

Gearing up for a second term in office

On January 9, I will start my second year as a State Representative for the 120th District. I was in Topeka last week and I went to the House Chamber, after attending some meetings. Trying not to sound too corny, but the feeling I got when I walked into the Chamber is similar to a feeling I got the first time my Dad took me to a major league ballpark. I can't describe the awe and responsibility I feel every time I walk into the Chamber, any other way.

News from
your
legislator
Ward Cassidy



One of the most dramatic demographic shifts of the past century has been the transformation of our country from largely rural to largely urban. In 1910, 72 percent of the country lived in rural areas. Today, only 18 percent of America is labeled rural. Statistics show that the NW Kansas population base is declining even more rapidly.

Working with five counties has given me the opportunity to see and share with each the hard work being done to maintain our way of life. I would again stress the importance of economic development directors working with their communities to grow in any and every way possible. There are grants available to help, but someone has to work for them and write them. Someone has to have a plan for local wealth to invest in their communities.

The decline of population means less clout at the statehouse. Laws that uphold the freedom to farm, the right to hunt and fish, laws for water allocation, local transportation, and laws that allow money to assist our local schools and hospitals may lose support as fewer legislators are elected from outside of metropolitan areas.

I have been active in forming a rural caucus of legislators to enlighten our colleagues about our way of life in the rural areas of the state.

This year I will continue to advocate for NW Kansas. I will also be keeping a watchful eye on the State Fire Marshal's office to see that there are not useless citations ordered. Another state agency I plan to work with is the Board of Healing Arts. I hope to encourage them to assist our local hospitals and to find ways not to be a roadblock to our rural communities getting strong health care. Cooperation would be better than more legislation. There are way too many laws as is.

Medicaid and the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERs) will continue to be an albatross to the state budget. One of our top Kansas economists gave the legislature some very unsavory choices: 1) reduce spending on all other categories of General Fund spending; 2) implement tax increases; 3) some combination of the first two options.

Our Governor and his staff are working hard on these issues. I pray that they can develop a strong Kansas economy that will provide services without exorbitant tax increases.



Dear Editor,

When times get tough, it's always the people that suffer, not the government.

The failure of the Deficit Committee, the President and Congress to find spending cuts would be laughable if it wasn't such a danger to the country. It is also evidence that the people we elect and send to Washington end up representing the government and not the people.

There isn't one federal agency that couldn't operate with fewer employees and some agencies like the Federal Departments of Education, Commerce, Energy and others that could be abolished altogether because they accomplish nothing. After that, with the exception of the military and congressional staffs, government employment should be reduced by at least 10 percent.

We made a move toward correction in the last election, and term limits would let us get rid of all the life-time, career, self-serving politicians that let us get into this deplorable situation.

RW Yeager
Norton

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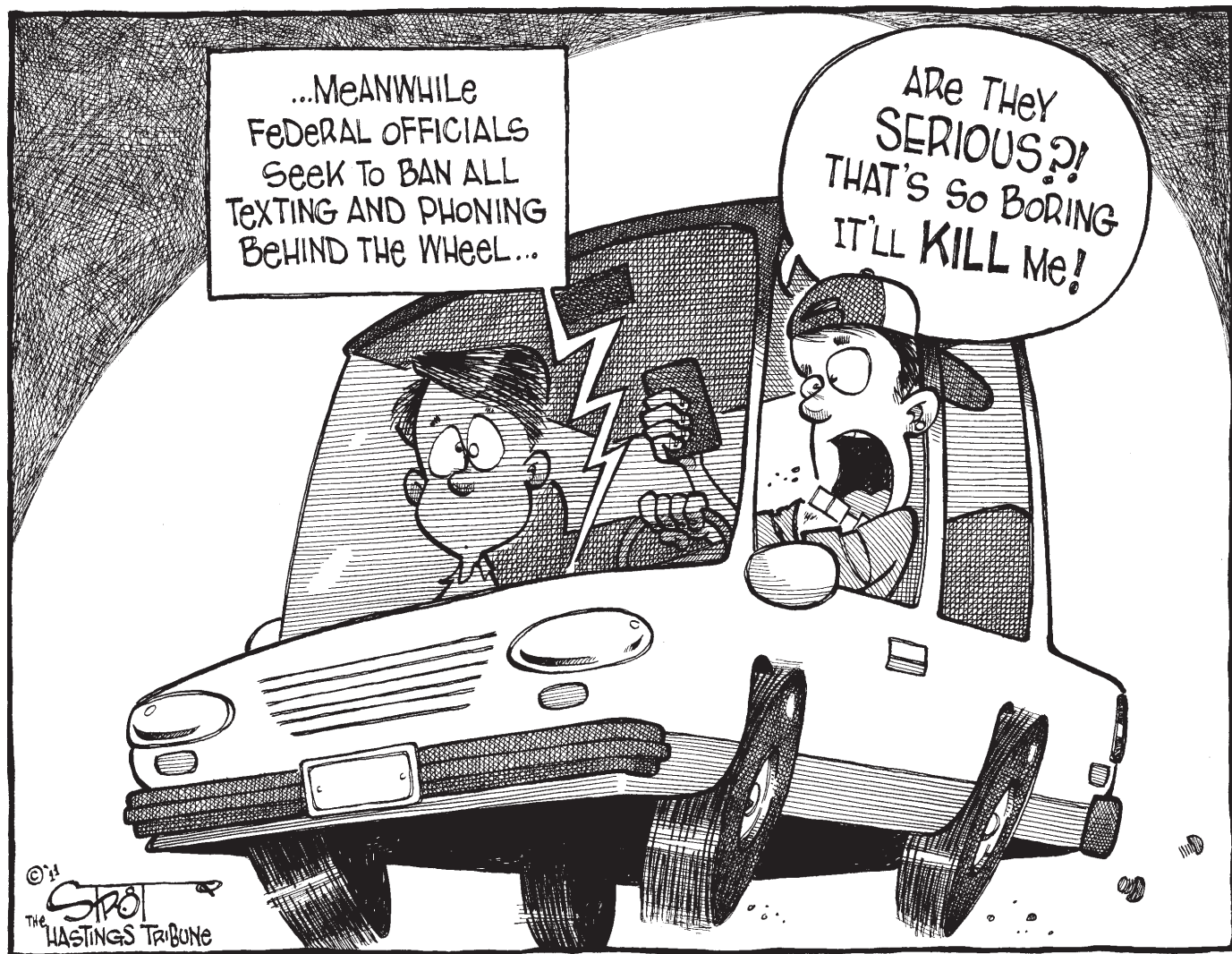
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Christmas gifts to ourselves and others

So here I am writing this while watching old episodes of "Glee" on my new Kindle Fire. I had never seen the show before, but have to admit it's kinda cute. Like a hip-hop version of "Fame." I feel as if this is a flashback to high school days when I would watch TV while doing my homework. Now granted, I never made the honor roll (much to my mother's chagrin), but my homework was always done, and I never missed an episode of "The Dick VanDyke Show."

Jim and I gave ourselves an early Christmas present with the Kindle. It's something we talked about for a long time and finally did it. But I'm still reading the owner's manual because this thing does so much more than I really understand. It has the Weather Channel, FaceBook, e-mail, practically every movie ever made, thousands of books, videos and music. And apps. I have no idea what they even are. We've downloaded a couple of books and some songs into it. It's nice to have in the car because we can read aloud to each other, the screen is lighted and the

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



print is big enough Mr. Magoo could read it.

I'm going to download a couple of movies to take on the road when we head south in a couple of days.

-ob-

I shouldn't admit this but I went "dumpster diving" again this week. It never ceases to amaze me what people throw in the garbage. What caught my eye was what looked like a bag of dog food. It was. A brand-new, unopened bag of name-brand dog food. My friends who rescue dogs were the beneficiaries of that find. While I was there, I dug a little deeper. Here's what I found: a brand-new curtain rod, a cool looking planter and a large oval mirror.

It's not that I really needed any of those things, but I know people who

can use every piece I rescued. A little soap and water and they will be good as new.

The point of this is: if you have something you no longer want, but it still has some life left in it. Don't pitch it in the trash, take it to one of the many thrift stores in the area. They will find a new home for it. It makes me think that some people have never had to do without if they are willing to throw away useable items. I hope they never fall on hard times: they won't be able to handle it.

-ob-

The candy and cookie factory at the Plotts' is about to shut down operations for another year. I'm going to make myself fix two more batches of caramel corn, one more batch of fudge and some mini banana breads, then "stick a fork in me - I'm done."

I love Christmas, even though I always take on more than I can accomplish. But I wouldn't have it any other way. It's part of this special time. So, from our house to yours, we wish you a very Merry Christmas.

Using the gift of memory, now, today and often

If I could request but one gift during the holiday season, I'd ask for a book. Books abound with a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. They provide hours of adventure and entertainment rarely found anywhere else in today's culture.

A couple of books I would include on any wish list would include, Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese and Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett.

Cutting for Stone is about Marion and Shiva Stone who are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon at a mission hospital in Addis Ababa. Orphaned by their mother's death in childbirth and their father's disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. This novel is an unforgettable journey into one man's remarkable life, and an epic story about the power, intimacy, and curious beauty of the work of healing others.

Pillars of the Earth is set in 12th-century England and the story line revolves around the building of a cathedral in the fictional town of Kingsbridge. The ambitions of three men merge, conflict and collide throughout 40 years of social and political upheaval as internal church

Insight

John Schlageck



politics affect the progress of the cathedral and the fortunes of the protagonists.

Another book I once read, and pick up to review from time to time, is Howard Thurman's, The Mood of Christmas. The message in Thurman's book revolves around a gift he says everyone should enjoy and use in the best way. This gift is memory.

Thurman defines memory as, "one of God's great gifts to the human spirit without which neither life nor experience could have any meaning."

What Thurman urges in his book is to use your memory now, today and often. Think what a priceless gift it is.

What if you had no memory? Every second, minute and hour of every day would have to begin for the first time. Learning would be impossible and education would be meaningless.

Instead, humans have the power to store vast amounts of information and experiences throughout their lives. All we have to do is think about it

and we can recall these thoughts and experiences on demand with the use of our memory.

Some people store only unpleasant memories. Every slight is filed away. When a later encounter is made with the person responsible for the offense, the individual is chastised again, either mentally or verbally.

After a period, the memory storehouse is full of unpleasant thoughts. The mind is filled with suspicion, resentment and hate.

For others, only pleasant thoughts are stored for safekeeping. Such thoughts can be summoned at a moment's notice. They restore faith and re-establish confidence in life at difficult and trying times.

Remember with the coming of the New Year, look to the future with hope - the confident expectation of good. Use the gift of memory to your benefit. Enjoy past experiences and remember life is what you make of it. Make it good.

And as for reading or giving a book this holiday season, there are plenty of other wonderful books waiting to be read. So go on line, visit your favorite book store or swap books with a fellow reader. Just remember, this is the perfect time of year to read a book.



Thumbs up to the Church of God Choir for the program this weekend. Mary Luehrs did a wonderful job of directing. I really enjoyed it. Called in.

Thumbs up to the gentleman that announced for the wrestling match held Saturday. He kept everything in good form considering all that was going on. What you do is greatly appreciated. Called in.