

## Teachers behind national 'Bee' winners

Thanks to an Olathe youngster, our state came in for some great publicity at last Thursday's 2007 National Geographic *Geography Bee* in Washington, D.C. Suneil Iyer, 12, a student at Indian Trail Junior High School, Olathe, placed second in the national bee, and in the process won a \$15,000 college scholarship.

The winner was 14-year-old Caitlin Snaring, a homeschooled 8th grader from Redmond, Wash. She not only won a \$25,000 scholarship, but also won a lifetime membership in the National Geographic Society. Caitlin also has the distinction of being only the second girl to win the Bee since its debut in 1989.

This bee, like all the others, is tough and challenging. No short cuts. You either know the answer or you don't. No prompting. It's you and you alone in the spotlight.

The winning question was: "A city that is divided by a river of the same name was the imperial capital of Vietnam for more than a century. Name this city, which is still an important cultural center."

The answer? Hue.

While watching these kids perform so well, we chalk it up to the classroom teacher, the face we don't see, but a face deeply involved in the process.

When we see these kids stepping up and making us proud, don't we sometimes wonder what the problem is because all we seem to hear is more of the negative than the positive about our nation's classrooms? Have we forgotten there is a lot of good being done?

Are we not paying attention?

Teachers are not the kind of people to pat themselves on the back.

We need to do that for them. It certainly would be in order for us, right here at home, to pen a thank-you note recognizing our teachers for their efforts, their successes, and the good care and attention they give our children throughout the school year.

No truer words were spoken than these: "Where would anyone of us be were it not for a teacher?"

You know the answer.

—Tom Dreiling

## Kitty makes its escape

Pretty Thing is back in Norton, living at the pound. Our experiment in taming her failed miserably and I ended up trapping her and taking her back to Sherry, the animal control officer in Norton. Sherry guaranteed me that she would find a new home for her.

Pretty Thing was a beautiful little part Siamese kitten I brought home a couple of months ago. She was a little wild, but Sherry and I thought that she was tame enough to go home with me.

We were both wrong.

Pretty Thing didn't even have a name for the first month. She hid in the basement and we never saw her. Finally, I moved the cat food upstairs. If she wanted to eat, she had to come upstairs.

She did but her visits were hit and run. She hid under the desk until she was sure we were a long way away and wouldn't come near.

We could see her and talk to her, saying soothing things like, "Hi pretty thing, want some supper?"

After a couple of weeks, I decided that that was her name. She was officially Pretty Thing, but we still couldn't get near her.

I thought we were making progress until one day I started down the stairs and Steve was in the kitchen. Soon Pretty Thing realized that I was blocking her avenue of escape. She went berserk. She ran into the kitchen, bounced off a chair and headed for the basement stairs where I was. When she saw me, she made a U-turn in midair and headed back up the stairs, where she spotted Steve. She careened off a leg of the desk and headed back downstairs. Seeing me again, she hit

### Open Season Cynthia Haynes



the wall and headed back up, finally making her escape into the dining room. All these figure-8 maneuvers took about five seconds.

Pretty Thing wasn't going to become a house cat, at least not our house cat.

I brought in the small animal trap Sherry had lent me in case I couldn't tame her. I set it up in the kitchen and put the food bowl inside. I left it there for most of a week so all the cats had to go into the trap to eat.

They didn't like it, but they all four got used to it.

Then one night, we caught Molly Monster. April Alice and Jezebel and tossed them outside, took the food bowl out of the trap and left some inside.

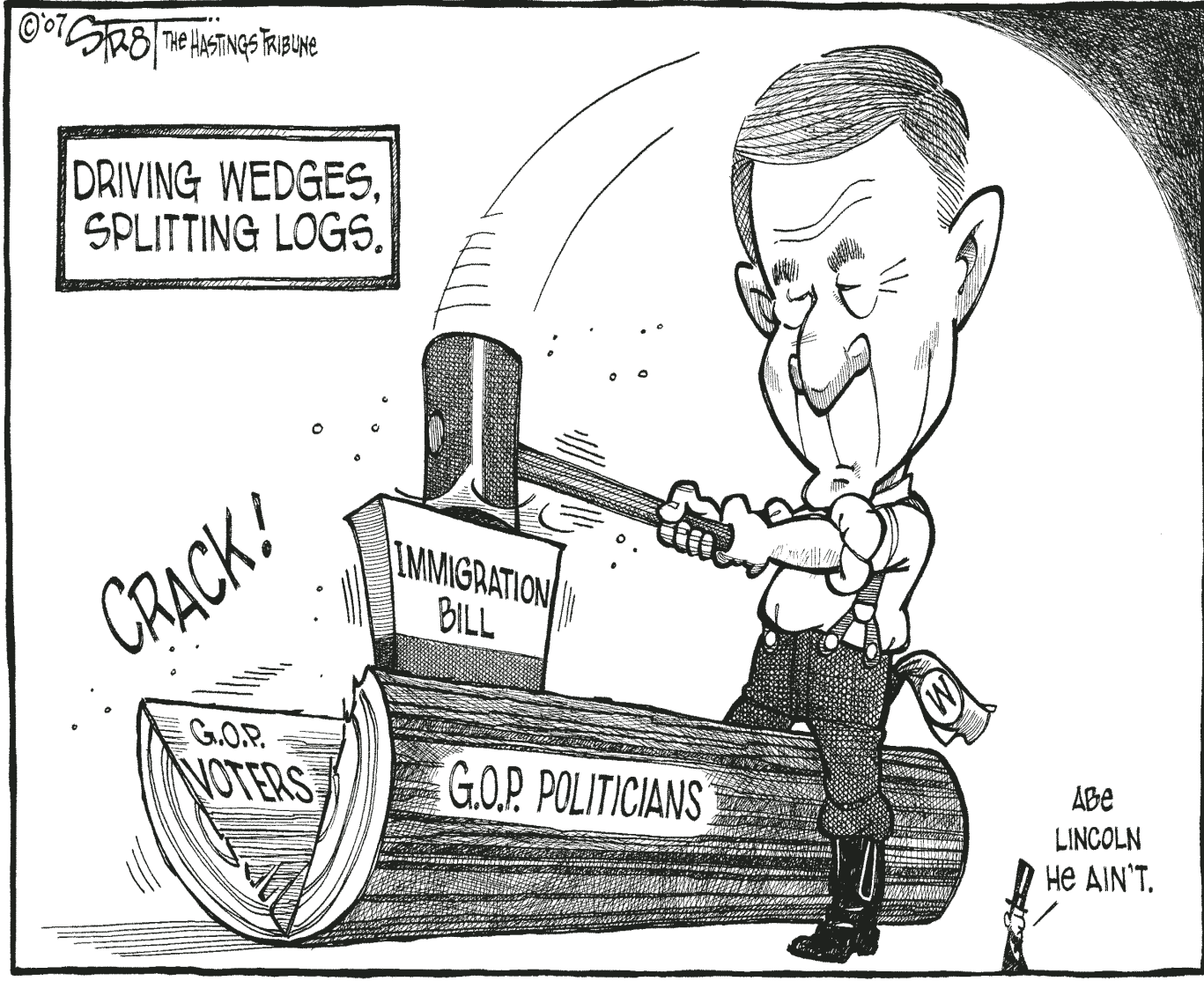
We set the trap. It didn't take 15 minutes and we heard the door slam. Pretty Thing was in the box. The next day, I took her back.

Sherry says she has a farmer who wants a good cat.

Pretty Thing is a good cat and she should be happy on a farm where there are no kitchens and no traps.

Steve is right.

I need to let the cats come to me and not go looking for them. They always seem to find me when the time is right.



## Weekend takes on a life of its own

If this is Tuesday it must mean we survived the weekend. Occasionally, I over-book our schedule. We don't like to miss anything. But, this past weekend, was especially cram-packed. I won't bore you with the details, because everyone lives busy lives, but our schedule was so close, we decorated our graves after the alumni banquet, in the dark. It was, literally, the only time slot we had to do it.

However, Monday afternoon, we did manage to squeeze in a nice little nap right before we grilled a couple of rib eyes. After dinner, we worked in the yard, planting flowers, weeding and transplanting a nice little walnut tree from a neighbor's yard. She had plenty of trees and said it was volunteer. She suspected a squirrel forgot where he had stored a walnut a couple years ago. She has worked around it for two summers and was ready to see it go.

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



My daughter, Kara, and I confirmed the dates for her daughter, Taylor's, stay with us. We'll wait until July 21 to make the trade. That will give Taylor two weeks with us before her parents come to get her. They will be here for the Decatur County Fair. Taylor, however, will have already had one week of Norton County Fair under her belt.

She will also get to go to another wedding with us. A dear friend's daughter is

marrying during Taylor's stay, so she will get to go to another party.

Two summers ago a young couple we think a lot of got married. As we were leaving the festivities Taylor said, "G'ma, that was the bestest party I have EVER been to."

Everyone loves a wedding. And, I know this will be a wedding to remember, as well.

This was my brother Bob's sixtieth high school reunion. I delighted in telling everyone that I knew it was his sixtieth, because I was the reason his mother was pregnant at his high school graduation. Of course, that let's the cat out of the bag about my age.

I don't care, though. The older I get, the less sensitive I am about age. One of the blessings of maturity.

## Ellis man astounded by government's audacity

To the Editor,  
"Magnificent," cried the ministers, but they could see nothing at all. Indeed there was nothing to be seen....(The Emperor's New Clothes by Hans Christian Anderson)

When the "Gonzales/Ashcroft" bedside story broke last week, I was so flabbergasted and awe-struck at the audaciousness of the Bush administration that my consciousness was temporarily stunned with momentary disbelief. My shock demanded that I type something if only to prove to myself I wasn't dreaming.

No doubt you've already heard about the March 10, 2004 visit by the then Chief White House Council Alberto Gonzales and former White House Chief of Staff, Andrew Card to the bedside of Attorney General John Ashcroft who was at the time suffering from a pancreatic illness and whose condition was listed as critical in the ICU of George Washington University Hospital. Now bear in mind that at the moment this meeting was happening, Ashcroft had, because of his grave health, relinquished power to Deputy Attorney General James Comey who was acting Attorney General with complete authority in that role. The story is absolutely bizarre.

What happened here is very clear. Concerning the illegal wire-tapping program, the White House knew their activities were in violation of the Constitution and the President simply sent his Chief of Staff and his Chief White House Council to George Washington Hospital to "Per-

suade" an ill man who held no power as Attorney General at the time, to approve of a program of which he, Mr. Ashcroft, and the acting Attorney General James Comey both found to be illegal at the time. Yet when Ashcroft and Comey refused to approve its legality, the White House proceeded with haste executing the questionable policy for the next three weeks. Can you say audacity? I knew you could!

In this "bed-side" story, before our very eyes we have been given witness to a perfect example of comedic mad-cappery. Not since the days of the Keystone Cops and Our Gang have we seen such bungling or mayhem. The Administration's self-serving collective ego and their own stumbling methodology to achieve results is so obvious with their callous disregard for a man's health and their almost comedic if not pathetically sad display of pandering. These facts are played out through the Administration's own zeal to obtain from Ashcroft an ends to a means, in a manner of which that could metaphorically be described as to jumping into the hospital bed with Grandpa Joe and just before the old geezer draws his last breath, coaxingly whisper in his ear: "Listen...gramps.....am I still in the Will"? And then lament tragically at his passing while scheming to marry his young widowed bride! This Administration just

doesn't understand couth.

Folks, over these past six years I, like many of you have "run the gambit" on emotions. I have for the better part believed I had come to see and question just about everything one could possibly see and question of any presidential administration. Their actions and behavior have more than qualified them for examination and scrutiny. The examples, which demand it, are numerous and some are quite remarkable. Any more I simply find myself repeating the same phrase over and over: "Un-believable, simply un-believable!"

We have watched in amazement while this administration marched us to war based on ill-conceived information and poor planning. We have been further confounded by the unwillingness of this Administration to hear the collective will of the American people or even some members of its own party for that matter. Bush's approval rating hovers somewhere around 30 percent, yet he acts as though he has a sixty plus percent mandate. Is it possible Rove, Cheney and Rice are exulting the Emperor's new clothes! What other explanation is there? I'm convinced that sometime around 3 p.m. each afternoon just before King George's Cheerios and nap time, lines begin to form "on the right" in the East room for the "Royal stroking of the King's ego!"

"Right you are G.W.!"  
"You're the Man Mr. Prez!"  
"Genius!"

Bill Robb  
Ellis

### LETTER

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



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