

We have many reasons to be thankful

Three years of drought, at the end of a recession, troops at war on distant continents, an impasse in Washington. What do we have to be thankful for?

It might be our schools. They're losing enrollment and fighting budget cuts, but they're mostly the best. They turn out kids with high test scores and a low ratio of violence. They're long on sports and character, short on dropouts, discipline problems and failure.

They are, for the most part, places where students go to learn and have fun. They're schools, not warehouses. They get the support they need when the chips are down and the budget is tight.

Or maybe it's the weather.

Yeah, I know it's been dry. But we live in a place where the summer is bearable and the winter is (usually, not this weekend) sunny, bright and warm. The humidity stays low most of the time and you can be outdoors most days.

There are those long, lingering sunsets in the fall, awesome thunderstorms in the summer. The Lord usually sends us enough moisture to grow a crop and keep some trees.

What more do we need?

Well, it'll rain again some day.

We've got miles of wide-open vistas to be thankful for. Back east, you can get claustrophobia driving down the highway. Here, you can see 50 miles on a clear night. In Denver, half the time, they can't see the mountains across the valley.

Maybe it's living in a place where government is both honest and efficient. In Kansas, we take it for granted that the folks down at the courthouse are working for us, not to get into our pockets.

Let one step over the line, take just a few bucks, and they'll wind up in jail.

If the war is dragging on, remember that we were attacked. If we don't vanquish our foes, they'll be back — again and again.

America is the last, the only superpower. We didn't ask for the job of policeman to the world. There's nobody else to take it.

We should be thankful that we're still able. Imagine a world without some sort of order, a place where dictators run rampant and democracy is on the run. Imagine the world in the 1930s, for instance.

And be thankful.

We should appreciate living in the best and most free country on earth.

It's not perfect, not by a long shot. But it's a much better place than it ever has been. It's free, safe and, even in a recession, prosperous.

In America, we live better than any nation has in the history of mankind. In America, we're free to think and live as we please, to pray and work as we please. If our country has some faults, that's the price we pay for freedom.

But thankfully, there aren't many.

Out here, we should be thankful that we live among the nicest, most generous and friendliest people anywhere.

We live where you can walk down the streets at night and feel safe. Where you can leave your house or your car unlocked and expect things to be there when you return. Where people wave when they pass you on the road.

We've got game, fishing, open fields and the open road.

What more could we ask for?

Yeah, there's a lot to be thankful for.

— Steve Haynes



Youngster becomes quite a jokester

Four-year-old Taylor has begun to understand the subtleties of delivering a good joke.

It makes you the center of attention, people hang on your every word, and, of course, everyone thinks you're very smart. But, unlike people five times her age, she actually remembers them. She has some great one-liners. She will ask, "What do you call a bear with no teeth?" But before delivering the punchline she will caution, "Think about it."

Then you say, "I don't know. What do you call a bear with no teeth?"

She will double over with laughter and say, ever so smugly, "A GUMMY bear!"

However, the fine line between a "what-do-you-call" joke and a "knock-knock" joke eludes her. Her daddy asked her the standard, "Knock, knock."

"Who's there?"

"Orange."

"Orange who?"

"Orange-ya glad I came to see 'ya?"

She "got it" but then she wanted to tell her own "knock-knock" joke. Except she didn't know any, so she tried to make some up. She would go through the entire "knock-knock" routine, but then her punchline wouldn't make any sense.

I said, "Taylor, that's not funny. Wait until you can learn some jokes."

Of course, that hurt her feelings.

"I'll never get it," she wailed.

Don't worry, kid. Even Jerry Lewis had to start somewhere.

—ob—

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



By the way, this edition is coming to you direct from Plano, Texas. Jennifer, Alex and I, along with Jennifer's neighbor, Eileen, made the midnight run between northwest Kansas and Texas on Friday night. Jennifer and I both hate to waste a day of vacation driving, so we left after work and drove during the night. With Eileen along, the conversation was lively and the time and the miles sped by.

Jim has just started another new house, so he will come down the day before Thanksgiving.

He was really pushing to get it closed in before winter hit, although a call home reveals "Ole Man Winter" has made his presence known. Jim said we had about an inch of snow on the ground and it was really cold.

—ob—

Looks like we got rid of our livestock just in time. We had been feeding the calves, Ike and Mike, since spring. Jim thought this would be a good time to sell them, before he had to start chopping water for them and while cattle prices were still up a little bit.

They were nice looking calves, and it

sure felt good to put that check into the savings account. When you do livestock like we do, part hobby, part money-maker, it takes the pressure off.

We buy their grain and hay in small quantities, so we don't have to budget much to accommodate them. Then when we sell them, it all seems like profit. Of course, if we kept records on our profit vs. costs ratio, it might not look so profitable. But then, keeping records would take the fun out of it.

—ob—

I'm trying to ease into Thanksgiving preparations this year. I already have my rolls made and in the freezer. Pie crusts are next on the list, and since Jim is bringing the turkey, I need to remind him on Tuesday to take the bird out of the freezer. It's ironic, isn't it, how we take days to prepare this feast and it takes about 20 minutes to devour it.

How blessed we are to have no more cares than how many varieties of salad to make. We have such an overabundance in this country, we have no idea how the biggest share of the world lives. The very poorest of our poor are still wealthy by comparison to most people in the rest of the world.

I know I can't save the whole world, and if I could send my leftovers to a starving child in China I would. But, I still try to do my part by helping feed people somewhere. Won't you?

Have a happy and hearty Thanksgiving!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

To the Editor:

I wish to comment about a delightful visit this past week with my parents, Evelyn and Carrol Hall at Whispering Pines Retirement and Assisted Living facility.

I was able to stay in the lovely guest quarters close to my family and share meals with them in the dining room.

Cynthia Collins, director, and her staff could not have been more accommodating. As a daughter living many hours away, I thank the Norton community for providing such a beautiful and needed housing option for their citizens.

Cordially,

Carolyn Hall Gilhausen

Life is tough sometimes, or not

Steve and I took a mini-vacation a couple of weeks ago. He claims he has to get me out of town to keep me away from work.

Even that doesn't work, however, because we both take our computers.

This was a one-day trip to Denver for a concert, a glass of wine and a night at a downtown hotel.

Steve got tickets for the Lucinda Williams concert on Wednesday night and I booked a room at the Comfort Inn downtown. We planned to drive in after work, park at the hotel and walk to the concert, which was at the Fillmore about 12 blocks east of downtown.

Steve and I have a routine when arriving at hotels. I check in and he deals with the luggage — in this case two computer cases and a small suitcase.

But there was a hangup at the desk. The clerk told me they were booked up and the person who had our room the night before wasn't leaving.

In other words, there was no room in the Inn.

So, for the same price they had booked us a room at the Brown Palace across the street.

Oh woe is us — forced to stay at the luxury hotel. Life is tough.

We boogied across the road and checked in as a pair of bellhops grabbed our bags and practically carried us upstairs.

There was ice in the bucket, water in the

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



silver pitcher and a mint on the pillow.

Life was tough.

We dropped our stuff and headed for the Fillmore, although the bellhop's suggestion of hors d'oeuvres and music in the lobby was tempting.

The walk was brisk but enjoyable and we arrived during the middle of the opening act — a nice band that ended its set with a gospel song.

The Fillmore is a strange place. It has the stage at one end and what appears to be a huge dance floor in the middle with a few small tables scattered down the sides. Mostly, however, it hosts concerts.

We were able to get a spot up front and after about 45 minutes, the main attraction came on.

Lucinda Williams was weird, but we had a good view of the show even though we had to stand the entire time. The band was fantastic, Ms. Williams has a great voice but she went from overly talkative to haggard within a few songs and appeared almost too tired to finish the show.

Her voice never gave out, though, and at a big place, like Red Rocks, we would never have noticed the slumping shoulders and closed eyes.

Steve, I and several others in the audience had our own opinions of why she was having trouble, but while others voiced the thought that rehab was in her future, I kept my mouth shut. She gave us what we paid for and the rest wasn't my business.

After the show, we wandered into a late-night restaurant and had a snack and a glass of wine, then it was back to our substitute hotel room, which had free high-speed Internet access.

Life is tough, I told you.

We both got stories to edit and things to work on for the way home off the Internet while having coffee in our room the next morning. Then it was time to pack up and head back to the real world.

It wasn't a very long vacation, but it was a fun one and I even got a little work done.

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

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