

Now they're flashing the age card

The current presidential campaign has taken another twisted turn. Race and gender have shown their ugly faces of late. Now comes age. Yes, age. Chuck Norris, supporter of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, told a crowd Sunday that Sen. John McCain, if elected, might not live out his first term.

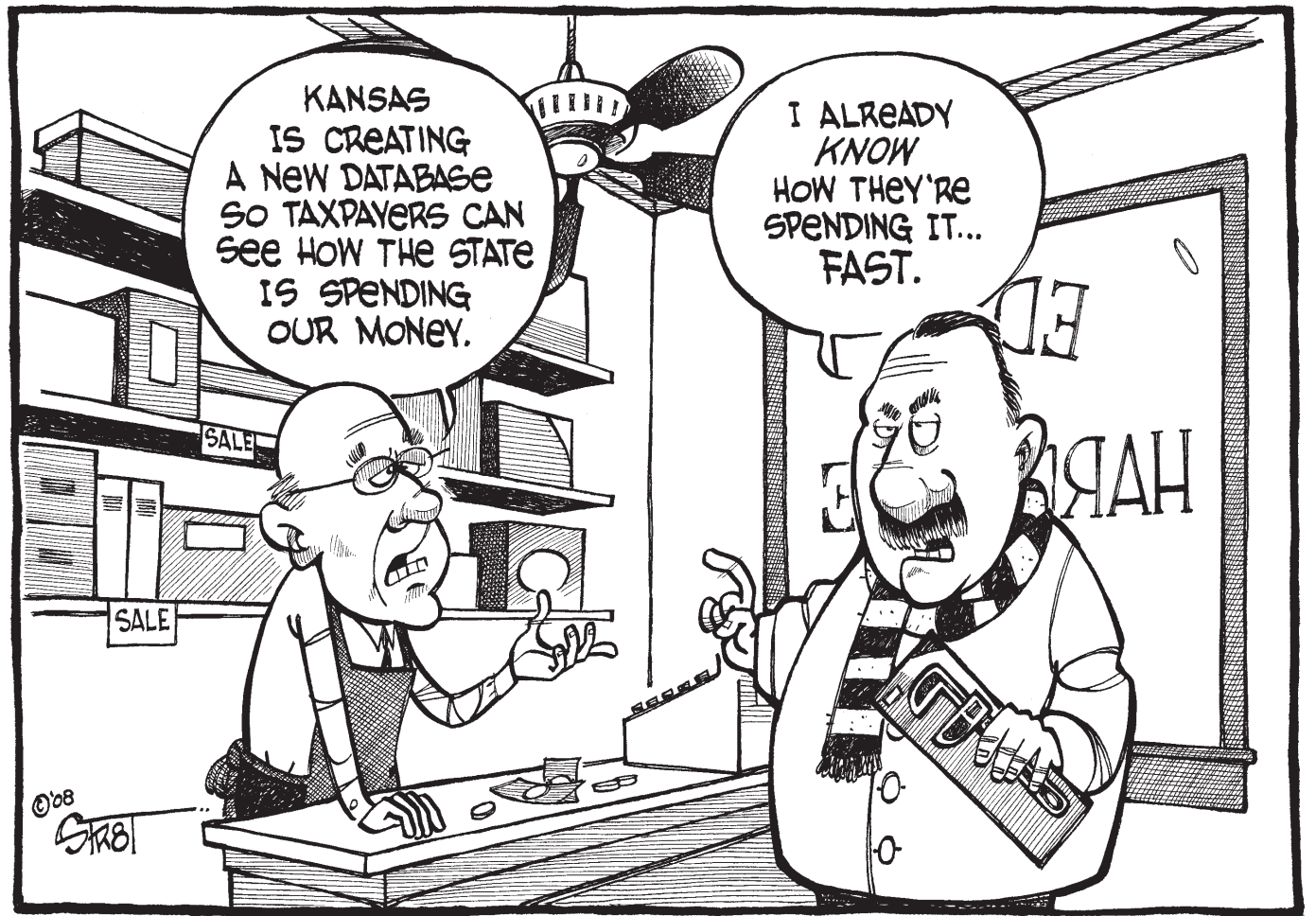
He came up with some sort of calculation as he flashed the age card. It made no sense at all. Sen. McCain is 71 and would be 72 when he takes the oath of office. That's no secret. Anyone who is following the campaign knows this. It seems so out of character to now be raising that as an issue, much as it was out of character to bring race and gender to the plate.

Sen. Clinton is not a woman. Sen. Obama is not an African American. Sen. McCain is not on his last leg, not in the arena in which we see them today. They are three Americans seeking the highest office in the land.

But unfortunately, in politics, you have pitchmen who say things candidates won't say. That's their role. But this age thing is disturbing. We can't recall the age card being of any importance when the late President Reagan was seeking the office. Maybe back then we were more tolerant, or maybe we just used common sense.

The campaign continues, and will for many months to come. It will be interesting to see what cards will be flashed next. Just consider the course before you buy into the dialogue.

—Tom Dreiling



Yes, we have come a long way

What wonderful things I have seen in my lifetime. As I sat watching a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunday evening I was reminded of the events that have brought us to this point in time. Here we are in the throes of a campaign with a female and an African American male running for the Democratic presidential nomination. It is because of the persistence of Dr. King that this is possible. Many individuals, of all races, took part in the fight and many lost their lives to gain civil rights, but it was the efforts of one man who coordinated the groups to make equal rights possible. Not only was his fight for African Americans to have these rights, but that fight in turn made these same rights accessible for women. Civil rights are equal rights.

Regardless of the outcome of the nominations and subsequent election, we as a country have come a long way in the last fifty years. I graduated from high school in 1964 at the height of the civil rights movement. Norton was not exactly a bed of tolerance at that time, although as a high school senior I was certain we possessed an attitude of acceptance. I remember interviewing restaurant owners on their policy for serving an African

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



American in their establishment. I began the project with the idea of proving how "open-minded" my hometown was. Imagine my surprise when most owners said they either could eat in the kitchen or not at all, only one had a true open door policy. I have always had great admiration for that man and do 'til this day.

Much of who we are is reflected in our political parties. Regardless of what happens in the upcoming nominations and subsequent elections, I am proud to be an American. I am honored to be a part of a system in which one party supports a woman, an African American and until recently an Hispanic governor as contenders for the Democrat nomination. Kansas voters have an opportunity to take part in their party's caucuses. The Democrats from this district will convene on Feb. 5 in Oakley and the Republicans in Norton on Feb. 9. Let your voice be heard.

Thumbs Up...

To... James Sturgill, age 6, on winning the Eclipse model car. Good show! (e-mail)

To... Norton Knights of Columbus, on your recent successful Tootsie Roll campaign, and your disbursement of funds locally. (e-mail)

To... Almena, and good luck with your Community Improvement Plan meeting on Wednesday. (e-mail)

To... our county's Republican leadership, for having Norton as a site for the presidential caucus. (by phone)

(To submit a name or names for this biweekly column, e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call 877-3361 or 877-6908, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks for your continuing input.)

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When you long for the kids, you go

The diagnosis is in. I have a severe case of MMG (Missing My Girls). But the cure is in sight. We leave this week for a few days in Texas. We saw Adam, Kara and Taylor this summer when they drove out here. But, we haven't seen Jennifer, Alexandria and little Ani since last March; it's been more than a year since we've seen Halley; and I can't remember the last time we saw Becky and her family.

We talk on the phone a lot and send e-mails but that doesn't get you hugs from grandkids or early morning kitchen-time with your daughters.

It's as it should be, though. They are all independent and raising families of their own. I don't want to keep them tied to my apron strings -- I just want to see them more often.

So, until I retire we'll grab whatever chance we have. It's really not enough, but I can get by if I can see all my kids (and grandkids) a couple times a year.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



I've talked a lot about the girls, but we already have a spring trip planned to see our son, James. So, everyone is covered.

-ob-

Jim and I need help. We want to be "wired" into the rest of the world (we really do) but technology has left us in the dust.

Take cell phones, for example. We just need phones that can make and receive calls. But, there is no such thing as a simple cell phone, anymore.

I went to replace a phone I had dropped and broken. Our service contract was

up for renewal and the nice girls at the phone store had a great offer. Buy one, get one free (after the mail-in rebate) or something.

Feeling very hip and "with it" I walked out of the store with two brand new phones, still in their boxes.

The challenge came when we tried to operate them. Jim accidentally found the speaker-phone button but then couldn't turn it off; I still haven't found it; and forget about text messaging.

These phones have cameras, something called a Cell-top, alarm clocks, internet access, calculators and probably a global positioning locator.

If I knew how, I think I could even check the stock market. It's a mini-computer in your pocket.

Surely, there are others who feel like we do. We just want to make and receive calls. We don't need all the bells and whistles.

Less really can be more.

Traces of Christmas are tapering off

The Christmas season has almost officially ended at our house. I ate the last piece of homemade candy; surely that means something! My sister, Sue, is the official confectioner in the family. She makes caramels and chocolates of all kinds. She also makes peanut brittle, (but mine is better!)

This year I tried divinity. I was always afraid to do it, it was my mom's specialty. Some places we fear to tread because the bar has been set so high.

Or maybe we don't want to find out it wasn't that hard. It chips away at the pedestal of those we idolize. I can compete with my sisters but not with Mom!

Mom has been gone for 23 years though. If we are ever to have divinity again someone else is going to have to try it! It came out rather well, but it requires time, patience and is a pretty exacting deal.

The recipe said to put in almond flavoring. My Grandma would have put black walnuts in it. I didn't like the almond flavoring and I don't like black walnuts. Next time I'm thinking just a little vanilla will do.

I've been doing quite a bit of experimenting with recipes as of late. We have a lot of hamburger. As I thought about what I could make with it, it came down to meatloaf, stromboli, lasagna, and tacos. That's okay for a week, but what do you do the next week.

Maybe lasagna, tacos, meatloaf and stromboli?

Back Home Nancy Hagman



So I got a new recipe book, just for hamburger! It's been interesting. Some of it I liked and some the hubby liked, some neither of us liked. Some of it falls in between. I won't cook something he really does not like again; but I will say there was absolutely nothing wrong with California Tamale Pie!

Spinach-Potato Bake was an absolute disaster. Even though we hated it I am still storing the leftovers in the fridge! I'm afraid if I throw it out it will kill the dog! That recipe called for nutmeg as seasoning. Yeah, it sounds odd, perhaps it was a misprint. Cloves do a lot for ham so I thought it might work the same.

I can't say low blood sugar was causing me to not think clearly, because at the time we still had lots of Christmas candy around.

The dish that surprisingly met with Junior's approval was Texas Beef Stew. It has a very odd combination of things in it. It must have been his glowing endorsement that made me brave enough to put nutmeg in a hamburger casserole!

-bh-

A friend asked me if I had all my Christ-

mas decorations down, out of sight, out of mind and stored away. The answer would be yes, they are down and they are out of sight. Anything I don't have to look at is out of mind but no they are not put away! They are in the spare bedroom and the door is shut! They need to go to the attic but it's too cold for that! I'm staying in the kitchen, its warm!

-bh-

If you are feeling adventuresome here is a recipe to spice things up these long cold January days.

Its taste tested and approved.
TEXAS BEEF STEW
1 pound ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
1 28 ounce can crushed tomatoes with garlic
1 1/2 cups frozen California Blend veggies (broccoli, cauliflower, carrots)
1 cup frozen sweet corn
1 1/4 1/2 ounce can whole new potatoes (halved or quartered)
1 1/4 1/2 ounce can chopped green chilies

1/2 cup water
Brown ground beef and onion in a large saucepan over medium heat until well browned stirring occasionally.
Stir in the rest of the ingredients, bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer 5 minutes or until heated through.

Have a piece of Christmas candy for dessert and stay warm!

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Wanted: Letters to the Editor, and more salutes for 'Thumbs Up'