

We are very proud to be grandparents

Life is Good
Rita Speer



Late in August my husband and I found a week when we were free of obligations and our son and his wife were able to host us. So after Bob preached that Sunday morning, we left for Iowa. We broke the 400+ mile trip into two days because he still cannot ride long distances after his back surgery. We arrived in Ankeny early Monday afternoon.

Annabella, who is nearly three, was in bed for her nap. Lillyanne, then 10 months, was playing happily on the floor. Our son warned us not to get too close too soon, so I got down on the carpet a few feet from her. She looked at me and broke into a big grin. She then crawled over to the chair where Bob was sitting and put her arms up to him to be picked up.

We spent several wonderful days with our son and daughter-in-law and the girls. We played with them, babysat them a couple of times and were completely enchanted by them. Our last night there, we went to a motel that has a water park so the little girls could play there. Annabella went down a short slide and then decided to "commandeer" a similar slide on a pirate boat. Her parents took her down a huge water slide, like the slides one sees at outdoor water parks.

Lillyanne had a floating seat and walked herself all over the shallow water. She liked having her head close to the water and although I was beside her, the pool attendants reached for her a couple of times, thinking she was about to upset herself.

Annabella is very blonde, with a blonde's complexion. Her eyes, however, are quite dark. Lillyanne, on the other hand, has dark hair, dark eyes and an almost-olive complexion. I told people she looks quite exotic, especially in contrast to her older sister. She has gotten over her fear of the camera, and her parents took an enchanting photo of her shortly before we visited, in which she was sitting in the grass, an arm resting on one knee and a leaf in her mouth, looking like a professional model.

Last week Matt and Michelle and the girls were here again. They spent a night with us on their way to a funeral in Elkhart, returning on Friday. Matt's class reunion was held over last weekend, and he proudly showed off his girls to former classmates and friends. Again we were even privileged to babysit those beautiful girls a couple of times.

We had only seen Lillyanne one other time when she was about a month old. She is now a "real" person with her own delightful personality. We watched her take a couple of steps on her own while she was here, but she knew intuitively she could get someplace faster by crawling. One of her favorite objectives was the dog's dish, and once she had a nugget of dog food close to her mouth before I got there.

I think being a grandparent is one of the most marvelous gifts I have been given. Having time with our grandchildren trumps anything else we might do. I know both these girls have me wrapped around their fingers, and they are locked tight in my heart. And if you ask, I'll be glad to show you pictures of them.



Preparation for the events in our lives

This year it's going to be different. I told Jim we were going to start putting up our Christmas lights this week so when we return from Thanksgiving in Texas the lights will be up and ready to go.

I can't tell you how many years we (well, really Jim) have battled blizzards and blinding snow to get up "just one more string of lights" before Christmas Eve. I don't want to go through that again, so this week I am going to start carrying up some of the boxes of lights stored in the basement.

I say "some" with tongue in cheek because we have enough lights to decorate the entire town. We have miles of lights in every color. My job is to test the old strings and replace any burned out bulbs. In addition, we have a stockpile of dozens of boxes of brand-new lights we've picked up over the years in after-Christmas sales. Jim

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



has the reputation for putting lights on everything that doesn't move. But, that kind of ambition takes time, so we need to get an early start. I just want him to limit it to our own property.

-ob-

Monday was my last day back in the official work-a-day world. My society editor counterpart has healed and is ready to get back into harness. Just when I was getting into the "swing of things" it's time to go. I just want to turn her desk back over to her in good

shape. I've had a lot of fun working these past few weeks and will miss seeing my office friends. But I know I'll be dropping in on them periodically.

-ob-

When I told one of my Dallas daughters that snow was in our immediate forecast she said, "Yeah, we've had a weather warning too. The weatherman said to grab our jackets this morning, it might drop into the low 70s." She's so funny.

However, the older we get, the better Texas looks in the winter. If I could accurately predict when the worst two weeks of winter would be I would definitely spend them in Texas. But then, if I could do that I would be like the "Weather Lady Extraordinaire". I would always know where the good weather was and follow it around the world.

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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

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Finding the journey's end with modern technology

Communication and the written word ain't what it used to be. Neither is the King's English, grammar, punctuation or just about any integral part of listening, speaking and writing.

Why should we learn the basics of communicating in a world where today's smart phone technology can and will do everything for us?

Today, we're busier than any time in our history trying to keep up with the latest technology of talking to one another. It's about brevity and moving forward swiftly, silly.

Don't believe me, just ask the masses who today worship at the altar of these hand-held icons. You can talk, text, tweet, Facebook, photograph, play music, games, wake up, go to sleep, find a place to eat, check on the weather, - do almost anything you wish except maybe think for yourself with these wonderful rascals.

To some extent, we all rely on the latest technology to accomplish many of the tasks we once learned to do ourselves. You know carrying on a conversation, telling a story, writing a letter, adding and figuring mathematical solutions in our heads, remembering, communicating a message - actually making contact with another human being - visiting in person.

People I know are dying for human interaction. They just don't know how to make the connection anymore.

That's why we need to return to the basics of communication. It's all about the destination or the journey's end.

Answer the following question. If you were to drive from Salina to Kansas City, how would this trip be different from 1950?

You might respond the highways are much wider and smoother. Others would say today we have the Interstate

Insight

John Schlageck

system and toll roads. Someone else might respond that we have many more places to buy fuel and food - and these businesses stay open 24-hours each day.

All good answers, but what if I were to ask, what hasn't changed?

The answer is the journey's end. That remains the same, Kansas City.

Today the latest/greatest technology is just around the corner waiting to be purchased. There will always be the next generation tablet, smart phone or laptop for those with the money or desire to possess them. We have been conditioned or conditioned ourselves to believe we must have PCs with us at all times and all places.

How can we live without them?

My question is how can we truly live with them?

That is the real challenge. We have become slaves to each new wave of technology; we replace our obsolete models with the latest, greatest version. At the same time, we trick ourselves into believing each new change will result in communication being done quicker..

Quicker?

Possibly.

Better?

Don't bet on it.

There is no relationship between the tools used in writing and the ability to write or communicate. Instead the results can be far worse because we often labor forever over the copy or in most cases, we simply schlock words out there for the world to see without protocol including misspelled words,

incomplete sentences, improper and unnecessary punctuation and incorrect grammar. Today in our haste it's all about garbled garbage and plenty of it.

Regardless of the technology we use, the destination or journey's end remains the same. Good letters, text messages, stories and communication that informs, reveals and motivates other human beings to action not consternation and confusion.

Remember, it is not the tool we use to communicate that is necessary, it is the thought we hope to convey to others. After thinking about what we wish to communicate or the story we hope to convey, we write it, edit it, review the piece again and rewrite the final draft. Strive to do your best.

All around us are examples of great speeches, letters and broadcasts - the Gettysburg Address, the radio broadcast of the Hindenburg crash, FDR's fire side chat, "The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself..." President Kennedy's quest to land on the moon, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade... not because they are easy, but because they are hard..."

These carefully chosen and crafted words had power and meaning. They described scenes, situations and events with riveting anticipation and spontaneity.

The main reason for their greatness and longevity is that no matter how plain and primitive the tools used to convey them, those who uttered these words never lost sight of the destination.

As we work with the latest technology, never forget this. After all, what good is the message if the recipient cannot understand and is not moved to action?