

United States involvement with Iraq not over

It was a huge headline Thursday morning: Last combat unit leaves Iraq.

Papers, cable news and internet news sites all had photos of humvees, tanks and armored personnel carriers headed down the roads into neighboring Kuwait.

It should have been the moment that many Americans – not to mention Iraqis – have waited for for seven years. The U.S. is finally out of a desert quagmire that has cost the lives of thousands of our troops.

Not so fast.

The last combat unit may have left, but there are still 50,000 U.S. troops on the ground and thousands more private contractors. What are they doing? Advising and assisting is the official line, which means they are training Iraqi security forces and providing security but handing over more and more of the day-to-day missions to the Iraqis.

Luckily it seems our leaders aren't acting as if this is the end of the road. Nowhere are big speeches announcing the complete and utter end of the occupation. Republican and Democrat leaders alike smartly noted that a lot of work is left. Everyone is hedging because we're still there.

We cannot yet ask ourselves if we succeeded in Iraq, because it isn't over. What we have to ask ourselves is: what are our goals, what is needed to accomplish them and have we been successful so far?

One of the main questions we need to ask now is, what effect will the withdrawal of front-line troops have on Iraq. If the 2007 surge is to be credited with the current stability of the country, will removing troops lead to instability? Or have our troops rooted out all of the insurgents?

The weekly reports of suicide bombers, assassinations and other attacks seem to indicate that they are not gone. Less maybe, but not gone. Can Iraqi forces handle the vacuum we're leaving behind? And will the U.S. troops who are "advising and assisting" continue to sustain casualties? Only time will tell.

The orderly withdrawal of our combat troops is good news, no doubt about it, but it should not be looked on as the end of U.S. involvement in Iraq.

Kevin Bottrell

Defining the word serendipity

I like words. I pride myself in having a good vocabulary. When I was a nursing instructor, students and fellow instructors alike often "accused" me of using twenty-five cent words when I presented lecture material. My husband often asks me the meaning of unfamiliar words he encounters as he reads.

One of my favorite words is Serendipity. I like how it sounds as I pronounce it, I enjoy seeing it in print, and I appreciate one of the definitions I have read: surprised by joy. I enjoy watching people, and one of the things I notice is how few people look as though joy is part of their lives. So many people frown or look unhappy as I observe them, and I wish I could offer them some joy for their lives.

As I prepared to start this column, I thought back on some of the things that have been serendipitous for me in recent months. One was having our then-17 month old granddaughter visit us with her parents in May. Life is joy-filled for her. She handed me a Mother's Day card upon arrival, announcing that she was going to have a baby sister or brother in October. I would definitely say that was serendipity for my husband and me. While here, she would approach the dog, arms outstretched, back away and just laugh out loud. Our son posted pictures of her on the beach in Pensacola, FL,

Life is Good
Rita Speer



last weekend. She was standing barefooted in the sand, her arms up, shrieking with delight. That is serendipity.

This past week has also provided another experience of serendipity for me. Our church has had teenagers and adult sponsors here for Prayer and Action. We opened our home to an adult sponsor to shower in the afternoon after the day's work was finished. We got to know her and both of us were "surprised by joy" by that encounter.

People often exchange pleasantries with one another. One says, "How are you?" The other replies automatically, "Fine, and you?" And yet as we watch people look at their facial expressions and body language we often see people who are sad, angry, miserable. Can we reach out to these people and offer them a little bit of joy?

One morning at the grade school last spring, an employee asked me, "How are you today?" I responded, "I am good!" He said, "I don't know why I ask you; you are always good." Yes, that is how I feel. After I completed my chemotherapy and began feeling better physically, I understood that life is a gift of God and I want to share my joy in that with others. And some of the answers I sometimes receive tell me I am able to give a small gift of serendipity.

I ask you to think about what you have received recently that is serendipity. And I challenge you to pass that on.

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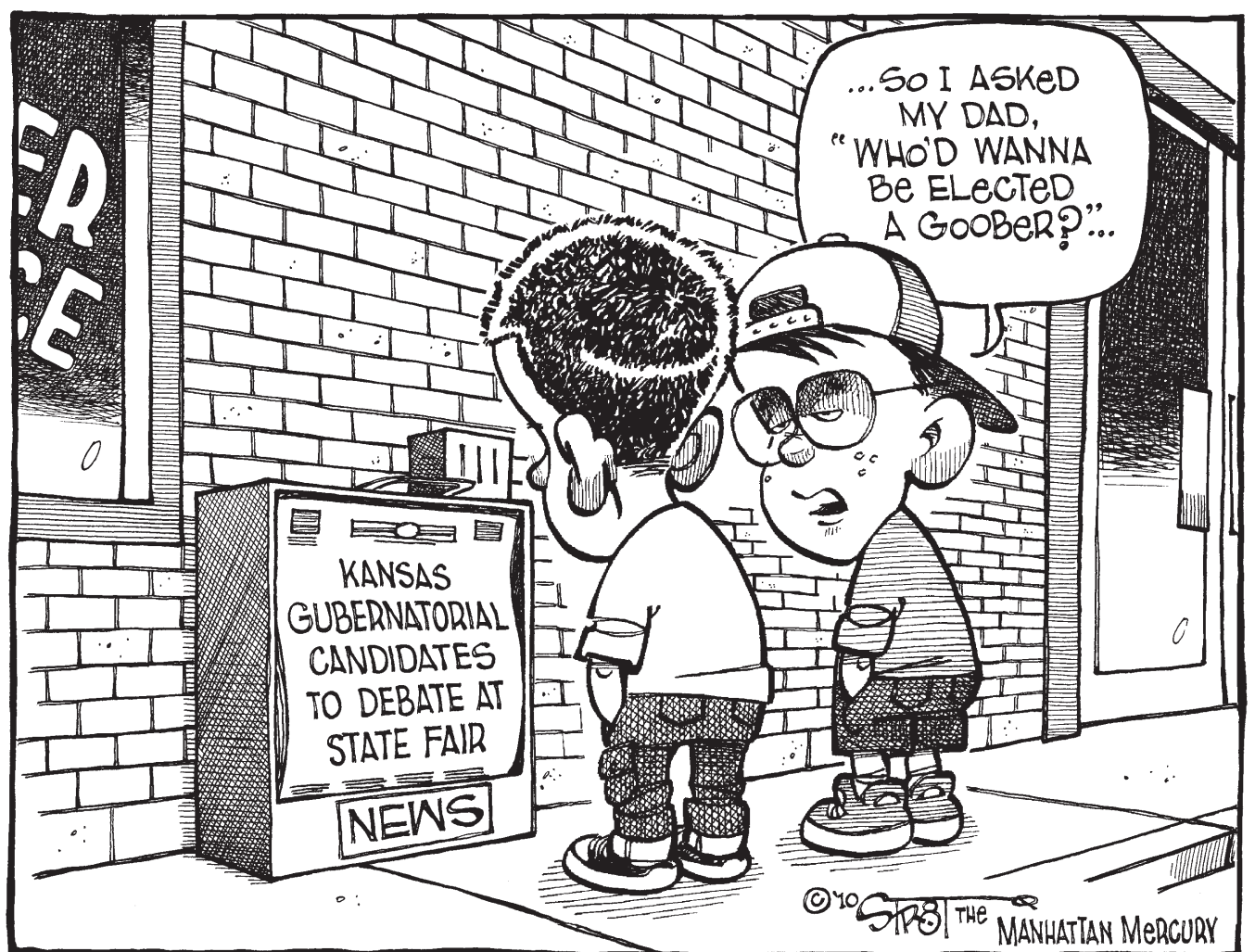
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We endure as our lives change

It was August 20, 1965. The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus once said, "Nothing endures but change". We have endured and we have changed.

August 20, 1965, marked a significant event in my life. With Trinity Episcopal Church serving as a backdrop, Jack and I were married. He was twenty; his mother had to sign for him. I was 19, barely. Throughout the years we have definitely seen change. Life seldom is how you planned. Jobs come and go, health is a tentative partner and aging requires a sense of humor. Your princess/prince partner sometimes seems more like a toad and worse yet you often feel like one, but because of your belief in someone other than yourself, you endure.

Being married a long time does not signify a life without difficulty; it signifies the determination of two individuals to work through those difficulties. No couple grows in the same direction, at the

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



same time, how boring, but one thing is for sure, change will be a constant companion for individuals and relationships. Throughout our life some of our problems were big, some were made big by our reactions, but all have created the background of who we have become. Along the way we have cast off the outgrown threads of our experiences and stitched together new ones in our search for peace and happiness and a better understanding of our world and each other. Sometimes we have been successful, other times it has been marginal and yet we are together.

Mostly we have endured because of God's grace.

Is it smooth sailing from here on out? Not likely, I've known too many who have divorced after fifty years of marriage, so I know the work continues. Jack and I remain passionate idealists. We can still spend hours discussing politics, books, religion or a variety of other topics. We don't always agree, but these exchanges define our individuality and our marriage. He still can make me laugh when no one else can and in spite of all the physical help and emotional support I've needed over the years, he has never made me feel weak or dependent.

So today, August 20th, I'd like to thank Jack for being my husband and the father of our children, but even more importantly for being my best friend and my inspiration. Forty-five years, five children, eleven grandchildren, more good than bad...priceless.

Your meaning of 'box' and mine may differ

Someone has studied regional differences in speech in the United States and come to the conclusion the English spoken here is not universal. The author's premise was regions have dialects; the dialect of a New Yorker may be as foreign to a Kansan as Greek.

The examples he used were familiar. For instance "boonies" and "hinterlands" are the same thing.

In the Midwest we generally call soft drinks "pop". Some places they call it "soda". In the South they ask you what kind of Coke you want. It's then acceptable to order any type of beverage (except Pepsi).

The point is taken, however is it important enough to warrant research? Are there any instances where chaos ensued over confusion about what you call soda pop?

In our own family we have euphemisms that no one else understands (or wants to). For us, it's comforting to be understood.

Enter niece Annie: cute as a button (who says that?), spending time with her Dad, searching for something to do last fall. Big mistake around Uncle Junior! Soon she was disking, swathing, chasing cows and doing all manner of farm work.

Annie: absolute best sport and not being a daughter or the wife; never snarls at the boss! One day she even agreed to

This to
Shall Pass
Nancy
Hagman



drill wheat. This is a difficult job. It gets dusty, making it hard to see where you have been. You have to watch closely or you end up with skipped rows. Or a chain comes off and half the drill fails to plant for the whole field. Not that I know any of this from personal experience!

Winter came and Annie went off in search of greener pastures. But as wheat harvest rolled around, she was in touch. She wanted to cut the wheat she drilled.

As a world traveler, she was amazed to learn a new language right here in the Heartland. She started writing down the hubby's odd sayings; claiming she is going to write a book.

Funny how things that cause the rest of the family to roll their eyes charm those with a fresh perspective.

It makes one consider the expressions we've always used. As in when something is extreme, the hubby has been known to say "----to who laid a chunk." Annie thought that was hilarious. Now really, what does that mean? Who is it that laid the thing? And what sort of a chunk was

it? See, sometimes it is best not to over analyze this stuff!

After Annie was gone; promising to come back next harvest--I think it was the pink John Deere cap that sealed the deal. The extent of our weirdness was really brought home. Dillon, the summer help, told me Junior left him "a box."

I'll give you a moment to think about that. I'd never heard it put that way. Nevertheless I knew instantly what he was referring to. When the hubby wants his help to do something as soon as they roll into the yard, he finds a box, writes a note on it and puts it where they park. In Dillon's case he would not come into the house to find a note and I wasn't home to give him a message. Thus he got "a box"!

More interesting than the fact dialects and euphemisms develop is why? It is assuring when those who belong have a way of affirming their membership. Flattering when someone seeks admission as Annie did by studying and adapting our habits.

It is natural to set boundaries, in this case with language. It helps us identify those not our tribe, to protect our own.

In today's society, protectionism has some negative connotations. We associate it with isolationism. Who do we protect? We protect those we treasure. Who does not want to be treasured, to belong?

So it is. We teach those we love our language. We give them "a box".



Thumbs up to Diane Stiles and ALL of her hard work for Norton County. Good Luck in your new job. Emailed in.

We really appreciate the School and the City of Norton for putting the great new surface on the Tennis Courts. Beverly and Chuck Kohfeld. Emailed in

Thumbs Up and Letters to the Editor:
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