

We're what's killing rural America

If rural America is dying, what's killing it? Though it's popular to blame Wal-Mart, I don't think that's it. Wal-Mart is a symptom, not a disease. What's killing rural America is rural Americans. We don't realize how good we have things, and we don't invest in our own, wonderful way of life. We teach our kids that they need to go off to the university and get a good job in the city. We don't make jobs for them back at home like we used to. We do our shopping out of town or with some big, faceless corporation. We don't support the hometown grocery or the mom-and-pop stores on Main Street. We're hooked on the excitement of going to the big stores and buying big-brand merchandise. A trip to the next-bigger town becomes a social outing, not just treason to the local economy. But it's more complicated than that. Wal-Mart exists because it does what people want. It has low prices, if you don't mind hiking through a jammed up, ding-and-dent parking lot. It's open all day so people can shop when they have time. One retail expert notes that in an era when everyone works, a store that's open 9 to 5 must be catering to the retired and the unemployed. That's not the most profitable demographic, is it? Go to any Wal-Mart at night or on Sunday, or 9 p.m. on a Wednesday, and you'll find cars from all the surrounding towns. Go downtown in those same towns, and you'll find most of the stores locked and shuttered. Maybe the owners are home complaining. Maybe they're over shopping at Wal-Mart along with all their customers. Most of our towns have places to buy the things we need. These businesses provide jobs that keep our towns going. They are the building blocks of our communities. But we drive right by them on our way out of town. Then we get together and complain about the declining population and the ever-lower enrollment in our schools. We gripe that it's tough to attract new businesses. We complain that no one wants to live "out here." We'd all be a lot better off if we learned to invest in our own towns and the businesses that support them. Instead of hitting the highway to buy a car or a coat, we ought to look downtown. Out on the highway. Or worst come to worse, in the next county over. Not in the city. Not at some chain store that sucks profits out of our town and sends them to five of the wealthiest people in the world. We don't, though. We think we're going to save money on the road. We're mad at the town grocer or the Ford dealer. We want to have some fun. Hey, nobody spends all his money at home. There are things you can't get here. There are things we want in the city. That's not the point. If we want rural America to survive, rural Americans have to start investing in our own back yards. We need to spend most of our money at home. We need to shop at the town grocery and support the downtown stores. We need to spend our money where it supports jobs and taxes and profits at home, not in Arkansas. Even if it costs a few cents more. Because if we don't, we're all going to have to move to the city. And while it's a nice place to visit, I don't want to live there.

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Veterans bring back war memories

Our editor was talking in the office regarding another "column." I did NOT volunteer.

Then there was some conversation regarding a column that previously ran in the newspaper, "Out of the Past."

When I went home, my brain began to say, "That would be rather neat to write about things of interest from the past". My age allows me to remember the past, if the brain will co-operate. My age, ah, yes, well that's material for another day.

I hope this column allows readers to "remember" and allows the younger readers to understand their parents' and grandparents' lives better.

I attended the Veterans Day potluck dinner. I was disappointed that more people did not attend to honor Veterans. Now, before I scold too much. I realize a large audience watched the parade and respectfully honored our veterans.

Soon we will be remembering Dec. 7. That brings many memories to mind for a large segment of our population. I was very young on Dec. 7, 1941, but I knew something very serious had happened. My parents "sat around the radio" a great deal the next few days and I knew things were going to change.

My young mind did not comprehend fully at that time. Then three of my uncles joined the Navy, one of them died very young because of complications received

Memories

Sonya

Montgomery



in the service. My other uncle went to the Army. Then there were other relatives and friends who began to go away and flags began to hang in windows.

Later came the rationing, and I remember my mother using molasses or honey in the bread and other baked goods because we used sugar very sparingly.

Gasoline was also on the ration list, as well as tires, and because we were living on a farm, we seldom drove to town. Because I was so young, I'm sure that I did not feel the full impact of the war, but it made me forever grateful to those who served.

One thing I felt was that the entire country seemed eager to do what they could for their country.

People could purchase savings bond stamps, which cost 10 cents each, you could then put them in a book and when you had \$18.75 in stamps you could purchase a U.S. savings bond. I don't remember how many stamps I had, but I did feel that I was helping soldiers by purchasing

stamps when I could with some of my allowance.

Not too many years ago, I found a letter written to my great-grandmother from her niece in 1939 discussing the "winds of war in Europe."

Isn't it rather sad that now we use the telephone or "write" to each other by e-mail and they go to la-la-land or somewhere and probably future generations will not know our thoughts.

There have been other "conflicts" which have affected our lives in many ways, too numerous to mention in this column. Nearly every person knows someone who has served their country in these conflicts.

The conflict we are now in, whatever side you come down on this debate is your right because of the sacrifices soldiers have made in the past. It seems to me that "our rights" should carry with them responsible action and conversation.

When politicians and others talk of "how slow" the process is going, I have to believe they haven't been around very long. My memory kicks in and reminds me that World War II took many years to win and many more years to rebuild the countries.

Yes, I know, it's a different kind of conflict or war, but probably even more difficult in some ways because you are not sure who or where the enemy is.

Wanted: home for pair of kittens

Steve says our youngest daughter is an enabler. Saturday night she called to tell me that she had access to a wonderful calico kitten that needed a home.

Further conversation brought out the fact that there were actually two calico kittens in need of a home.

I was tempted by the first kitten, but knew two was not in the cards.

My personal cat limit is three. We have had more in the house, but only because we were cat sitting — sometimes for a year or two — or one of the cats had had kittens.

Since Kubla Khan disappeared a month or so ago, we have been down to a pair of felines.

Miss Molly and April Alice are like sisters. They fight all the time.

On the other hand, two cats are kinda nice.

There's just Steve and I now, so two laps and two cats work out just right. Two cats, however, do not work out to one on his side and one on hers on the bed at night.

Two cats in the bed equals one cat fight with us as the mat.

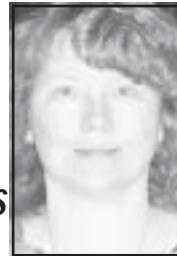
I have to admit, however, that I have been dreaming of a third cat. My preference would be for a young male — not a kitten, but not over 3 years old and preferably Siamese or part Siamese.

My preference does not usually mean a ding dang thing when it comes to cats, however. They find us — not the other way around.

We were after a young tom for my son when April Alice purred her way into my arms and heart.

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



She was the reason we had eight cats that spring. We knew she was pregnant when we took her home, but since we couldn't catch the young tom, my son said he'd take one of the kittens. He got two. Actually, I know the two calicos youngest daughter is trying to pawn off on me. They lived at our place in Colorado last summer.

Rachel spent the summer in Colorado at our house with youngest daughter. She brought her cat and three kittens.

Looks like it's one down and two to go for Rachel. I thought she had them all given away. Well, that's not the first time I was wrong about a cat.

Actually, I suppose I'm somewhat responsible for at least one of the kittens. I saved its life.

I was reading when I noticed that the kitten had become tangled in a drapery cord and was in the process of hanging itself.

Still, I don't think I could take one and not the other. They'd be about 7 or 8 months old now and probably very attached to each other. It wouldn't be right to take one and not the other.

And, as I've already said, three cats is my personal limit.

However, if anyone out there is interested in a pair of really cute, playful cats, I know where to find them. Just call the paper and leave your name and number.

I'll find you, because you know something? I'm an enabler, too.

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