Tuesday night concert. Excellent! (called in)

✓**The Norton Telegram**, for donating the newspapers for the soldiers' care packages. They really enjoy reading the hometown news. (called in)

✓**All the churches**, choirs and musicians, who came together at the Methodist Church for the beautiful Thanksgiving services. (called in)

✓**Diane Lambrecht**, Eisenhower Elementary teacher, and **Ruby Cook** (head cook) and her staff, on the Japanese meal (with chopsticks) prepared to coincide with the study of Japan and Japanese culture. Super! (e-mail)

✓**Phyllis Harting**, on the well-deserved honor bestowed at the Norton County Extension Council's annual meeting. (e-mail)

✓**Carla Moore**, the new program director at Valley Hope. (e-mail)

✓**The Norton Telegram**, for the campaign on Shop Hometown. Thanks from the businesses. (hand delivered)

(Thanks for your participation. To submit a name or names, e-mail tomtd@nwkansas.com, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, call 877-3361 or 877-6908, or drop by the office.)

Share your thoughts with
a 'Letter to the Telegram's Editor'

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

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This has been my fastest year ever

It is hard to believe that in three more weeks (Dec. 30) I will have been a resident of the Norton community for a full year. Seems like just yesterday I arrived in this community still showing the effects of a late November snowstorm. I was up here a week prior to that looking for housing. That taken care of, it was then the move itself that kept my mind, and physical capabilities busy. My son Todd came down from his home in Aurora, Colo., and he was joined by nephew Nick Schlyer at Hays, to pack up the U-Haul for the relocation to Norton.

Norton wasn't new as far as communities go. I can remember living in a couple of northwest Kansas towns that engaged Norton athletes in various sports and subsequently found myself driving here to cheer on the opponents of the Blue Jays.

Too, I can recall making a couple of trips to Norton some years ago with my late wife, Jean, to visit with her sister and husband, Wanda and the late John Pilkington. We got to see nephews Donnie and Johnny Pilkington do their thing in athletics, but mostly, however, when their Blue Jays visited our confines at Goodland, where we lived. I might add that I still have a few bruise marks on my arms from Wanda's punishing reaction to every move on the wrestling mat when Johnny was engaged in the heat of battle. You didn't want to be anywhere close to her.

Norton's a nice town. The people take pride in their homes and their yards. Businesses go out of their way to fill your needs. The church community is alive and well. Educationally, Medically, things are sound. In a nutshell, Norton gets it done!

Sometimes it takes an "outsider" to point out a community's positives. I like doing that. Negatives, on the other hand,

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



are like unwanted flies, bothersome. The people I am in contact with, for most part, think Norton is about as good a place as any to live.

To underscore the role a community's newspaper plays in the overall scheme of things, I will relate this story that goes back a number of years. A company, looking to expand, had its eye on two towns in our state. They paid on-site visits and were welcomed warmly by the town's dignitaries. One town tried to outdo the other, given the need to put their best foot forward. After several visits to each community, they retired to their home base to ponder their decision. There was little to set one town apart from the other. So, what they did was subscribe to each town's newspaper. It was pretty much what they saw in those two newspapers that helped them make their decision. The town that got the nod was portrayed in its newspaper as a town of positives. The other was filled with negative news, day in and day out. I like to think that *The Telegram* is more positively-directed in its approach. We will not bury our head in the sand, but we will monitor situations and conditions and report them as such. But we don't lay awake nights looking for the "gotcha!" approach.

As I travel, I always pick up newspapers in towns I travel through. I learn more

about each of those communities from their newspaper than I could sitting and listening to coffee babble.

Norton's OK.... No, it's better than that. Norton is Norton and its future hinges on what each of us does to promote it. Don't expect any group or organization to be the cheerleader, you need to put yourself in that role too. Maybe we need a couple thousand bumper stickers that simply say, "Think Norton."

-td-

A man in Seattle calls his son in New York a few days before Christmas and says, "I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing; forty-five years of misery is enough.

"Pop, what are you talking about?" the son shouts.

"We can't stand the sight of each other any longer," the father says. "We're sick of each other, and I'm sick of talking about this, so you can call your sister in Chicago and tell her."

Frantic, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone. "Like heck they're getting divorced," she shouts, "I'll take care of this."

She calls Seattle immediately, and says to her father, "You are NOT getting divorced. Don't do a single thing until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don't do a thing, DO YOU HEAR ME?" and hangs up.

The old man hangs up his phone and turns to his wife and says, "OK, honey, they're coming for Christmas and paying their own way."

-td-

Have a good evening and a good weekend. And don't be a no-show at the church of your choice

New twist to world's seven wonders

The teacher told her class that today's assignment would be to list what they thought were the present "Seven Wonders of the World" Though there were some disagreements, the following received the most votes:

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids
2. Taj Mahal
3. Grand Canyon
4. Panama Canal
5. Empire State Building
6. St. Peter's Basilica
7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the list from each student, the teacher noted that one student had not finished her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many"

The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help.

"The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the 'Seven Wonders of the World' are:

1. To See
2. To Hear
3. To Touch
4. To Taste
5. To Feel
6. To Laugh
7. And to Love."

The room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. The things we overlook as simple and ordinary and that we take for granted are truly wondrous!

This is sure to boggle your mind. The year is 1906 — One hundred years ago.

At Week's End (td)

are some of the U.S. statistics for that year (which you might want to cut out and paste in your family's album):

✓The average life expectancy in the U.S. was 47 years old.

✓Only 14 percent of the homes in the U.S. had a bathtub.

✓Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.

✓A three-minute call from Denver to New York City cost eleven dollars.

✓Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California.

✓With a mere 1.4 million people, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.

✓The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower!

✓The average wage in the U.S. was 22 Cents per hour.

✓The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

✓A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a veterinarian \$1,500 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

✓More than 95 percent of all births in the U.S. took place at home.

✓Ninety percent of all U.S. doctors had no college education! Instead, they attended so-called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as "substandard."

✓Sugar cost four cents a pound.

✓Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.

✓Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

✓Five leading causes of death in the U.S. were:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

✓The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.

✓The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was only 30!

✓Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and ice tea hadn't been invented yet.

✓There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

✓Two out of every 10 U.S. adults couldn't read or write.

✓Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school.

(Do you have something to share? Simply e-mail tomtd@nwkansas.com, or drop it by the office at 215 S. Kansas Ave., or fax 877-3732. Thanks for your help!)