

### Passport system one giant mistake

The current mess with passports is a great example of government planning, which is pretty much an oxymoron anyway. The Homeland Security people decided that to beef up border security, Americans would have to have a passport to return from neighboring countries, including Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean islands, at least by air.

U.S. immigration officials have never required a passport for simple cross-border visits, but in this age, there's an insane desire for security people to control every movement.

This may sound like a good idea, but it has little to do with fighting terrorism and a lot to do with police power to watch and control all of us citizens. Police agencies have wanted this for a long time, but Congress resisted. The Sept. 11 attacks gave them the chance to get what they wanted.

As usual in Washington, if something sounds like a "really good idea," it can fly through with little thought to the consequences. That's how we got the present mess with passports.

The security guys said it was a good idea. Terrorists might be infiltrating through Mexico or Canada, they claimed, though there's not much evidence of that. The only terrorists we know of coming through Canada got caught.

And on the Mexican border, there's no telling who might be coming in, but really, it's unlikely terrorists could pass themselves off as Latino illegals.

There are ways for terrorists to get into this country, but most of them involve sneaking in through regular channels, on regular flights, right under the noses of the authorities. Customs and Immigration officers usually are too busy checking ordinary people to see the real terrorists. They spend their time harassing Arab visitors and other friends of America.

But regardless of whether the passport deal was a good idea, it's created a mess. No one asked if the State Department could issue a passport to every American planning to travel this year.

Passports that used to take a month to get now take three. The "expedited" service that used to take a week — at a cost of \$60 — now takes three or more. People with tickets and hotel reservations find themselves stranded. Even pleas to congressmen can't speed the process much.

Even after the initial crunch, no provision has been made to beef up the passport offices for increased business. In fact, the State Department has had to hold employees who planned to retire to keep the pipeline flowing at all.

We're obsessed with identification in this country, but the real benefits of beefed-up ID aren't for terrorism control. They're just for control. Terrorists find ways around such things. Ordinary people just have to put up with the new rules.

Even with supposedly foolproof "Real IDs," passports and computer tracking, in the end, a terrorist who's well trained and sophisticated, as the dangerous ones are, will find a way. It takes good police work and good intelligence to find those guys and block them.

Meantime, the new rules have cost billions and inconvenienced millions for no real purpose. It's a sham, an expensive charade and a real nuisance. Not a benefit to our security.

The smart thing would be to eliminate the passport requirement — it only applies to airline flights, not to land crossings, anyway — and go back to the old system. That's not likely to happen, because it's too sensible and the security hounds are in the driver's seat.

— Steve Haynes

### Thumbs Up . . .

**Jered Sloan**, you all did a great job on the tiger sculpture at Fort Hays State University. (*Telegram* staff)

**City of Norton**, for spraying the mosquitoes. (hand delivered)

**Jennings firemen**, for a super fun day! (e-mail)

**Julia Kent**, Norton's budding astronaut! (e-mail)

**Redeemer Lutheran Church**, on your 25th anniversary. (by telephone)

**Clayton Bashford, Taylor Dicks and Seth Henrickson**, bicycle winners in the Norton Public Library's summer reading program, and **Allie Corbin**, winner of the Junior/Senior High Division, who was awarded an MP3 player. (*Telegram* staff)

(To submit a name or names, e-mail [tomd@nwkans.com](mailto:tomd@nwkans.com), phone 877-3361, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks for your input!)

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#### Nor'West Newspapers

**Dick and Mary Beth Boyd**  
Publishers, 1970-2002  
Incorporating the Norton County Champion  
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### Why not 'fines double' in school zones?

Isn't it something the way a town livens up with the start of a new school year? The morning tempo excites with parents taking their kids to school, and the older kids taking themselves to school. And all this, coupled with the normal morning traffic makes for a busy time. It's also a time for all motorists, regardless of destination, to exercise caution and be aware of those who walk to school and need to cross streets. It's a time to slow down. The speed limit signs in the school zones are there for a reason. If you ignore them and proceed on your merry way, the end result may not be so merry. The signs out on highway construction say, "Give Them A Break," and also warn, "Fines Double In Construction Zones." Maybe that "fines double" ought to also apply to school zones. We just can't be careful enough.

-td-

The way things are going, it looks like Vice President Dick Cheney will be the last man standing when President Bush turns off the lights for the last time at the White House.

-td-

Former Sen. Fred Thompson, who also plays a major role on "Law and Order," a popular television series, is supposed to announce his bid for the Republican nomination for president in early September. I have a funny feeling he's going to announce otherwise. To me, he just doesn't seem to have the fire in the belly needed for such a run. I can, however, see him as a running mate for the eventual nominee. Maybe in that role he can bring something that seems to be lacking in his party, "Law and Order."

-td-

The Democrats have their own problems. Sen. Clinton, for example, appears to be a bit confused. She continues jabbing at President Bush as though she has won her party's nomination, and all the while forgetting Mr. Bush isn't a candidate for

### Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



anything. But despite it all, there's one thing you can say for Hillary, .....hmm, I forgot what it was.

-td-

Don't forget to take part in our "Tell Us 2008" straw poll. The latest results were in Tuesday's *Telegram*. You can mail your choice to *The Telegram*, 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, drop it off at the office, fax 877-3732, call 877-3361 or 877-6908, or e-mail [tomd@nwkans.com](mailto:tomd@nwkans.com). Please include a comment if you wish, your name won't be used. Lot of presidential candidates to choose from. I think it's eight Dems and nine GOP. Next results will appear in September.

-td-

A Kansas cowboy was overseeing his herd in a remote pasture when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of a dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a Brioni suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leans out the window and asks the cowboy, "If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf?"

The cowboy looks at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looks at his peacefully grazing herd and calmly answers, "Sure. Why not?"

The yuppie parks his car, whips out his Dell notebook computer, connects it to his Cingular RAZR V3 cell phone, and surfs to a NASA page on the Internet, where he calls up a GPS satellite navigation system to get an exact fix on his location which

he then feeds to another NASA satellite that scans the area in an ultra-high-resolution photo.

The young man then opens the digital photo in Adobe Photoshop and exports it to an image processing facility in Hamburg, Germany. Within seconds, he receives an email on his Palm Pilot that the image has been processed and the data stored. He then accesses a MS-SQL database through an ODBC connected Excel spreadsheet with email on his BlackBerry and, after a few minutes, receives a response.

Finally, he prints out a full-color, 150-page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized HP Laser Jet printer and finally turns to the Kansas cowboy and says "You have exactly 1,586 cows and calves."

"That's right," says the cowboy. "Well, I guess you can take one of my calves."

He watches the young man select one of the animals and looks on amused as the young man stuffs it into the trunk of his car.

Then the cowboy says to the young man, "Hey, if I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my calf?"

The young man thinks about it for a second and then says, "OK, why not?"

The cowboy says, "You're a Congressman for the U. S. Government."

"Wow! That's correct," says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that?"

"No guessing required," answered the cowboy. "You showed up here even though nobody called you, you want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked. You tried to show me how much smarter than me you are, and you don't know a thing about cows... this is a herd of sheep. Now give me back my dog."

-td-

Have a good evening. And there's no guessing who the boss is when you attend the church of your choice this weekend.

### Public service at the heart of our success

#### Citizen Duties Bob Strevey



King, but Washington would have none of it.

Likewise, after taking the office of President, he served our nation at a difficult time and returned to the life of a private citizen. Can you imagine Napoleon, or Hitler, or Saddam Hussein returning to life as a private citizen? Each of our presidents who survived their time in office has quietly laid down their authority and returned to life as a private citizen.

Part of our strength as a nation is the willingness of our people to accept the duty of service, and then to turn power over to others who have been chosen to serve, even if those individuals are of a different party with very different priorities for the government.

Public service is at the heart of our ability to be a free people.

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used the power to defeat his country's enemies and then returned to his role of a simple citizen.

This example was followed by our own George Washington, who was called by the Continental Congress to assume command of the American armies fighting for our freedom, and when the war was over he surrendered his command to return to his farm. Some of his officers tried to get Washington to take a crown and become

In 458 B.C., the Roman Republic was engaged in a desperate contest with the Aequians. The Roman army had been intercepted among the mountain defiles and was in imminent danger of destruction. In this emergency, the Roman people demanded the appointment of a dictator. Cincinnatus was a brave and unselfish patriot. Messengers found him plowing a field. Cincinnatus heard the envoys and accepted their commission. He raised new levies of troops, marched to the relief of those in danger and won a great victory over the Aequians. Then the aged victor laid down his arms and returned to his plow.

In short, this good citizen responded to the call and served his country in a time of great danger. Other successful soldiers like Napoleon, for example, used their military success to acquire power and control. Not so the great Cincinnatus, he