

## Exercising one's right to believe

People protesting against religion in government have gone a bit too far this time, we think.

A group called Americans United for Separation of Church and State raised a howl when Gov. Sam Brownback appeared at a religious rally a couple of weeks ago.

"The governor is really overstepping his constitutional bounds," the group said in a release. "He was elected to serve as governor of our state, not our state pastor-in-chief."

So what exactly did the activist group object to?

According to press reports, the governor talked that day about how he turned to God after learning he had cancer in 1995.

"I finally reached up and said, 'God, this life's yours,'" the governor said. "It started a great adventure."

He ended his talk by praying for forgiveness of his sins and the sins of others.

Organizers of the ReignDown USA event denied that they wanted political leaders to enforce any kind of religious belief on the state. The event was designed to promote "humility, prayer and repentance," they said.

What really ticked Americans United off, however, apparently was a proclamation the governor issued beforehand declaring the day of the rally as "a day of restoration."

That amounted to the governor using his office to promote religion, the group said.

"The people of Kansas do not need politicians telling us when, how or whether to pray," Vickie Sandell Stangl, president of the Great Plains Chapter, said in the statement. "If anybody needs to repent, it's Gov. Brownback. He needs to repent for violating the constitutional separation of church and state."

So was the governor promoting religion or just exercising his right to believe?

It's a fine line. American leaders have always proclaimed their piety, at least when it suits them. Most presidents have attended church. Most governors have led prayers and attended religious events. Our founding documents call upon the deity to guide and protect the Republic.

Perhaps Gov. Brownback stands out because he's made no bones about his Roman Catholic beliefs or his conservative approach to religion. He's an attractive target.

We're not here to argue for mixing church and state. School districts should not force students to pray, nor should the government support or promote the church, any church.

We're a free nation, though, and even the governor should be free to believe as he wishes. He shares the First Amendment with the anti-religionists.

But can our leaders pray in public or declare their faith in God? They have since the beginning of the Republic.

Our Constitution is an imperfect document, and its meaning has shifted with time. Where it once shielded slavery and denied women the vote, today it does neither. Public prayer? Our leaders are allowed, but no one is compelled to agree with them. That's part of what freedom means.

— Steve Haynes

### On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



## Holiday gifts, illness and all

My daughter, Halley, has been here for a few days. She came for Christmas and we've had a great time. Sorry Jim missed it.

He didn't miss it in the literal sense. He was physically here the entire time. But, cognitively, he's been gone. It all started with a nasty, hacking cough he hadn't been able to shake for a couple of weeks. It was getting to the point where he couldn't sleep and he was getting worn down. The day before Christmas he managed to see a doctor and was prescribed an antibiotic and a high-powered cough medicine containing codeine. His first dose was about 11 a.m. It's a good thing he was sitting down when he took it, otherwise he would have fallen down. When I say he was out, I don't just mean he dozed off. I mean, the lights were out and no one was home. Sometime during the night, he must have roused enough to take a second dose, but he didn't get the cap back on the bottle and poured the entire contents into his lap. Christmas day he managed to stay awake just long enough to eat a few bites of dinner and then, right back to sleep. This continued until Thursday afternoon when he managed to stay awake for a few hours.

When he's fully recovered, I'll tell him what a good time he missed.

-ob-

Normally, Jim and I don't do Christmas presents. We like to give them, but neither one of us care that much about getting them.

Or so I thought. This year I discovered that I had actually accumulated about three

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



presents for Jim. A pair of alpaca wool socks I picked up during my ladies club road trip in October; his usual pair of overalls; and a nice, long-sleeved, cotton shirt with his preaching school's insignia embroidered on the pocket. Then to top it off, an old friend stopped in my office the week before Christmas with the offer of three window panels for a Model T. I jumped on the offer and wrapped them up, too.

I was acting pretty smug, thinking I had really pulled one over on Jim when I noticed a rather large, nicely wrapped box under the tree. It had my name on it with a hand-written sign, "Don't shake or tilt."

Christmas Day Jim wasn't feeling too good (see above paragraphs) but he feigned enthusiasm for his gifts.

I on the other hand was almost giddy. When I opened my present I was flabbergasted. There was the most beautiful, bright yellow, upright stand mixer I had ever seen. Years ago I had talked myself out of wanting such a fine piece of kitchen machinery. But, secretly, I had always desired one. And, now, I had one.

Oh, I know Jim may have had an ulterior motive for getting the mixer. After all, he will be the beneficiary of the culinary delights I will be expected

to produce. But, that's OK. It will be worth it.

-ob-

Two of Halley's cousins (my brother Dick's boys) were in the territory for Christmas and she wanted to see them so we made a quick trip to Dick and Donna's place for a visit.

Somehow the conversation got around to how long Jim and I have been married and, inevitably, the topic of our first date came up. I couldn't believe Sheldon had never heard the story so I was giving him the highlights.

I set the whole story up. How it was going to be a "sympathy" date; how it was on April Fool's Day; and how, during our ride to a restaurant in a neighboring town I kept saying, "I don't get involved. I don't make commitments; and let's just be friends."

When I got to the part where there was a lull in the conversation as Jim was searching for the right words, I said, "And then, there was a pregnant pause."

With a confused look, Sheldon said, "What's a pregnant pause?"

Halley said, "I'm not surprised you've never heard of it. The term refers to silence. Something the Kelley family knows nothing about."

His brother Kirk said, "Well, in theory, it's when no one is talking."

Halley added, "Some people actually don't mind silence."

Anyway, we all laughed so hard, I'm not sure I ever finished my story. But, I guess, Sheldon knows it all worked out because....they lived happily ever after.

## Good advice, never wear a white bathing suit

Before we all become buried in the new year, let's look at this new beginning with a bit of humor. Plenty of people trot out their lists of resolutions. Often, such lists are as long as their arms and last as long as their pinky.

I've all but given up on New Year resolutions. Seems I can't keep them either. But this year I've decided to do something different. I've compiled a list of "lesser" resolutions — some things I believe I can accomplish in 2013.

Here's what I will try to work into my new year:

Remember that no time spent with your children is ever wasted.

Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.

Never laugh at anyone's dream.

Don't wash a car, mow a yard or select a Christmas tree after dark.

When traveling, take two big safety

### Insight John Schlageck



pins so you can pin the motel drapes shut.

Always accept a breath mint if someone offers you one.

Keep the porch light on until the family is in for the night.

Rehearse a joke before you tell it.

Always try the house dressing.

Believe in love at first sight.

Send your mother-in-law flowers on your spouse's birthday.

Buy ladders, extension cords and garden hoses longer than you think you'll need.

Steer clear of any place with a "Ladies

Welcome" sign in the window.

Once in a while invite the person in line behind you to go ahead.

Exercise patience when behind the wheel of your vehicle — hand gestures are out of the question.

Own a hammock and use it often.

Never be photographed holding a cocktail glass.

Give people more than they expect and do so cheerfully.

Be as friendly to the janitor as you are to the board chairman.

Overestimate travel time by 15 percent.

Never wear a white bathing suit.

Don't miss a good idea simply because you don't like the source.

When you say, "I'm sorry," look the person in the eye.

Trust in God, but always lock your car.

Have a wonderful 2013.



Dear Editor,

All of this ridiculous clap-trap coming out of Washington about the fiscal cliff would be laughable if it wasn't such a farce and a danger to our country.

The problem is big government and big government spending. For the first time in our history the public sector is larger than the private sector, and with all the babble coming from both sides, there isn't one word about reducing the size of government.

With the exception of the Military, the dupes in Washington should immediately and arbitrarily lay off ten percent of government employees. After that if they would put the remaining unelected bureaucrats, and Congress, on leave of absence, we would immediately start becoming the great country we once were.

R.W. Yeager  
Norton, Kansas

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

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

OFFICE HOURS:  
8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.  
8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732

#### STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager  
Advertising Director/Managing Editor  
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com  
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports  
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com  
Michael Stephens..... Reporter  
Society Editor/Area Sports  
mstephens@nwkansas.com  
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production  
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association



Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:

e-mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kansas 67654