

## Where is our money best spent

Dear Editor,

The issue of spending 2 or 3 million dollars for a new swimming pool in the city of Norton brings to mind how things were in Norton in 1954 when the swimming pool was built.

Every store front in the downtown area was full of businesses. There were three drug stores, two jewelry stores, five restaurants, a bus stop, Heaton's Coke bottling plant, several farm equipment dealerships, several car dealerships, two hotels, three grocery stores, a bakery, two or three hardware stores, Horney's appliance store and a record shop, a Duckwalls and a Ben Franklins, JC Penney's, Montgomery Ward, Borwne's clothing store, Virtues clothing and dry goods store, Cottage Style Shop and other dress shops, two banks, a movie theatre that was open every night and afternoons on Saturday and Sunday (filled to capacity). There were two lumber yards and also a bowling alley and two funeral homes. I am sure I left out a few things, but I'm sure people's memories will be refreshed.

There was one police car and four officers who drove their own vehicles to work and the officers used the police car for their shifts only. The Sheriff's Department had one vehicle and it belonged to the sheriff. He had no deputies. Nobody in the police department took the patrol car home with them. The officers were always on call.

There were full service filling stations downtown and several motels, restaurants and full service fillings stations and a car dealership on Highway 36.

Go downtown now and take a look around. It is frightening to see all the empty stores and buildings. Things have regressed in Norton the past 58 years and I cannot see it getting better. As the children graduate from high school they go away to college and get jobs in the city and never come back to live, as the job market here is nothing! They'll probably do as I did, come home to visit the family.

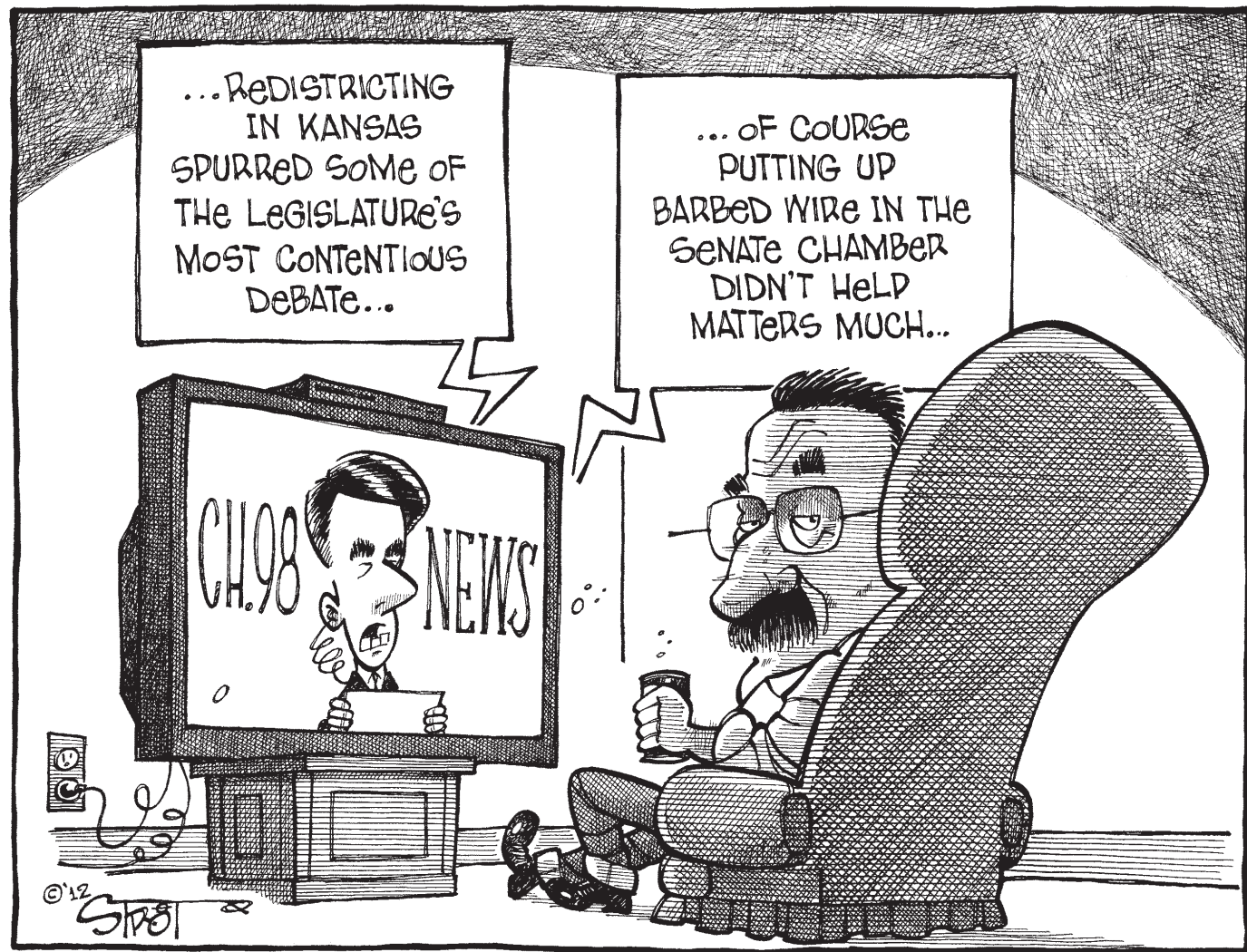
Who will be left to pay for the new swimming pool? We people on Social Security. The city and county keep raising our property taxes every year and we have a hard time paying them on what little our retirement checks are. I am against paying higher taxes each year when I do not see how it is benefiting the city of Norton.

The new water treatment plant is not satisfactory. The letters from the city prove that the water still is not safe to drink. We use bottled water. Are our tax dollars paying for that? Who pays for the new pickups and vehicles the city employees drive around town in, and we see them parked in their driveways in off hours? Who pays for the fuel for these vehicles? If they are on-call firefighters they can get to the fire station just as quickly in their own vehicles). I guess the taxpayers are left to pick up the tab!

There are not too many of us left in the county to do that. The census from the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002 was Norton County population: 5,841, the city of Norton's population: 2,943. On the Kansas Secretary of State's website in 2010, Norton County population was 5,671 and Norton city population was 2,928. Not a growing situation!

My opinion: Put a cork in the existing swimming pool and use some of the money (that is so readily and willingly to be spent) on fixing the city streets, mowing the weeds from the city streets, getting rid of some of the eyesores around town (crumbling, vacant dwellings that are attracting varmints, also piles of junk in people's yards and vacant lots, etc). Let's give new businesses an incentive to come to Norton.

Vi Belden  
Norton



## Some people lack a sense of humor

My weekly coffee group recently contemplated the lack of humor in today's world, most especially in the lives of children. As we reminisced, we realized many things we did as kids would have gotten us into serious trouble now, but back then pranks were as much a part of childhood as was losing teeth.

Lack of a sense of humor was grossly reflected this week in the suspension of 60+ Walker, Michigan, high school seniors who road their bikes to school as their senior "prank".

The principal, Katharine Pennington, was unaware of the upcoming prank and as one of the students said, "That was the idea!" The principal's reasoning for inflicting the punishment was "the prank" tied up traffic, made it difficult for teachers to get to school and was

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



dangerous. She sent the students home, banned them from participating in the senior walk and, for some, from the graduation ceremony itself. Pranks meant to hurt someone or cause embarrassment are one thing, but this was a truly innocent prank.

This year the NCHS seniors placed hay bales in front of the entrances to the school and thank heaven, High School Principal Rudy Perez and Superintendent Greg Mann saw it

for what it was...a rite of passage. Inconvenient to early arriving teachers perhaps, but not harmful in the least.

Common sense and humor have become rare commodities in today's world and we are worse off because of it. Although Principal Pennington has apologized to the students, the damage is done. The teens have lost respect for an authority figure and they will be much more cynical than before.

Henry Ward Beecher once said, "A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road." Hopefully the seniors in Walker, Michigan, will view this as just a bump in life's path and will develop a sense of humor if not because of this experience, then in spite of it. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

## Graduation, the first step into your future

When I was young I recall graduation with mysticism: eager 17 and 18 year olds marching to Pomp and Circumstance, a crowd dressed to the nines. For days after we hummed the song, practiced the march, and dreamed of the day we donned the gowns.

I can pinpoint the day it lost the allure: my older sister's graduation from Kansas State University, a football field and a couple of speeches. At some point the master of ceremonies told the graduates to move their tassels to the left and pronounced them graduated.

It was so impressive I boycotted my own college graduation a couple of years later. It was the 70's. I can't explain, you had to be there.

I retained a bad attitude especially for eighth grade graduations. They may have been worthy of a celebration back in 1920, when it would be the only graduation for many.

Today they are a stressor. I overheard a mother discussing her daughter's impending eighth grade graduation. It required a formal, a hair appointment, nails, reception, gifts etc. The lady said, "For the girls eighth grade graduation is about out doing each other, it needs to stop!"

If I were to hazard a guess the boys show up in polo shirts and new athletic shoes. The crowd is somewhere between jeans and pajama pants. The main fashion accessory is a "Pro-Ag"

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



ball cap! I know! I attended a High School graduation last weekend.

Still I try to put on a happy face. One of my greatest regrets is not requiring our oldest daughter to "walk" at her graduation from Kansas State University.

We all agreed, it would not be her last graduation, so why bother! Her Master's was bestowed by another University. I hope graduation there has improved; in 2005 it was a mess.

Somewhere along the line Kansas State figured out how to "do" graduation. The advance degrees are one day; the undergrads by College another. Everyone walks across the stage. Each College does something unique to them. Ag has fun. The Business College has a wonderful reception for those with advance degrees.

I'm glad to see this considering all the blood, sweat, and tears (not to mention money) it takes to get a degree! Grads should have a moment of glory.

I would be remiss if I did not give a shout out to Wichita State University. From a parent's perspective they

do everything well from Freshman Orientation to Graduation.

A commencement address entitled "10 Things Your Commencement Speaker Won't Tell You" by Charles Wheelen was posted on Facebook recently.

It was interesting to read the comments. Different points had meaning for different people.

For me it was: "3. Don't make the world worse. I know that I'm supposed to tell you to aspire to great things. But I'm going to lower the bar here: Just don't use your prodigious talents to mess things up. Too many smart people are doing that already. And if you really want to cause social mayhem, it helps to have an Ivy League degree. You are smart and motivated and creative. Everyone will tell you that you can change the world. They are right, but remember that "changing the world" also can include things like skirting financial regulations and selling unhealthy foods to increasingly obese children. I am not asking you to cure cancer. I am just asking you not to spread it."

Congratulations to all the grads! Your parents, friends, school administrators did what they thought was best to make a memorable day for you. The important thing; Graduation is one day. It is up to you to make the rest of your life what you want it to be.

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