

Major changes for veterans and the US

I must have been sleeping. That's the only way I can explain not knowing that a major change was made allowing veterans, as I am, to render a hand salute when the national anthem is played or when the flag of our great country is raised, lowered, leading a parade, or part of any other ceremony at which veterans might be in attendance. This major change was part of the Defense Authorization Act of 2009. Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma is to be credited for this change; he is an Army veteran.

Prior to this major change, which is in effect, veterans, like everyone else, placed their right hand over their heart to demonstrate respect. Now, when you see people watching a parade, for example, and they are dressed like anyone else would be and they suddenly render a hand salute as the flag passes, they are veterans.

Nice touch. For more information, you can Google 'new hand salute rules'.

I need to thank friend Helen Henderson of St. Augustine, Fl., for drawing my attention to this new law. She, too, is a veteran of the United States Air Force and she also served at Misawa AFB, Japan a few years after my tour ended.

The tune goes like this, "The stars at night are big and bright...." But those words now need a rewrite, thanks to the presidential straw poll results from last weekend's Conservative Political Action Conference (C-PAC) in Washington, D.C. The new words should be, "Ron Paul's the guy, who caught their eye...."

Yep, Texas Congressman Ron Paul captured 30 percent of the vote, with Mitt Romney coming in second at 23 percent. All others were in single digits, ranging from 6 percent down to 2 percent.

The experts already are cautioning that Rep. Paul stands no chance whatsoever of getting the Republican presidential nomination. Those same experts gave little known Sen. Barack Obama no chance either coming out of the gate.

You know, campaigns are like pregnancies: You have to wait several months before you know what the end result will really be. Well...I'll take that statement back. Technology now allows Mom and Dad to peek at what's forming deep, while the political masterminds haven't come up with such a device. Good thing they haven't, it would just be something else to argue about.

Speaking of polls, I kicked one off a few days ago among those on my contact list. It's for the Republican presidential nomination. I would encourage you readers to also get involved in this early, early poll. It's very simple: Just e-mail me at <milehitom@hotmail.com> with the name of the person you would nominate. That's it; after I place a mark next to your pick, I'll destroy your e-mail. By taking part, you can no longer say, "Nobody ever polled me!"

Looks like the president got another one on Speaker Boehner; he celebrated his first anniversary of being smoke free! Something else for Mr. Boehner to 'cry' about.

In the e-mail: "Your mashed potato story is priceless," Carolyn Hammerschmidt, Bowie, Md.

"Thanks for another enjoyable column (old time phones). You sure took me down memory lane." Yvonne Braun, Hays

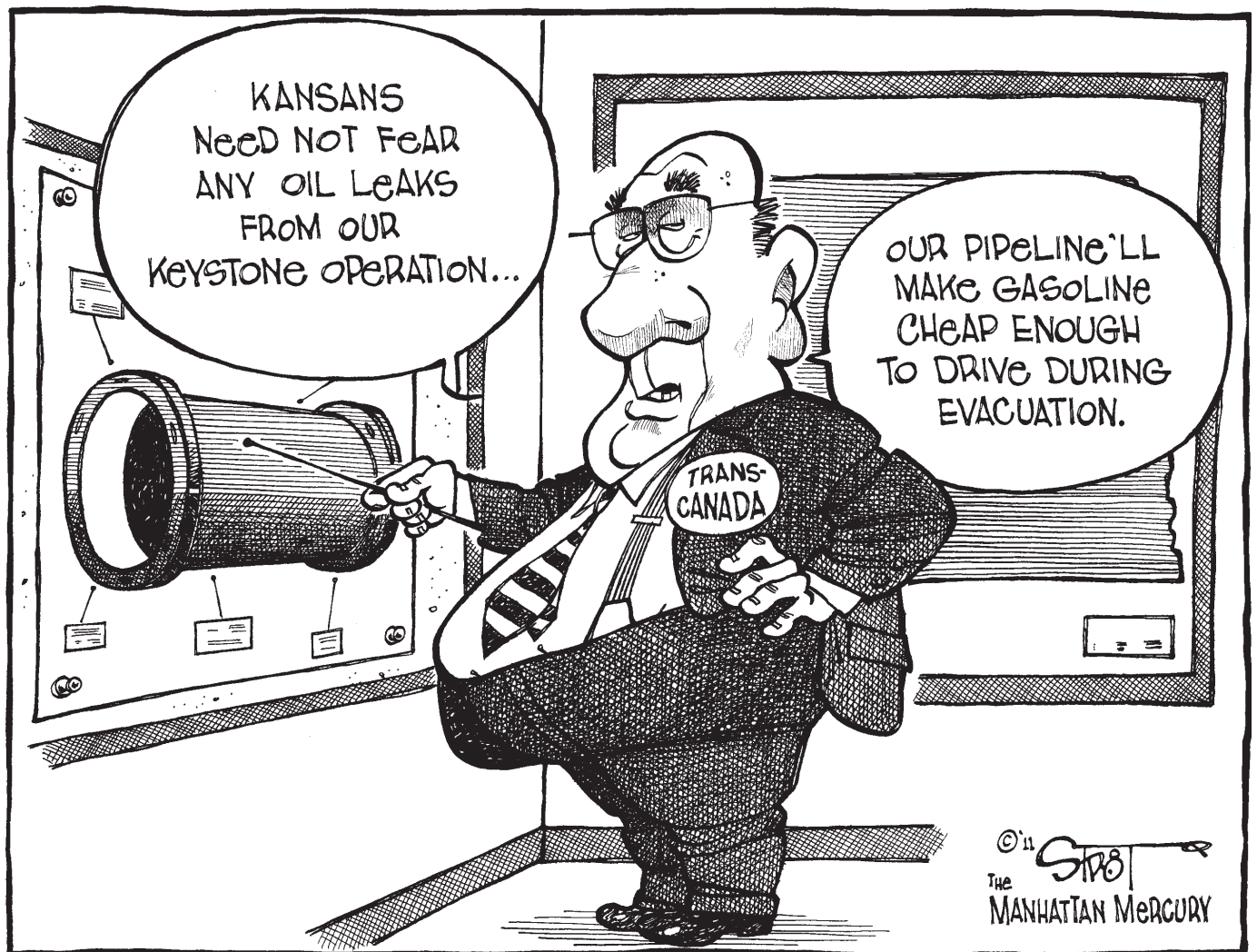
"Memories of our party line...it truly was a PARTY line sometimes. We had a neighbor you could always count on to listen in on your conversations." MaryKay Woodyard, Norton

I don't believe this came from Santa Claus, but that's how it was signed: "When are you going to talk about those old fashioned outhouses?"

Caution: Explosive! While I was trying to make some sense of President Obama's proposed budget, the first set of numbers I punched in...blew up!

Tom Dreiling is a retired northwest Kansas journalist, and graduated in 1953 from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian. He lives in Aurora, Colo. <mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com>

Stop
Look
Listen
Tom Dreiling



The challenges of getting a passport

I've heard if you can be identified from your passport photo you are not well enough to travel. Having recently gone through the process of getting a passport I have found that to be true.

We're going to Canada in May. It's disappointing that a trip over a friendly border requires a passport. There are several steps to getting a passport and all are time consuming and cost you money. First you have to get a birth certificate. Mine was cheaper (Nebraska) than the Hubby's (Kansas). Mine was printed on pink paper, making me wonder if the Hubby's would be blue, it wasn't.

The Hubby's history is pretty boring. Where were your parents born? Smith County. Where were you born? Smith County. Where do you live? Smith County.

At least my family got around. Though I just realized because of my parents' inexplicable decision to spend a few years in Nebraska I cannot be a member of the Kansas Native Sons and Daughters. Even though the lifetime dues are no different I can only be an affiliate member. And I so feel like a Native Daughter!

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



The place where we got our passport photos does graphics, photography and serves as a hangout when the locals get tired of the coffee shop next door. I had an interesting conversation with the owner and a loafer about where we came from, where we had been and where we were going.

It was a frigid day. It was suggested I should go to the Caribbean rather than Canada. I expressed hope it would be warmer everywhere by late May. In truth we only had to wait until February 16 for warm weather. (I hung the laundry out!) Canada looks quite beautiful but only Kansas can have a 70 degree swing in the high temperature in one week!

We applied for our passports at the County Treasurer's office. It was a busy day and thanks to staggered lunch hours

only one person was there to assist us and about 20 guys wanting truck tags. I was almost ready to go behind the counter and answer the phone, "Treasurer's Office. Can you hold?"

We had filled out most of the forms at home. Some of the questions are really, really hard to answer. Hair Color? Nancy: currently blonde, Junior: what hair????? The person helping us did not think the State Department would have a sense of humor about this. So we played it as straight as we could. At least they don't ask what you weigh!

The Hubby's birth certificate reads: First name: Eugene, Middle name: Francis, Last name: Hagman Jr. We were advised to fill the application out to reflect the birth certificate. So when the passport came, it said Surname: Hagman Jr.

At least he got his, I'm still waiting. I hope there is not a problem outside of my true weight and hair color, I have nothing to conceal!

Oh well as of today I am too ill to travel (fighting a cold/flu or something). And sadly I do resemble that passport photo greatly!

Common thoughts on a common issue

Is it possible R.W. and I agree on something? Well, perhaps and perhaps not. In his recent letter to the editor he spoke of the need for oil in this country and the logic of recovering our own supplies rather than importing oil from other countries.

According to the Energy Information Administration, "The United States imported about 51% of the petroleum... that we consumed during 2009." Our demand for oil has remained pretty steady, however 2010 showed a slight decrease, but like it or not we are still oil dependent and it will be a long time before oil is a thing of the past.

Balance is the solution to most problems and oil is no exception. If we truly want the best for our country we will seek a balance of energy sources i.e. oil, coal, solar, hydro and wind. The search

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



for energy also will provide employment, tax revenues and improved technology for countless individuals and companies. This is where greed must not be the driving force.

Too often we see oil companies making record profits at the expense of the average citizen. We are a country rich in natural resources and there is no reason for one solution to be a threat to another.

Regardless of the path we choose a prime factor must be the protection of our

environment. This isn't a global warming threat but rather a responsibility we have to future generations, as is the need for fiscal responsibility. By choosing safe, dependable and varied energy solutions we ensure a healthier planet for our grandchildren's great grandchildren.

Whether we are talking about energy sources, the budget or health care reform we all must shoulder some of the pain. Changing our ways is never easy whether it is high speed railways, solar powered companies or wind powered homes it is exciting to look to the future and imagine the possibilities. All with the possibility of being home grown.

Just think, who would have thought R.W. and I had anything in common. <mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net>. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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Letter to the Editor,

If opponents of oil complain that our country is dependent and addicted to oil, then they must also complain that people are dependent and addicted to food. We need oil to operate and be productive, not to mention the tax income the government would realize from the producers.

Oil fuels the economy of the world and is the basis of the wealth of all of our enemies. We have enough reserves in our country that we could easily satisfy our own needs and become a supplier to the rest of the world. Instead of our misguided government giving money we don't have to other countries to drill, we should start drilling here wherever we have reserves.

Obama's decision not to drill is a danger, an insult, and a slap in the face to our country.
R.W. Yeager, retired contractor

This letter ran on 2-15 but due to typist error it printed incorrectly. This is the corrected letter.

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