

Who is #1? Utah!

We've got to get something straightened out. It has to do with the questionable Thursday night game in Miami pitting Oklahoma and Florida for the national football championship. From our perspective, we already have a winner!

It's Utah!
So, as far as we're concerned, Oklahoma and Florida are playing for second and third place. After all, both of them are losers. Both are bringing 12-1 records to the flawed championship match-up.

Utah ended the season with a 13-0 — perfect — record! They picked up their 13th win a couple of days ago by showing Alabama what football is all about. You remember Alabama, the team that was ranked #1 in the country for five weeks and was expected to kick the Utah bunch off the field?

Well, that didn't happen.
So we'll go through the Thursday night football farce and when it is all over the winner will be 13-1 and will be the so-called national champion. Then the team that loses Thursday night will be the #2 team in the country with — oops! — two, TWO LOSSES.

And where will Utah, 13-0, finally end up? Who knows, that'll be in the hands of a bunch of misguided people who still don't get it. Get what? The need for a playoff system, much like we have in basketball.

So, after Thursday night's final bowl game and an un-national champion is crowned, we'll just laugh it off. The real champion emerged with a clean 13-0 slate.

They weren't losers.

— Tom Dreiling

Sound off!

Won't seek another school board term

After serving three terms on the Norton School District Board of Education, I have chosen not to seek re-election for a fourth term. I have thoroughly enjoyed my 12 years on the board but feel it's time to step down.

It has been a rewarding experience and I have had an opportunity to work with dedicated board members and outstanding administrators.

I encourage patrons who live in Norton City Ward 3 and those outside the city limits but within the boundaries of the Norton School District to file for Position #6.

Thank you,

Elaine Lofgreen
Norton

Let's talk 'Traumatic Brain Injury'

Traumatic Brain Injury is most often the result of a sudden and violent blow to the head that causes the brain to collide with the inside of the skull. This collision bruises the brain, tears nerve fibers, and can result in internal bleeding.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health, half of all traumatic brain injuries are the result of accidents involving cars, motorcycles, or bicycles, while approximately another 20 percent are caused by acts of violence, such as gunshot wounds or by incidents of child abuse.

As a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the U.S. military has seen a significant increase in traumatic brain injury, which is being referred to as the "signature wound" of those military conflicts. Explosions account for 75 percent of combat related injuries and include not only the deadly shrapnel, but also the resulting blast wave itself that can cause brain concussion.

This latter point is critical for American soldiers and veterans because some of them may not be aware that repeated exposure to blast waves can result in brain injury.

In other words, while traumatic brain injury can be the result of one single vio-

High Plains Mental Health Ken Loos

lent event, it can also occur from a series of less violent attacks. According to *The American Veterans and Service-members Survival Guide* (2008), individuals who suffer from traumatic brain injury will experience some of the following challenges:

- Trouble with memory, attention, or concentration.
- Sensitivity to sounds, lights, or distractions.
- Impaired decision making ability or problem solving.
- Difficulty with controlling behavior or increased impulsiveness.
- Easily confused or overwhelmed.
- Changes in sleep patterns

The current policy of the United States Veterans Administration requires that all veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars be screened for traumatic brain injury when they receive medical care.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, and Traumatic Brain Injury have similar symptoms, thus this screening is vital for an accurate diagnosis and treatment.

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We finally saw the big New Year's ball drop

For the first time in years, Jim and I were awake to watch the ball drop in Times Square and welcome the new year. Normally, we go out for dinner, then come home early to watch a good movie. We might wake up and tell each other, "Happy New Year." But, we're usually in bed, long before midnight.

Thanks to an invitation from my brother, Dick, and his wife, Donna, to share a soup supper on New Year's Eve with them and our cousins, Barb and Art, we were away from home and the cocoon of our recliners.

The food was great and the conversation, of course, was lively. It was midnight before we knew it.

"Why not stay all night?" was Donna's question.

Why not, indeed? Show us a bed and we're there. We were assigned to "The Pink Room" and after borrowing a nightgown from Donna, settled in for the night.

The next morning we even managed to

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



sleep in a little. Donna introduced us to a new breakfast dish called something like, "Egg-A-Laga". Basically, hard-boiled egg whites chopped up into a white sauce, served over buttered toast with the mashed egg yolks sprinkled on top. It was delicious and kept us at the breakfast table until about noon.

As we were leaving I told Dick and Donna the next "slumber party" would be at our house.

I love to receive "newsy" Christmas letters. Emily Post "poo-poo's" them. But, I love 'em. A letter tells me my friends have put a lot of thought into sending

their yearly greetings. It catches me up on the happenings, good and bad, in their families.

I never get a Christmas letter done, so this year, we are working on a New Year's letter. While we were in the car on the way to church, we jotted down some of our year's highlights. There were a lot. The hard job will be to pare them down to a tolerable level. I understand not everyone thinks our lives are as exciting as we do.

Jim is earning some major "brownie points". He announced we were ready to lay the tile in our bathroom, utility room and back hallway.

Say no more. I was already on my way to the lumber yard. It didn't take me long to make my selection. After a friendly "debate" regarding the color, the order was placed. Oo-o-h-h! I can hardly wait.

A new year is like a clean piece of paper. It is waiting for you to write your life on it. Make it a good one.

Don't brush off those cold weather warnings

When the temperatures in Kansas dip below freezing, two types of people usually surface — those who enjoy invigorating weather and those who tolerate the cold from inside. How an individual feels about the cold weather usually depends on where he/she grew up, age and more importantly, attitude.

Another factor comes into play — wind chill factor. Wind chill factor is usually defined as the cooling effect from wind and temperature on the human body. Wind whisking by exposed skin during cold weather increases a person's heat loss.

An Antarctic explorer, Paul Siple, and his colleague, Charles Passel, first coined the term "wind chill" in 1939. Siple described wind chill as the relative cooling power — heat removal — from the body with various combinations of wind speed and low temperatures.

Some 70 years later, wind chill has become a common term in our everyday conversation. Knowing the factors help people protect themselves against frostbite and hypothermia. Tissue damage occurs in frostbite when wind chill temperatures fall below -25 degrees F. Hypothermia results when the rapid loss of the body's internal temperature alters judgment. This sometimes results in death.

Insight John Schlageck

Western Kansas stockmen know the harder the wind blows, the lower the wind chill factor. Simply put, it is the relationship between wind speed and actual temperature that produces this chilling effect.

People who spend time outdoors during these cold periods — stockmen, construction workers, hunters, runners and skiers — may create their own winds or increase the existing wind. Because movement magnifies airflow, they should be especially cautious of wind chill.

Manual labor and other physical exertion can cause heat loss also. Sweat begins and heat is removed by vaporization. Breathing cold air also results in the loss of heat from the lungs.

Few people realize that smoking, drinking, prescription drugs and illegal narcotics may also contribute to frostbite or hypothermia during bitterly cold temperatures. All of these dull the senses.

Alcohol dilates the capillaries of the skin and that increases the body's heat loss. Nicotine smoke absorbed by the blood causes the capillaries to constrict. This restricts the blood flow to the earlobes, fingertips and other regions of

the body. Medication can have side effects too, so venture outside during cold weather with extreme caution.

Wind chill charts for regular references are available wherever outdoor equipment is sold. Use these charts only as a point of information. Wind chill charts aren't always accurate because they don't take into account all the possibilities of heat loss, or the preventive measures against it.

Air temperature is rarely a reliable indicator of how cold a person will feel outdoors. Elements such as wind speed, relative humidity and sunshine or solar radiation also play a part. A person's health and the type of clothing worn will also affect how a person feels.

When you go outside, dress for the weather and the wind. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. These layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and subsequent chilling. Snug mittens are better protection than fitted gloves.

Always wear a hat, preferably wool, ear protection and a scarf or neck gaiter. If it's bitter cold — stay inside.

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)

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