

A mixed up Christmas brings family together

Christmas 2011 is well and truly over at our house. The decorations are down, the house is quiet and our routine has been re-established.

Christmas certainly turned out differently than we anticipated. In the fall our son Matt suggested he and his family were going to Georgia to spend Christmas with his sister Allison. So we resigned ourselves to Christmas alone. It would be okay; we could do that. It had to be better than the Christmas we spent apart.

Then Allison announced she planned to drive home for either Thanksgiving or Christmas; which holiday did we prefer? Selfishly I said Christmas, knowing this Christmas might still be given over to Matt's in-laws. That was the way things stood until Allison shared that Matt and his family planned to drive to Norton right after Christmas. Wow! That certainly changed things, and I began planning menus and sleeping arrangements.

A couple of weeks before Christmas Allison announced she had invited her older sister to come to Norton for a day during her visit. That she might come surprised us, as Becca hadn't been in Norton in several years. I decided I should adopt a "hands off" approach and wait to see how things played out.

Allison arrived in Norton on Friday, December 23. She'd driven through rain but had not encountered any other problems. Christmas Eve morning Becca and her entire family arrived. We opened some gifts, including all the presents I had sent her. Some hadn't been wrapped, so I handed out the "every year" gifts of jammies and boxers to our grandsons without benefit of wrapping paper. (Not that it made much difference, our older grandson Christian takes after his mother and is quite skilled at opening and re-wrapping not only his gifts but his siblings' presents as well.)

While I was fixing dinner, the kids set up Skype on our younger grandson Kaleb's laptop so that they could visit with Matt and "meet" their cousins, Annabella and Lillyanne. The youngest of Becca's children, Mady, decided she wanted to come back on Monday so she could meet her cousins in person and spend time with them. We put our heads together to arrange transportation for Mady's return.

After eating we took the customary family photos and waved goodbye as the Arterburns left to spend the rest of Christmas Eve with Becca's in-laws in Ogallala, Nebraska. Bob and I then prepared to go to church.

Christmas Day was quiet, but things began to gear up on Monday. Matt and his family were on their way to Norton, and Bob and I prepared to drive to Lexington, Nebraska, to pick up Mady. We all arrived at our house at about the same time.

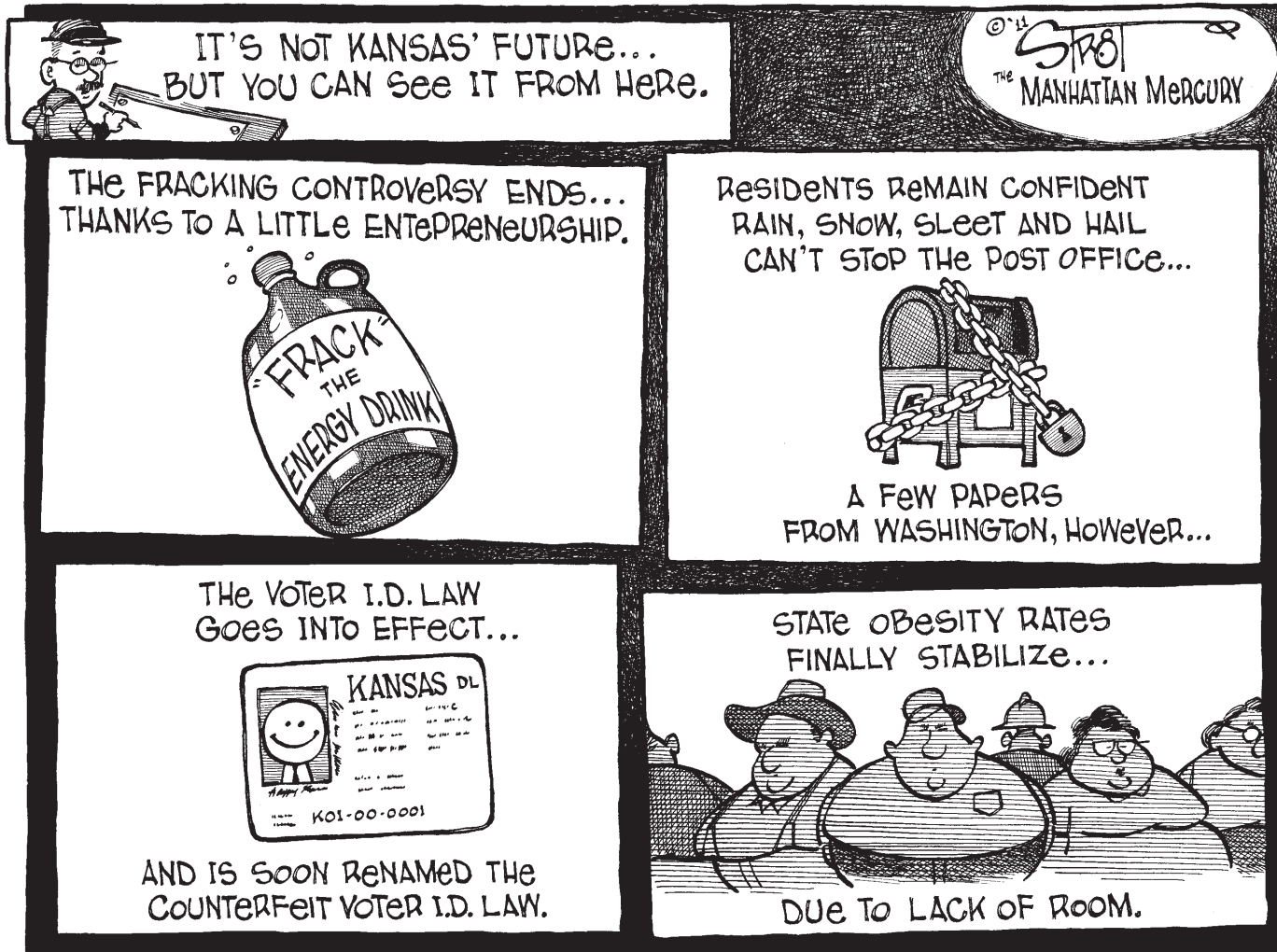
On Tuesday we exchanged gifts with Matt and Allison. Mady was surprised to find a few things under the tree with her name. This day was so laid back that we had pizza for supper instead of my cooking another big meal. Matt and Michelle and the girls left the next day, and we made arrangements to return Mady to her home. Allison stayed here to begin packing for her return trip to Georgia.

Thursday we said goodbye to Allison as she began her 1200 mile drive home. We kept in touch during her two-day trip by cell phone and tried not to worry too much (we are parents, after all). Friday we made one more road trip, this time to Kearney to exchange a Christmas gift that arrived minus a necessary piece. We arrived home shortly before Allison texted that she had arrived at home safely.

What an event this Christmas was! We saw all the family. Of course I wish we had all been together at once, but I have wonderful memories and good pictures. God blessed us so richly this year, and I am so very grateful.

I hope you all have a New Year filled with peace, joy and love.

Life is Good
Rita Speer



Heating ways from back in the old days

In the most recent issue of Consumer reports Nathan Maxwell of Leavenworth, Ks asked, "You say never to put a space heater in a child's room. What's the best way to heat a cold bedroom without roasting the entire house?"

The expert replied, "Sounds like you have a heat distribution problem", going on to give tips for strategic opening and closing of vents, etc.

My first reaction was maybe the bedroom didn't have a vent! All you boomers raise your hands if you slept in a heated bedroom as a child!

Remember the old floor furnaces? The hubby's younger brother burned his feet on such a unit. My sister fell on ours. She put her hands out to catch herself resulting in burns on the soles of her feet and the palms of her hand.

I'm not certain it even merited a doctor's visit. I do remember every night mom slathered on some sort of salve and wrapped her hands and feet in gauze.

I hate it, I'm turning into one of those "back in the old day's" people.

Later we got two wall furnaces. The trick was to get a flannel sheet, make a tent and climb in for a few minutes. When you and the sheet were good and toasty you made a run for the cold bedroom! With luck you fell to sleep before the chill set in.

The hubby thinks he had it tough, but

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



he eventually got an electric blanket!

We had a porch around our room so even though there would be ice inside the windows we never had snow sift in as he claims happened in his room. So he wins that one!

We were discussing these hardships with another couple, there stories were similar! The lady ended the reminiscing, "Sound like we all had the same childhood." How did we survive?

I may have misunderstood Nathan's Consumer Reports question. But it amazed me that the expert never considered the fact that perhaps the room was cold because there were no heat vents.

Two of the bedrooms in my house do not have vents! It's an old house; I consider it part of the charm. Of course, I don't sleep in those rooms. You'll have to ask my house guests how charming they think it is! I'm guessing they would say the winter is more tolerable than the summer!

It seems to me that there are worse things than having a cold bedroom.

We turn the thermostat down at night unless there is company upstairs. We sleep much better when it's cooler.

I once read a book written by a patient in tuberculosis sanatorium in the 40's or 50's. The woman said the windows in the sleeping rooms were wide open year around. The theory was fresh air was vital to recovery.

She also reported the patients, despite their weakened conditions, never suffered any adverse effects from "catching a chill"! She was quite convinced that colds and flu are passed by "germs".

Remember the old-fashioned boarding and fraternal housing with "sleeping porches"? Just what are the true risks of sleeping in a cold room?

As to the unfortunates in the unheated bedrooms at my house: I provide extra blankets and flannel sheets! Sometimes we get lucky and are blest with relatively warm temperatures as we were this past Christmas. I had a full house but no complaints about the bedrooms!

The joy of having a family together does a lot to warm things up!

Nathan didn't solicit my advice, but I can't help myself! Buy your kid pajamas with feet. Get some flannel sheets and a warm comforter for the bed or an electric blanket. When they grow up they will be a little tougher and have stories to tell their grandkids.

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- ★ **Governor Sam Brownback**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. roberts.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-4774
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002. moran.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-6521
- ★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 300 SW 10th St., Room 262-E A., Topeka, Kan. 66612. ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us (785) 296-7399
- ★ **Congressman Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. huelskamp.house.gov (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124
- ★ **State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka, Kan. 66612 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov (785) 296-7659
- ★ **State Rep. Ward Cassidy**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Topeka, Kan. 66612 ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov (785) 296-7696

Keeping legislators out of education at election time

The state of our education reveals much about the health of our nation. Quality education creates a strong defense, a thriving economy and good health for communities. However, as with many things, government tends to make everything too complicated and education is no exception.

The old adage, "If you don't play the game, you don't make the rules," rings true for educators. Legislators want to have a say in every aspect of school from science to sex education. There was a time when education was directed by educators, not legislators, not parents, but teachers and principals. We didn't have a lot of interferences in our school day. The classroom doors didn't open and close very often. Teachers taught, principals led and parents encouraged their children. When the door shut after the morning bell rang, it would stay closed until lunchtime, and the same with each ensuing session.

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



We learned to read, do math, phonics and work together. We also learned respect and manners and if, by chance, you got into trouble at school, it paled in comparison to the wrath you would experience at home. Seldom did a parent attack a teacher/principal and side with their child. Was that always the correct call? Probably not, but it succeeded in helping children understand the purpose of orderly actions.

We always told our children, "Find what you love to do and you will never have to go to work again." Educators generally have found that seldom is

monetary compensation the driving force of their career choice. Too many times in recent years, education has been marginalized and not seen as the foundation of our country. Students have been encouraged to major in a field where they can demand the larger salaries. Legislators have too often used their role to diminish teachers' value.

This is an election year, not just for the president but for all of those who locally, statewide and nationally can put our nation on track. Let us study the voting records, friendship pacts and the ideas of those wanting our votes as we prepare to support candidates, regardless of the party. Our votes do make a difference and aligning ourselves with those who value education is a cornerstone for our country's strength. <mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net>mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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