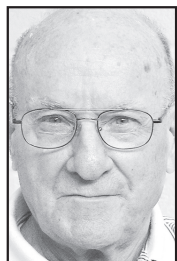


## The question is, medication or a meal

Man of the Plains

Tom Dreiling



Let's just call this a little story about two categories of need, meeting head on.

It's a true story. I happen to know that because I'm the character involved.

The two categories of need are (1) groceries, the stuff that keeps us alive, and (2) prescription medication, the stuff that, well, keeps us alive.

And both of these categories of need were purchased by this Man of the Plains in the very same building on the very same day just a few days ago.

The groceries, 32 items in all, totaled \$81.10.

The prescriptions, 2 only, totaled \$82.46.

You often hear people say, especially those who are on really fixed incomes, as am I, that they find themselves choosing between food and prescription medication. I hadn't given that much thought until I came face to face with that realization. I had to cut my grocery bill in half to accommodate my prescription medication needs.

My only support, as I've mentioned before, is that thing called Social Security. Not many bucks but it's better than nothing. And I warn those politicians who think they are going to put their carving knives into Social Security, that I will personally hunt them down and use my carving knife on each of their fingers. I'll also whack off their thumbs to boot! It's no laughing matter but there are some crazies in the House of Representatives and in the United State Senate who have an eye on Social Security as one of their targets.

I am not alone in this fight for survival. I spent my life working for a noble, very noble cause - the right to know - newspapering, in other words. Many of those community newspapers I worked for were not so blessed as to be able to offer their employees a retirement plan. Of course it wasn't just newspaper employees faced with this negative, but employees of many other occupations as well. There was a time, it might be worth noting, that when you landed a job the package also included a vacation, but not always paid. Retirement compensation? What's that?

I loved working as a journalist for 44 years, and proof that I still love writing can be seen in my frequent columns that appear in your favorite newspaper(s). Yep, ink still runs through my veins, although retirement dollars don't. But that's just the way it is.

Yes, there are people who still count pennies as part of their survival plan. And they give thanks for that allotment, knowing there are people worse off who wish they had pennies to count!

Someone some time back, over a cup of coffee, offered this during a conversation about God, "I would rather believe there is a God and then find out there isn't, than to believe there isn't a God and then find out there is!" Interesting.

American Idol is a good example of turning singing into screaming. Many a good song falls short because some performers try reaching for notes way beyond their capability, yet knowing this will bring the unruly crowd out of their seats and on their feet with screams of their own. I always shake my head as the judges declare those performances, "Beautiful..." I still don't quite understand the role of the judges because America picks the winners. The advice the judges give is shallow, except for Randy Jackson who often tells it like it is, despite boos from the audience.

At the outset of this year's Idol, I picked a kid during the auditions who plays a guitar and sings mostly country with a range as deep as the Grand Canyon and as high as needed to capture the hearts of the millions of Americans who vote each week. His first name is Scotty, and I think the last name is McCreery. He and two young ladies will battle it out for the title of Idol.

Time for a few Snippets

"Snoot' Gingrich for president? May as well toss in 'Terrible Trump' as his running name. Maybe this will bring Americans to their knees in prayer!"

"Welcome to Colorful Colorado, somewhere under all that smoke!"

"Aurora (Colo.) is what it is, despite one newspaper's effort to change it's image. Too many years of adversity is embedded in its history to suddenly wipe all the bad stuff away."

"Is it Bush or Obama we thank for Ben Laden's demise? It's not clear."

"If Pakistan's leadership knew Ben Laden was living a life of luxury, with three wives, inside their borders, how can we trust that country? Wake up Obama!"

"Our children go to private schools and they aren't laying off anyone. Maybe the public sector needs to look into how we do it. It's all about living within your means."

"I saw a thing on television about the seriousness of head injuries to football players in high school. Did our schools see that? That's a real wake up call for every parent who has a child on that football field!"

"Can I wish someone a happy birthday in your Snippets?" (Note: No!)

"The I-70-Vine Street Interchange in Hays (Kan.) is a classic study of an engineering student who flunked. That's as big a mess as you'll find along the interstate from Denver to Topeka. We usually pull off at Russell to eat our McDonald's hamburgers."

(Snippets to my email address. Keep them short, no more than four sentences, or I'll do the cutting.)

I will close today with love to Lance and Tobie and Alyssa and Caleb; Todd and Darci and Grayson and Kennadi; and Denise and Darren and Samantha. (I knew I'd eventually slide my kids and grandkids' names in the column.) If you've got a name of someone you'd like me to sign this column off with, please e-mail it to me. It's free...on me!

Your comments on anything that appears in your favorite newspaper coming from my computer, are always appreciated, regardless of the tone. Simply email me at <mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com>milehitom@hotmail.com

Tom Dreiling is a retired journalist, now living in Aurora, Colo.



## What Mom taught me about caring for the ill

Now, I know why I'm not a nurse. Some people are natural-born care-givers and some aren't. I fall into the latter category.

Not that I can't empathize - I just don't get all "mooshy" over every little thing. My kids will tell you they knew better than to complain unless they were bleeding, vomiting and/or burning up with fever. I figured if they felt well enough to want to watch TV or play games, they were well enough to go to school.

Of course, that kind of attitude has consequences. My children are grown now and, they still don't complain. That's why my oldest daughter waited until she had an 11 1/2 pound tumor before she sought medical care. And, she had to have emergency gall bladder surgery because she had learned to tolerate the pain. Complaining is one thing, being aware of your physical well-being is completely different. It's something I'm trying to work on.

My matter-of-fact attitude probably comes from my mother. She could have been an emergency room nurse. After being married to a farmer and raising five boys and a girl, she had about seen it all by the time I came along. I remember the day I broke my right arm in a bicycle accident. We didn't know it was broken at the time so, she wrapped it, tightly, with Ace bandage, made a sling out of a dish towel and made me stay inside. The

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



next morning a call was made to a local nurse asking her to "take a look" at it. The nurse surmised both bones, right above the wrist, were broken and marveled at how I had been able to tolerate the pain through the night. There hadn't been any pain. Mom had wrapped it so well, it didn't swell.

Then there was the time my youngest brother, Jim, had a crochet hook embedded in his elbow. My grandmother was living with us and had been sitting in my dad's easy-chair, working on a doily. She left her crocheting in the chair about the same time Jim came into the house playing with a puppy that had just crawled out from under the front porch. He plopped down in the chair, oblivious to the danger lurking there.

When he got up to take the pup back outside, Mom stopped him at the kitchen door. Jim was completely unaware, but she had spotted a crochet hook, protruding outside his shirt, dangling from his elbow. Knowing this was beyond her level of expertise, a trip to the hospital

was inevitable. Never prone to too much sympathy, I remember her saying, "Oh, Jim. And, that was one of your good shirts!"

So, if my husband, who is recuperating from a table saw accident, thinks I'm not giving him enough sympathy - his concern could be justified. But, even he would have to admit he's not been the easiest patient. However, I am trying to trust his judgment. If he feels like working he's going to work so, I might as well get used to it.

We had a follow-up visit with the specialist/surgeon last week and actually saw Jim's thumb for the first time since the surgery. Granted, it's still swollen, however, it looks really good and, is healing nicely. Jim says it itches, which is a good sign. The index finger is doing so well the doctor said the dressing could come off.

In two weeks the pin comes out of the thumb and then we'll talk about therapy.

A side note to all this: a "flutter" in Jim's heart was detected before the hand surgery. So, this week he's having a heart catheterization. All precautionary but, it's really made us appreciate the good health we've had up to this point.

Was it Mark Twain or Will Rogers who said this? "If I'd aknownd I was goin' to live this long, I would a taken better care of myself."

## Keeping hydrated during the hot summer heat

### Insight

John Schlageck

If the last few days of mid-May are any indication, this summer could be a real scorcher. While some don't venture outdoors much except on weekends, for many outdoor work continues as usual.

Working outside in 95 to 100-degree heat can result in dehydration. Farmers, ranchers, construction workers and other folks who toil in the sun can forget to drink enough fluids.

You rarely hear of a farmer who lets his livestock overheat. Most people with pets see that they have cool, clean water during the dog days of summer. But sometimes these same people forget to take care of themselves.

Every year, emergency rooms and health-care facilities across Kansas treat cases of heat exhaustion. For those afflicted, this is not a minor problem. Often it takes two to three days to recover from severe heat exhaustion.

Anyone working outdoors during the summer months should always have plenty of fluid within easy reach. Drink small amounts, up to a pint, and drink often.

While experts disagree, water still seems to be one of the best fluid replacements for those who work in the summer sun. Sports drinks are also recom-

mended, especially those that contain no more than 8 percent carbohydrates. Pure fruit juice mixed with an equal amount of water is another excellent drink to replace lost fluids.

Avoid beer and other alcoholic beverages that only lead to greater dehydration. Carbonated beverages and drinks high in caffeine should also be avoided.

Don't rely on how thirsty you are to gauge when to replenish your liquids while working or playing in the sun. Your thirst mechanism isn't always reliable.

In classic cases of dehydration, people feel unusually tired. The victim may have a headache and is usually nauseous. In severe cases, people perspire profusely, are extremely weak and their skin is usually pale and clammy. The temperature of the person is usually normal and unconsciousness is rare.

If these symptoms occur, move the victim into the shade immediately and loosen any tight fitting clothing. Offer the person cool fluids, but applying ice to the

body or drinking extremely cold liquids can make the symptoms worse.

In extreme conditions, such as heat stroke where the person has hot, dry skin, take the victim to a medical facility immediately to receive necessary evaluation and care.

The key to avoiding heat exhaustion is drinking plenty of cool water daily. Many activities associated with farming, ranching and construction work may cause this situation to arise.

If you're working in a sweltering hot hayloft - bucking bales where ventilation is likely to be poor - take shorter shifts. If signs of heat exhaustion show up while you're operating any type of equipment, stop immediately before an accident occurs.

Remember, anything that heats the body, such as exercise or strenuous work, puts an extra load on the system. Fortunately, these conditions can almost always be prevented with sensible hot-weather care.

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.

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

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ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654  
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association



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