

### Get your refill at the Half-Cup Kid

Is the cup half full or half empty? The optimist sees it as half full, but the pessimist sees it as half empty. Today we'll learn about a creative small town business owner who uses a half-cup as the theme of her business.

Last week we learned about Mary Jane Constantin, who opened a grocery store in her hometown of Bucklin, Kansas in 2002. As Mary Jane thought about other things which her community might need, she recognized that Bucklin had no coffee shop.

The former gas company building in Bucklin came up for sale, and Mary Jane bought it. The building needed major refurbishing, but when she cleaned it out, she found the original pressed tin ceiling which she preserved. In the attic, she also found an old cardboard box that said, "Folgers Coffee." It must have been a good omen. Now that box is proudly displayed at the front of the store.

One question was, what to name the coffee shop?

"My Aunt Wilma was a busy lady," Mary Jane said. "She was the youngest of 12 children. In the mornings, she would always say that she only had time for a half-cup of coffee. And she called all her nieces and nephews 'kid.' So she would say, 'How about a half-cup, kid?'"

It seemed a fitting name. On Memorial Day 2010, Mary Jane opened the "Half-Cup Kid" coffee shop in Bucklin.

The décor of the store is eye-catching. Mary Jane was at a store which had clocks on sale for half-price, so she bought a pretty clock that was painted gold and burgundy. She liked the colors so much that the entire coffee shop is now decorated in those attractive colors, including that same clock which hangs on one wall. When she picked out a pretty brown trim to complement these colors, it turned out that the name of this color was "espresso" another good omen.

Unlike the tin ceiling, the gleaming wood floor in the place is not original. The wood came from a dance floor at a place in Dodge City which had closed.

The shop offers flavored coffees plus other items as well. Breakfast and lunch are offered every day except Sunday. Mary Jane's grocery store, Main Street Market, can be a source for the makings of the meals. The menus are written on old chalkboards salvaged from a closed school building.

Half-Cup Kid offers smoothies, blended cream, cherry limeades, and slushies.

"The blender and espresso machine cost more than the building itself," Mary Jane said.

The local people seem to have a lot of fun with this coffee shop. A sign inside the shop says, "Will trade coffee for gossip."

A woman passerby on the street commented that Half-Cup Kid has "Starbucks quality at a small town price."

Rural communities face many challenges. One challenge is to sustain institutions such as the local grocery store or the local coffee shop. Mary Jane Constantin chose to buck the trend of closure and consolidation in rural communities by opening these new stores in her hometown. Not only is she offering those services, she is doing so with skill, creativity and ingenuity. That is a real asset for a rural community like Bucklin, population 713 people. Now, that's rural.

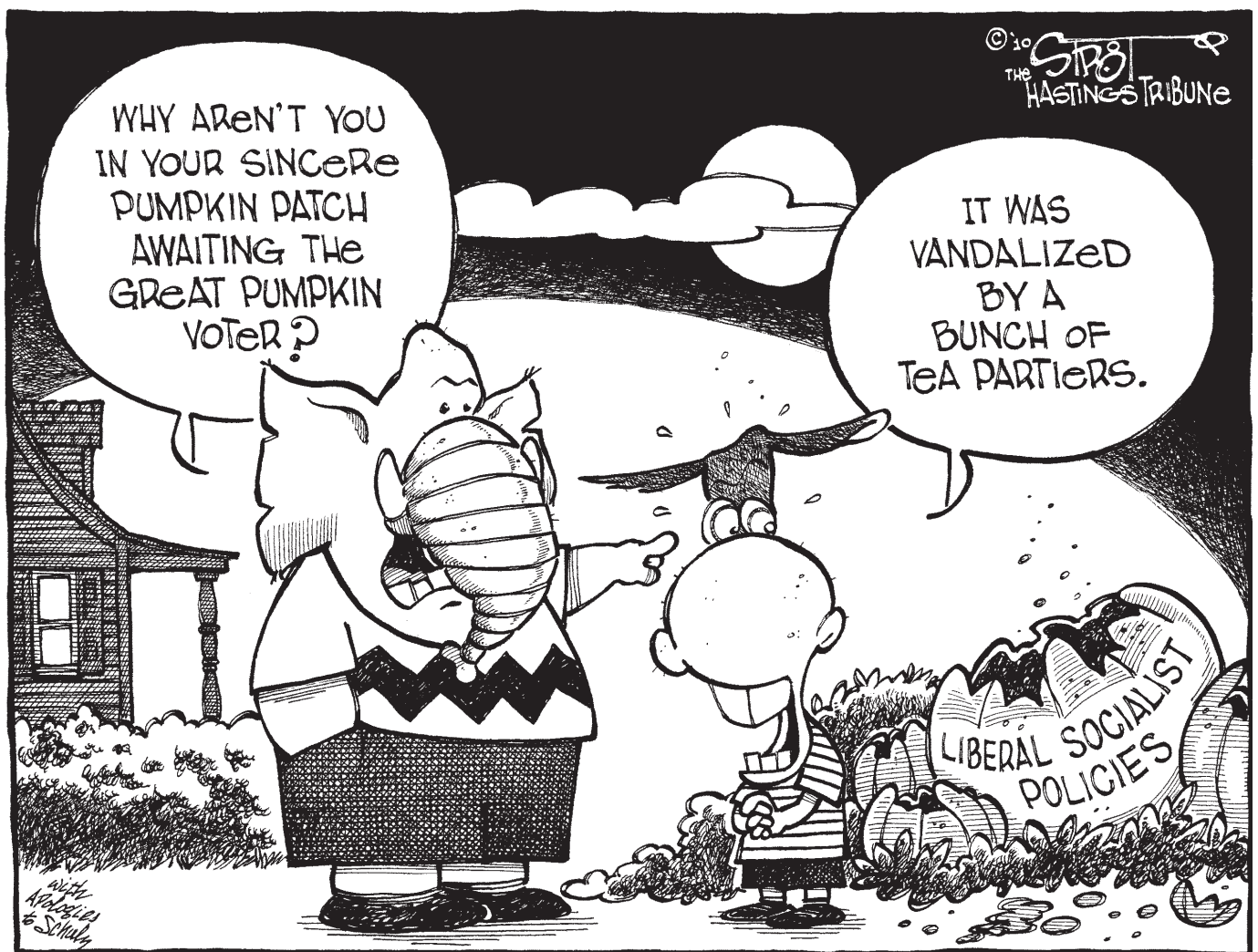
Mary Jane is an Oklahoma transplant, brought here by her husband's teaching job. Why invest in a rural Kansas community?

"Maybe we have some foolishness," Mary Jane said, "but we love it down here."

Is the cup half full or half empty? Optimists and pessimists will forever debate that question. For Mary Jane Constantin, the phrase "Half-Cup Kid" will forever remind her of her Aunt Wilma. Inside the door of the coffee shop is a framed black-and-white photo of an attractive matron. Of course, it is a picture of Aunt Wilma herself. We commend Mary Jane Constantin for making a difference by offering this service in her rural community.

So is the cup half full or half empty? Either way, I'll have a refill.

Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.



### All hallows eve, keeping the evil spirits at bay

Fleeting figures slink through the darkness. Overhead, witches astride long black brooms crisscross the full, silver moon. Ghouls, goblins and fairies claw and scratch their way out of the deep, dark underworld. The air crawls with anticipation. It's Halloween.

Ever wonder how this creepy tradition started?

Halloween dates back to the Celts, 5,000 years B.C. The Celts believed on this day the fairy mounds in Ireland opened and fairies and other supernatural beings from the underworld came up into their world.

No doubt this was a time of anxiety for the Celts who believe their world was being invaded. They attempted to keep these creatures at bay.

The villagers built huge bonfires. They took all the first fruits and first-born sons and sacrificed them — in an attempt to ward off evil spirits.

Black cats are one Halloween tradition alive today. These creatures are associated with Faust who sold his soul to the devil for knowledge and power.

A pumpkin or jack-o'-lantern is also a solid staple of Halloween. Jack-o'-lanterns also date back to the Irish and

### Insight

John Schlageck

Scotch.

The pumpkin was the American replacement for the carved turnip of the Old World. After the Scotch and Irish sailed to this country, they carved a pumpkin instead.

Faces on the pumpkin were designed to keep spirits and other grotesque images from their door. A candle inside the jack-o'-lantern helped expel the darkness.

Orange and black remain the colors associated with Halloween. These same colors have long been linked with the dead.

Unbleached beeswax was used for candles surrounding caskets during the Middle Ages. The candles had an orangish buff color and of course black was always draped across the casket or hearse.

Blackness always conjures a deep fear in the human imagination. Darkness and evil are synonymous.

As for witches and broomsticks, the

broomstick was a sign of a woman during primitive times. Naturally when women were branded witches, people believed they flew away by jumping on their brooms.

The Irish believed fairies, who came out of their mounds at Halloween, played pranks on the people who lived above ground. When the Irish came to this country they decided to emulate the fairies by going around and putting carriages on barns and turning over outhouses.

Dressing in costumes and going into the night has its roots in dressing up in animal skins and fertility rights. This tradition is also connected with the dark side and later adopted into the Halloween custom.

While the faces and costumes associated with Halloween continue to change, many of the customs remain the same. And while interpretation depends on the individual, the underlying theme remains the same — keep the evil spirits at bay.

Good luck and Happy Halloween.

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

### The marvels of Facebook and returning home

When I opened up my e-mail after returning from our trip, I had 374 messages. Most were 'junk mail' which I had to delete. But, hidden there amongst them, were some from friends and family. At least I have a program that can delete 'all unknown', although, I still have to sort through them because I never know if a friend who isn't an "approved sender" has sent me something. Wouldn't want to miss anything.

And just when I thought that nothing could beat e-mail, I was introduced to Facebook.

All the grandkids kept urging me to get a Facebook page. While at Jennifer's, I had her set me up. I don't quite understand it yet, and have only made one posting. But, I do enjoy reading everyone else's posting. While searching for people I know I looked for my former sister-in-law. Twenty-five years ago I told her, "I may be divorcing your brother, but I'm not divorcing you and Kathy (her daughter)." It had been a year or so since I talked to

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



Penny so, it was fun to re-connect. She's in Oklahoma and my niece is in the state of Washington. Don't know if I'll really 'get into' Facebook: I don't have an iPhone, iPod, or anything "I" on it. I guess that means we can't do pictures?

Anyway, I'm not sure my life is exciting enough to warrant a posting. To be sure, we're busy. Just not anything exciting. In fact, right now, I'm waiting to see if it will warm up enough to finish painting the rental house next door. Forecast says we might get rain. But, tomorrow looks good.

Two weeks ago when we left for Mexico, it was a beautiful Indian Summer. When we returned, we came back to Fall.

The ground is covered with dry, crackly leaves and it looks like my flowers got nipped by a frost. Some good Samaritan left a sack of green tomatoes on our front porch. Probably put them there because they knew our history with turnips hanging on a doorknob.

Anyway, I think I'll make a batch of Mock Raspberry jam with the green tomatoes. My mom had so much fun fooling people with that recipe. Anyone who tastes it is convinced it is the real thing. But, honest. It's made with ground green tomatoes, sugar, water and raspberry gelatin.

It's good to be home. Even if it is still the wreck it was when I left it. In fact, it's worse because now all our luggage and "trip trash" has been dumped inside the front door. We dug out enough to get ourselves outfitted decently for church but, that's about it. I've been sorting the snail mail: lots of junk mail there, too. The best thing about being home; besides having our cats act like they really like us is being back in our own bed. Ah, bliss.



Thumbs up to the Northern Valley Jr. High Girls on winning the GNEC tour.  
Emailed in.

## THE NORTON TELEGRAM

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Letter to the Editor.

During the month of November, the First United Methodist Church is planning special recognition of Norton county men and women (or those with a connection to Norton County) who are serving our country in the United States Military. If you know of someone that we can acknowledge, remember and keep in prayer, please send their name/s and addresses if possible to Kay Hawks at hawksjk@ruraltel.net, call me at 785-877-3885, or mail to me at 1115 N Second Ave., Norton, KS 67654.

Kay Hawks

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