

When is someone too old to be driving?

Let's talk about a subject that has split many families, and how this 'Man of the Plains' avoided getting caught in that net. Elder driving. Yep, driving when you really shouldn't be.

This always causes a heated exchange between a parent and the kids. As an example, let's say Mom has passed on and Pop is up there in age and he sometimes navigates his machine in a fashion that causes concern. Or, there might be a slip of the tongue about some weird experience while driving. These are tell-tale signs that the time has come for Pop to hang up the keys.

"But that's not fair! How would I get around?" he will ask, with a stern look that makes you feel guilty for even bringing up the subject. Church, groceries, visits, card club, and the list of reasons for hanging onto the keys goes on.

You need to be prepared and have answers that make sense. And don't think those six hated words, "You're getting too old to drive," will carry any weight. It won't. Expect a chilly reception from "old Pop" after you drop the "too old to drive" bomb on him. It'll take a while, quite a while for him to allow those words to sink in. And then again, he just might resent the suggestion and continue driving.

The roadways are packed with aging drivers who shouldn't be part of the pack. You'll spot them. Slowing everything down, or pretending to be part of the racetrack mentality. And there is always that thought in the minds of others: "Well, there's another one of those 'shouldn't be' drivers."

How did I avoid the family confrontation?

I hung up the keys myself.

I had noticed that things just weren't always making a lot of sense while behind the wheel. I was 75 at the time. Some of the examples of "why I shouldn't be driving" included:

- 1) A need to blink rapidly and then squint my eyes to bring whatever I was looking at into focus.
- 2) Noticing things that weren't there and not noticing things that were. That explains why sometimes I would suddenly stop, and then look around and wonder why.
- 3) Pulling up to a curb to stop, then suddenly experiencing a bit of confusion because my foot failed to automatically engage the brake and instead hit the accelerator and I would jump the curb.

Those three personal experiences stick in my mind and played a major role in my decision to lock the pickup doors, hang up the keys and make other plans as far as transportation was concerned.

The brain controls our every move. And when things are going along smoothly, there's no hesitation. But when the brain forgets to alert the rest of the body of its plans, that's when trouble starts. And you can find yourself in all kinds of unfavorable, if not down-right deadly, situations.

When I told my two sons what was happening, I know in the back of their minds they wondered, "How do we tell him it's time to get out from behind the wheel?" Well, I answered that question before they had a chance to ask it. I abruptly announced that I was going to give up driving. You could almost hear the sounds of relief settling in their systems.

To underscore my intentions, I told them we will put the pickup up for sale. That became their responsibility. I wouldn't know where or how to begin. They determined the best place would be CraigsList. They posted it on a Sunday evening and by noon the next day the pickup was sold. The couple who bought it liked the looks from the photo that accompanied the printed sales pitch.

It was a 2001 Ford Ranger, extended cab, bright red with around 50,000 original miles. The inside looked like it had very little use. I didn't drive much, generally no more than 7,000 or so miles a year. I had an idea what I wanted for the pickup. My sons had another idea. And because of them I made much more than what I was going to ask for it.

So, since the sale, which took place the first week of September 2010, they, the sons, became my "taxi" drivers and there hasn't been a time or cause that stood in the way.

It was a tough decision to make. After all, when the pickup left the driveway for the very last time, that put an end to nearly 59 years of driving. It hurt and that evening in bed a few tears were shed. But I knew "luck" had been with me but if I stayed behind the wheel, my "luck" most surely would run out.

If you have a mother or father, or maybe even both, still driving and you question their ability to continue doing so safely, approach the issue as lovingly as you can. Don't hurt them. Don't scold them. Hear them out. Then tell them that each time they pull away from the curb in front of their home, you worry yourself sick until they return. That might be food for thought.

Good luck.

Here we go again. This time it's Rep. Anthony Weiner, who seems to have a problem keeping his "trash" where it belongs. He's taking some time off now to get treatment for this problem. Why didn't he seek treatment before he became the talk of the country? I think a three-word sign needs to be made and then placed in the area on the front of his pants where it would best be noticed: "Out of Order."

Your comments on anything that appears in your favorite newspaper coming from my computer, are always appreciated, regardless of the tone. Simply e-mail me at milehitom@hotmail.com

Man of the Plains Tom Dreiling



Kansas? There's no place like home

Studying the country side for clues about farming practices occupied our minds for many miles of our recent trip.

We traversed the Missouri and the Mississippi. It is difficult to tell if the rivers are higher than usual because we have no frame of reference. The Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania was impressive to us High Plainsmen. It was a tad disappointing to learn that, as the old saying goes: it's a mile wide and a foot deep!

Just north of the border in Canada we observed small plots with "hills" of something. The plants seemed too large to be vegetables (unless they were potatoes). Yet there were "sunscreens" over the rows, giving the impression the crop was delicate.

The hubby wanted to "talk to a farmer!"

The point of the trip, besides just having a good time, was ancestor hunting. We wandered around cemeteries and met some 5th cousins (once removed). One was an actual farmer, Glenn.

The hubby was off with the "kids" exploring caves and the Western Hemisphere's oldest written records. So I quizzed Glenn about his farm. They raise soybeans and corn, sheep and pigs. The pigs are contracted; they feed breeding gilts after they are weaned.

Another branch of the family tree de-

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



cided upon inheriting Dad's farm they did not care to farm. They built a golf course: If memory serves it opened in 2008.

Many years of planning were involved, including land usage, wild life and environmental impact studies and so on. One interesting aspect of the golf course is the owners have a special dispensation allowing them to shoot nuisance geese if other methods of shooing them away fail.

A beautiful club house is used year round for retreats and events. There is the requisite pro shop and the 20th hole bar. Golfers: I did not misspeak. This golf course has a true, (optional) 19th hole; surrounded by a moat. The only way to hit onto the green is over water.

The hubby has a new cap for his collection: Baxter Creek Golf Course! Though my favorite is still the red seed corn cap adorned with lightning bolts and that one was free. (Or was it, just how many dollars worth of seed did we buy before

they "gave" him a hat?)

In Pennsylvania, near Lewisburg, we are told there are many dairies. I'll take their word for it. All you see is hills (they call mountains) and trees. We did have the creamiest ice cream ever at a stand set up by an enterprising farmer on his farm. You couldn't see the cows, because of the trees but you could smell them - not overpowering, it was just there. I felt a little homesick!

As I read the Telegram each week I'm amazed at the number of deer accidents in Norton County. Our travels prove Kansas is not the only state with a deer problem. Every few miles there were dead deer in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. The trees and other vegetation grow close to the roads creating a terrible hazard.

In the 90's Norton County 4-Hers hosted Japanese Labo students several different years. Once I drove a group out from Eastern Kansas and witnessed their reaction to the Saline River Valley north of WaKeeney. "AHHHHH-HHH"----- followed by the click, click, click of cameras.

I had to laugh a little. We see it every-day, how long since we savored the view, took a deep breath and let it out!

AHHHHHHHHH!

KANSAS! There's no place like home!

It takes a village to raise and protect our children

The scene couldn't be more horrific. A parent, in their hurry to get to work, drives from home straight to the office, locks the car door and heads inside. An hour later day care calls and wonders if the baby will be coming today. The parent drops the phone, runs to the car and you have heard the story's ending all too often.

Last week as I headed out the door with four grandchildren in tow, including 19 month old Ella, I said, "Grab one of Ella's books. I want to put it on the dashboard to remind me she is with us."

At that point my oldest grandson, Harrison, said, "Oh, that's my job. Ever since I saw the announcement on TV I decided I would never get out of the car until Ella is out." The announcement he was referring to is a Public Service Announcement, PSA. If I ever wondered if anyone paid attention to those, I had my answer. To be sure the adults, parents, grandparents, or caregivers, are the ones to take responsibility. They know a 12 year old can get side tracked and the burden of a sibling accident isn't one

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



they would want him to carry the rest of his life. Still the fact that he listened to the PSA and formed a plan to help in the prevention of such an accident speaks volumes both about him and about the PSAs we often take for granted.

When our children were little, life was very different. Parent roles were more defined. I'm not saying it was better or worse, just different. For one thing, mothers didn't work outside the home as often when the children were little, and even when they did the lines were clearly defined not interchanging the childcare rolls with each other. Mom still took care of children, etc and father's career was

number one.

Since the early 1990s there has been a tenfold increase in the number of child fatalities in stationary vehicles. Sometimes it is because a child gets in a car to play, but more often it is the result of being "forgotten" either by a daycare provider or a family member.

As a village how can we prevent these tragic accidents? A good start is the PSAs, awareness, check-ins at work, daycare and family check system. Don't be embarrassed to ask a parent or to remind a family member they have a little one onboard. The experts suggest you place the diaper bag, or a toy or anything which will help remind you of your precious cargo. In the meantime, I will always value those PSAs which allowed my grandson an opportunity to help in the prevention of a tragic accident.

This is the message of a lifetime, not only as a sibling but when he has children of his own. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Don't forget Dad this Father's Day!

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Thumbs up to Lacy Frack of the Norton Housing Authority. The food at the BBQ held at the Norton Manor was fantastic. Brought in.

Thumbs up to the Norton Community Swimming Pool staff employee, Terrell Lane. You looked out for the safety of my child where strangers were concerned and I greatly appreciate it. Brought in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.