

Question remains: Why punish car dealers?

Financial advisors used to tell widows that, no matter what happens, they could depend on the "blue chips" in their stock portfolios: you know, solid companies like AT&T, Chrysler, General Motors.

Only now, AT&T is gone, having dwindled away until one of its "Baby Bell" offspring bought it up. Chrysler and GM, both in bankruptcy.

What is this world coming to?

The car business, for one, just isn't what it used to be. And when the administration gets done "saving" GM and Chrysler, it'll be even more different than it is today.

There's an agenda there, lots of them, in fact: Smaller cars, more gas mileage, no more big SUVs. Bond holders were treated, not as banks or people with money invested, but like speculators with no real interest in the companies, let alone money invested.

The administration clearly wants the companies to build the cars it thinks people should have, not the ones they might want.

One wag said, when people decide they want big pickups again, Ford (unburdened by bankruptcy and federal "aid") should be in a good position to make them — and make a lot of money.

Right now, the industry is sitting on plenty of big vehicles, though. If you want a truck, you can expect a big discount.

Americans have shown that they will drive what they want, however, and they pay little heed to what they "should" drive or the price of fuel — for the good of the economy or the environment.

One of the strangest agendas is the idea that to make money, the big automakers need to get rid of thousands of their dealers.

Congress and the administration seem to buy into this plan, which supposedly would get rid of nearly a third of all the dealerships with each big firm. How that will help either recover is uncertain.

All the "Big 3" automakers have been slimming their dealer list for years, refusing to replace those — especially those in small towns — that close or go broke. That was a process of slow attrition, though, because state laws and dealer franchise contracts made it tough to get rid of a dealer who wanted to stay.

Bankruptcy changes all the rules, however, and with the power of a federal judge to void contracts, the companies could call the shots.

Their choices seemed to make little sense, though. Small, barely profitable dealers got a pass in some cases while larger firms in bigger towns were told they'd have to close. No one could, or would, say why.

One pattern did emerge: many dealer contracts to be voided seemed to involve dealerships that sold more than one automaker's products under the same roof. That was the case with Colby's Taylor Motors, which while retained by Chrysler, faces loss of its GM territory next year.

Are the automakers using bankruptcy to achieve ends that would be difficult, maybe even illegal, otherwise? Could be.

Why would they close profitable dealers, dealers who were moving cars for them?

Clearly, this is not something the government should be pushing. Why close dealerships that employ thousands when the country is trying to push recovery and create jobs?

Our congressman, Jerry Moran, has questioned this type of action. We all should be. Rural America, in particular, does not need to lose any more jobs. Dealers who can make the grade should be allowed to live.

Our communities and the dealers' employees depend on them. The administration and Congress should defend these dealers, not abandon them.

— Steve Haynes



To... Mr. Wiltfong, on receiving the special award, and to all our veterans — past and present — who keep us free and safe. Thank you for your service! (email)

To... Warren and Jean White, we agree the money can be better used on the streets. (called in)

To... the Whites, for their common sense approach for the unstable, unattractive, older than dirt Moffet building. (email)

To... Eugene Wiltfong, our community is very proud of you. (email)

To... all those kind volunteers, for keeping the summer baseball and softball programs going for our youngsters. (email)

To... our school district's bus drivers, hats off for another good year of concern and compassion for those entrusted to your care. (email)

(To render a salute, email tom.d@nwkansas.com, call either 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., or drop by the office. Thanks for your continuing support and use of this column. - td)

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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 Jays sports
Erica Bradley..... news editor
Sherry Hickman..... bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson..... computer production



When a child speaks the truth, watch out

The dinner table was set. The guests arrived. All were seated by the host couple. Dinner was served. But before breaking bread, the man of the house informed the guests that their dear little Rosie Ann, age 5, would offer up a prayer. And did she ever! It went like this, hands folded, head bowed, "Dear God, thank you for this food that Mommy made and would you please send clothes for all those poor ladies in Daddy's computer... Amen!"

Today is Day 71. Still no refund from Topeka. They say on their website — www.kdor.org/refundstatus/default.asp — to allow for up to eight weeks if you sent in a paper return. Eight weeks would be 56 days. I would say something is wrong. Perhaps they ought to hire a second person to help process the returns. I would just as soon not get my return now because I was told by the department of revenue that returns not received by July 1 will include interest. We'll see.

When does it end! Huh?! Now it's the governor of South Carolina who went before the television cameras to weep through the revelation that he has had an affair with another woman, thus explaining his sudden absence from his office for a week. Teary eyed and vocally drained, he said just what others in elected positions have said in apologizing to his wife, four sons, family, friends and the list goes on. I think these guys all use the same scrip. The governor's wife wasn't at his side. I remember many, many years ago when President Jimmy Carter told an interviewer he sometimes lusts and boy did they rake him over the coals for even thinking about it! But we have since

Let's Chat Tom Dreiling



Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles ahead of any rainfall. Deaths occur ahead of the storm because people try and wait to the last minute before seeking shelter. Remember, gang, if you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike your location. Seek safety before the first flash.

graduated from thought to action in so many cases by people we have put our trust in. I thought all along President Clinton should have stepped down over the Monica thing but he weathered that storm and I think in some way he set a precedence that has pretty much carried on since then, excluding the governor of New York who had the good sense to resign over his doings with some beauty.

These are all things that give politics a bad name.
Next?

Weather forecasts warn of storms, some severe, during this time of year. Peppered within those forecasts are tornado alerts, something not unfamiliar to the millions of us living in *tornado alley*.

But rarely do the forecasts warn of a silent killer out there — a killer that's not ushered in by wall clouds and everything else that instills fright. No, this killer does its thing in just seconds and if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time — well, it could be over.

LIGHTNING! That's what I refer to. Inasmuch as we are concluding *Lightning Safety Awareness Week*, this is a good time to take to heart the danger that lurks out there in this innocent looking landscape. Consider that since 1959 and up to today, 64 people — 64 KANSANS! — were killed in our state by lightning with hundreds more injured.

During my lunch hour Thursday, CNN carried a story about a school district in North Carolina that is paying its female students \$1 a day for each day they're not pregnant. Of course I fell off the chair! I guess this district has its share of problems with young girls coming up pregnant and they thought this might turn around the crisis. The money is saved for them to use when they enroll in college. All that said, I thought to myself: Pay school kids for not getting pregnant? Something's wrong. Apparently their sex education classes are faulty, or else they aren't being properly coached at home by their parents. Or maybe they are watching too much of the sex-tainted junk called entertainment on television, which I believe lures youngsters into the situations that produce unwanted pregnancies. Or else maybe these families need an infusion of religion — what is and isn't acceptable in the eyes of each one's creator.

Who knows.
But I know one thing for certain, paying these young women not to get pregnant will go nowhere if they don't pay the young men \$1 a day to padlock their zippers!

Have a good evening! And as you sit in the church of your choice this weekend, remember to pray also for these young women and men who are so easily led astray.

Beware: Summer is also skin cancer time

I recently read a public-service ad circulating by the American Academy of Dermatology that lists five ways to die on a golf course. The five ways include hit by a golf ball, run over by a golf cart, whacked by a golf club, struck by lightning and forgot your hat.

While none of these possibilities is pleasant to contemplate, the threat of skin cancer is real and should be considered carefully.

This is especially true of farmers, ranchers and construction workers who are in the sun much of the time.

Every year one million new cases of skin cancer are detected, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. One out of five people in this country develops skin cancer during his/her lifetime.

All across America, folks are gearing up for vacations with their families — many of these trips include stops at the beach or outdoor amusement parks.

Many others work for long hours in the sun during the summer months — farmers, ranchers, construction workers, amusement park attendants, etc.

If you spend several hours in the sun, protect yourself. Avoid the midday sun if at all possible. Cover up. Always wear a

hat. Work in the shade whenever possible. And don't forget to wear sunscreen.

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. One person dies every hour from this disease in the United States, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Fortunately, melanoma can be completely cured if it's caught early enough. Dermatologists advise us to examine our skin regularly.

If you find a blemish larger than a pencil eraser, multi-colored, asymmetrical or irregular at the edges, you may have melanoma and should see your dermatologist.

While we should protect ourselves from potential skin cancer, we should be every bit as aware of this danger for our children. Overexposure to sunlight during childhood will affect children for the rest of their lives.

Studies show that damage from the sun

to a child's skin can actually increase the odds that he/she will develop skin cancer as an adult.

American Academy of Dermatology estimates indicate 80 percent of a person's total lifetime sun exposure occurs in the first 18 years.

Protect your children. Cover them up. Teach them to wear long-sleeved cotton shirts that breathe. Make sure they wear head protection at all times. Make wearing sunscreen part of the ritual for gearing up for the sun.

While skin cancer can kill you, it's much more likely to disfigure you. Each year, thousands of Americans lose chunks of their skin to this disease, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Some people lose their nose; others may lose their ears, while others may get off with only the loss of an eyebrow.

Examine your skin regularly, at least once a week. Look for warning signs.

If you find anything bleeding, crusting or not healing, see your dermatologist immediately.

Remember, you can enjoy the sun and spend time outside, and don't forget these common-sense suggestions: have fun, and like everything else in life — enjoy the sun in moderation.