

Tuesday's Snippets

Here's what you contributed today, after reading last week's Opinion Page columns:

• A reader who enjoys the chuckles in "Let's Chat", sent one of her own: A guy was sitting quietly reading his paper when his wife walked up behind him and whacked him on the head with a newspaper. "What was that for?" he asked. "That was for the piece of paper in your pants pocket with the name of Mary Lou written on it," she replied. "Two weeks ago when I went to the races, Mary Lou was the name of one of the horses I bet on," he explained. "Oh honey, I'm so sorry," she said, "I should have known there was a good explanation." Three days later he was watching a ball game on TV when she walked up and hit him in the head again, this time with an iron skillet, which knocked him out cold. When he came to, he asked, "What in the world was that for?" She replied. "Your horse called."

• Some of our US statesmen have sure forgotten to observe this: "The common sense of mankind demands that law shall not stop with the punishment of petty crimes by little people. It must also reach men who possess themselves of great power and make deliberate and concerted use of it to set in motion evils which leave no home in the world untouched." Justice Robert H. Jackson, America's Chief Prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials after World War II.

• "I watch CNN. They tend not to let people yell at each other."
• "People who watch American Idol deserve what they get."

• "American Idol's judges are what make the show. Surely you know that the squabbles between Paula and Simon are rehearsed before the spotlight goes on!"

• "...comment on American Idol (which shares initials with Arrested Intelligence and Advanced Idiocy): I might not know much about art, but I know crap when I see it."

• "Go, Paula, go!"
• "Notre Dame and Barack Obama? Now that's an oxymoron." (This is in reference to Notre Dame's selection of President Obama to deliver their commencement address.)

Now here's some stuff to chew on and respond to for next week's

Stop Look Listen Tom Dreiling



Snippets:

√The NFL commissioner is looking to add a couple more games to the season and get rid of a couple exhibition games. It would be an 18-game season vs. 16 games presently, if the owners agree. Good for him. I'd even cheer if the season was 20 games and no exhibition contests, which prove nothing and are a waste of time.

√The network analysts are of the opinion President Obama is trying to do too much. He is being criticized for being away from the White House too often. They held his feet to the fire for appearing on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. And holding an internet Q&A session from the White House. The analysts are forgetting that today's news crowd — thanks to younger involvement — comes from a variety of venues. And this president is young enough to pretty much address them all. Call it the "new look" in news distribution.

√A television reporter, during a special on the Middle East, tabbed the U.S. troop build up in Afghanistan-Pakistan as the beginning of President Obama's "Vietnam war."

√Strange, isn't it, how it has taken the threat of a massive flood for the major television networks to discover North Dakota.

√Live and learn. Pratt, as you know, received in excess of 28 inches of snow in the latest storm, which prompted two gents from Canada, who were stranded in that community to comment on television, that they didn't know it snowed in Kansas. Well, live and learn.

(Got a comment or two to make? Just e-mail it to tom.d@nwkansas.com, regular mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, bring it to the office, or fax to 877-3732. No names are used.)



To... everybody who recycles! (called in)

To... all registered voters. Don't forget you have a date at the polls next Tuesday, April 7. (e-mail)

To... the unsung heroes, the coaches

at Norton Community High School and Junior High School. You are all exceptional role models, and we can't thank you enough! (e-mail)

To... the organizers of the Norton Community High School Prom. It sounds like another outstanding event awaits this coming Saturday. Good luck for all your hard work. (e-mail)

(To render a salute, please e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call either 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax to 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks for your continuing input. -td)

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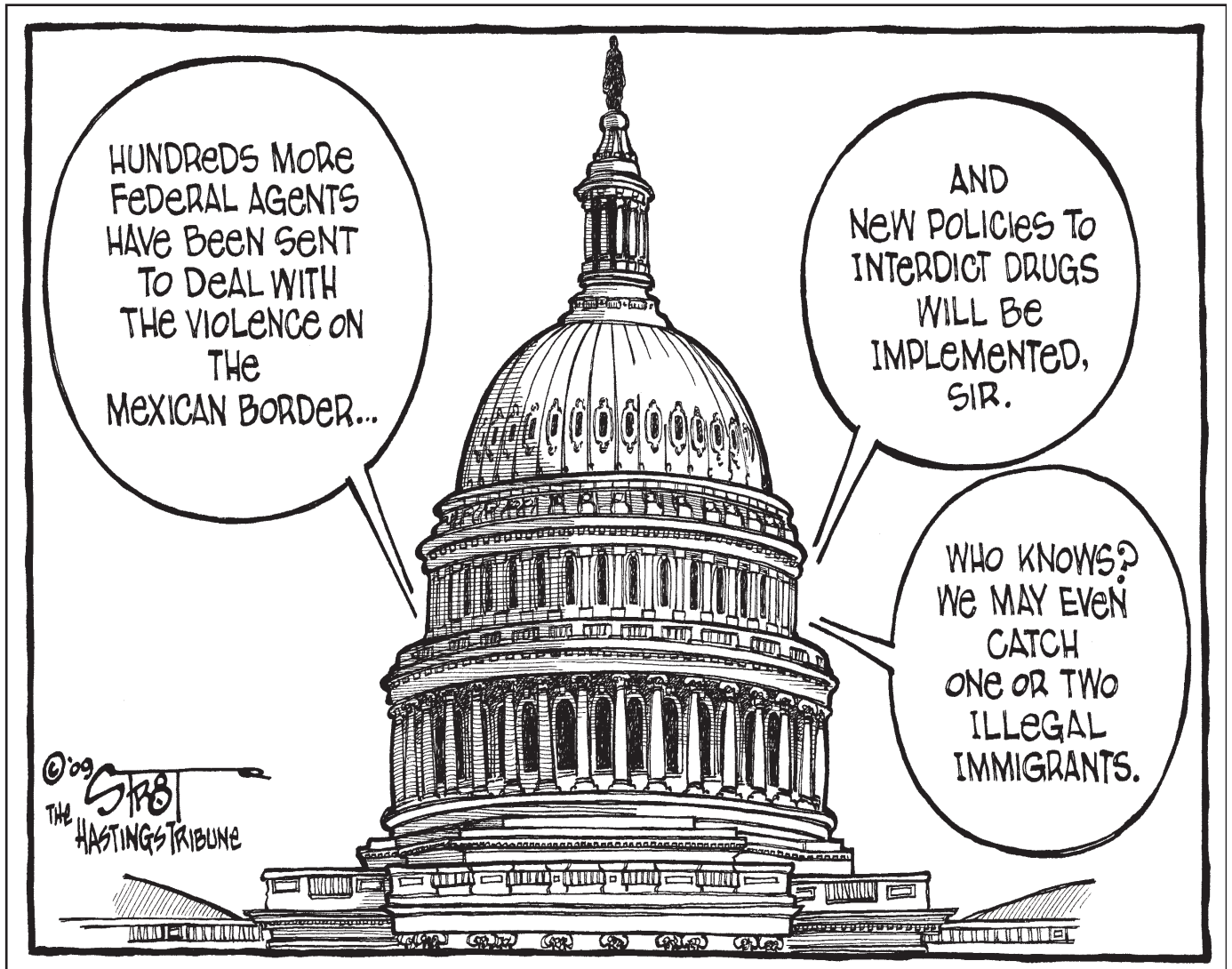
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Office hours:
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail:
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Tom Dreiling..... editor and publisher
Dana Paxton..... advertising director
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay sports
Brandy Leroux..... reporter
Sherry Hickman.... bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson..... computer production



He's good, very good and only 18

It's probably a question for Trivial Pursuit. And maybe one you know the answer to. But I had to look it up. How many keys on a piano? Eighty-eight.

Why do I wonder? We attended Stanton Nelson's piano concert March 29 at the Huck Boyd Center in Phillipsburg. Was I impressed? YEAH.

When we went in we happened to meet up with Sherri. "We have to sit so we can see his fingers!" was her counsel. Sherri plays, she's good.

The last time I heard her perform it was Home on the Range meet Rachmaninoff. A good description of Sherri!

The first part of the program was classical. Stanton did a Chopin piece. Chopin is my favorite. Watching his fingers is what made me think about how many keys there are. I believe he played every one of them.

I wonder why they decided 88 keys were enough. For me a couple of octaves would be plenty. Some of you might need more, some less. But Stanton needs them all. It's amazing.

Even more amazing was the second part of the program. Pieces Stanton wrote himself. You think he's pretty young: if it is just so-so, well he's 18. Sometimes we overuse superlatives. Believe me we do, if I hadn't been at the concert I would have been home

Back Home Nancy Hagman



watching the NCAA basketball tournament. I've been watching those games for three weekends now: we over hype things.

So not wanting to get too carried away let's just say, the music Stanton composed is good! I liked his Waltz Suite better than the Chopin and I like Chopin.

Chopin was a child prodigy. Do you suppose when he got to be famous people said, "I remember little Frederic. He began violin lessons with the same teacher my daughter had!" Because that is what I'm going to say when Stanton gets famous and it's the truth. Maybe I can get him to sign the violin I'm storing just for proof!

The concert was billed as a "Senior Recital". After it was over Sherri shook her head in disbelief. He's a senior in high school, right? That's right, what is the definition of prodigy?

On the way home daughter Elizabeth and I were discussing music in general.

I have a friend who said when he got to college he so wished he had learned to play the piano.

His reasoning: when a guy sat down to play in the lobby of the dorm the girls flocked to the piano and at least one would snuggle up on the bench.

Elizabeth says some professor she had claims women are attracted to men in the arts because in early times only successful men had the time to develop their talents.

Most guys had to spend 24/7 out hunting and gathering. If a man got all that done and still had time to compose and practice music he would be a good provider.

Makes sense, prodigy or not. Becoming an accomplished artist requires hours and hours of work. Like the old joke, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" "Practice! Practice!"

Here's another thought. Elizabeth noted the prominence of the bass notes in "Malaguena". "He really likes playing those low keys," she said.

I'd wish Stanton luck in college but I hardly think he needs it. At 18 he has figured out something most of us spend a lifetime learning. Use all the keys. The high ones, the low ones and lots and lots of the middle.

Something beautiful will certainly come of it!

Just give the people what they want

Insight

John Schlageck

While almost every industry today does a less than stellar job of living by the motto "the customer is the most important part of business," Kansas farmers and ranchers are one segment that adheres to this philosophy.

Kansas farmers and ranchers have always been willing to adapt to the ever changing consumer landscape. They approach each year with an open mind and the flexibility to develop new ways of marketing their livestock and crops.

Customers and consumers are driven by changes in personal preferences and increasing income levels. Give the consumer what he/she wants will never ring truer than today.

In today's tough economic times, shoppers remain tighter fistied with their money. They want quality, but they also want a good price. Convenience is also very important. All are major pieces of the buying equation.

Our future agricultural economy will continue to be driven by consumer demand. Consumers continue to become wiser, savvy every day. Tomorrow's well-informed shopper will want, and demand, more information about how food is produced. It will be up to the producer to help provide such information.

Some Kansas producers have already figured this out and are giving the consumers what they want. Dan and

Amy Saunders raise cattle in Jefferson County and market their family's beef in nearby Lawrence and suburban Kansas City. The Saunders want their customers to know them and their family livestock operation.

In the case of the Saunders, when customers buy their family's beef, they're also buying the complete package.

"They're buying us," Amy says. "They're buying a quality product, and they know exactly who produces it."

Consumers must never be viewed as adversaries. Consumers are the folks that buy agricultural products and keep farmers in the business of producing food, fuel and fiber.

As agricultural producers, we can never discount their intelligence. Rather we must seek input from them, and once we understand what their needs are — provide for them.

More than ever before, today's farming and ranching is consumer-driven. Whatever the consumer wants, that's what agricultural producers are obligated to provide as long as they can do so economically.

As has always been the case, every

year, agricultural producers are called upon to become better risk managers, especially as we continue moving into a market and consumer-oriented world arena.

The successful farmer in 2009 and beyond will be the one who manages yield and price risks by knowing exactly what break-even costs of each crop will be. He/she will incorporate specific goals that ensure profits and include prudent risk-management strategies.

Flexibility will key future success on the farm. One day soon farmers will no longer be able to rely on government payments. Farmers must examine sound, new marketing techniques and the latest crop insurance options coming down the pike.

Remember, past performance never guarantees future success. While relying on common sense is helpful, it will not always make you a successful producer.

But, becoming a business specialist and understanding who your customers are and marketing your business to them is a prerequisite to continuing in the profession of farming.

(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.)