

## Hiding injuries could harm sports

There's not much good about HIPPA, the Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act, unless you're a bureaucrat or a privacy freak.

It's costing us billions of dollars as the health industry changes everything to meet new federal regulations, but there's little benefit to the average consumer.

And there are some real problems created by this whacked-out law. As usual, when Congress changes things, it's the unintended consequences that come back to haunt us.

Preachers can't find out who they need to visit in the hospital. Newspapers can't get lists of hospital admissions, so friends don't know when people are laid up. Hospitals lose their connection to the community.

One of the more esoteric dangers has been little remarked, though, and that's the threat to the integrity of professional and amateur sports.

It's been the tradition, for many years, for sports teams to make full public disclosure when an athlete is injured. That puts the information out in the open and creates a level playing field for information.

With the new law, though, that's not happening anymore, at least in college and school competition. Many schools are afraid they will run afoul of federal law and are no longer releasing information on injuries.

The University of Kansas, for instance, has never said why quarterback Bill Whittemore missed three games this year.

Whittemore went down under an avalanche of purple in the K-State game. All the school would say was that he couldn't play. News accounts referred to "a possible shoulder injury."

That's dangerous. It creates a situation where insider information might become so valuable that gamblers will corrupt sports teams to get it. It's happened before.

While we don't like to admit it, there is a lot of gambling on sports, even though it's illegal in most states. Any time an illegal operation generates a lot of cash, corruption can't be far behind.

It'd be easy to say that we shouldn't concern ourselves with the problems of gamblers, but that's not quite the case. Illegal gambling is run by crooks who'd think nothing of spreading bribes around to gain an edge.

Some might scoff, but gamblers have shown over and over, from the Blacksox scandal to Pete Rose and friends, that the potential for corruption is never far away.

Sports information needs to be run like the stock market: the facts need to be out in the open, and everyone needs to have access to the same set.

Athletes, from high school through the pros, should agree when they join a team that they give up any right to privacy with respect to injuries or illnesses that might affect performance. There's nothing wrong with that.

Joining a team is a voluntary act, and there is no God-given — or constitutional — right to play football.

Players ought to be able to control their own information and waive their privacy rights. But if necessary, Congress should change this law before a sports scandal shows us just how wrong it is.

It'd be folly to wait until after the fact to see what's happening here. — Steve Haynes

## 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.

We do not publish form letters or let-

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## Husband solves corny problem

If nothing else, my husband is ingenious. We needed a better way to haul, store and dispense the fuel for our corn-burning stove.

Up 'til now, Jim had hauled it home in an open trailer, shoveled it into plastic buckets, and stacked them on the side porch. They were so heavy I had trouble carrying them, and it was time-consuming to always be filling buckets.

That's when he "hit" on the idea of putting wheels on an old combine bin and making a cover for it. He beefed up the legs with angle iron, added a tongue, and now all he has to do is hook it on to his pickup and away he goes.

The bin will hold about 50 bushels. When he gets a load, he can, with some fancy maneuvering, park it (more or less out of sight) behind the house. Then it's nothing for me to take two buckets out for corn.

Two half-full buckets are much easier to carry than one completely full bucket.

At first, when he opened the corn chute, a bump on the lip of the chute sent the grain flying in all directions. Jim's motto, when you have a problem like that, is "Get a bigger hammer." A few swift licks with the sledge hammer straightened it right

## Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



out, and now the corn flows in a nice, straight stream.

One thing about it, the squirrels love the "accidents" we have when the corn doesn't make it into the bucket.

—ob—

Halley got another invitation this year to a White House Christmas party. But it was already agreed last year that if she rated another invite, her sister would be the beneficiary.

So Kara is the one this year who is making the plans for a trip to Washington.

She said she got a good deal on her airplane tickets and found the perfect dress, so she is all set. I know exactly how she feels right now. I could hardly believe it was possible for ME to be in the White House. Even standing right next to the President of the United States, it all

seemed surreal. Like I was having an out-of-body experience and watching myself go through the motions of shaking his hand and speaking to him.

My opinion of him has not changed over the past year. If anything, I am even more convinced that God has his hand on President Bush.

I think he is the only man who has the will and the strength of character to make the decisions that have had to be made.

—ob—

Our friend Theo sent me a document that proves all of Santa's reindeer have to be female:

A field report from the Wildlife and Game Commission reveals that both male and female reindeer have antlers.

The report went on to state that male reindeer shed their antlers in the fall while female reindeer retain theirs until after they give birth in the spring.

Given that every historical account of Santa and his sleigh depicts it being pulled by eight antlered reindeer, that can mean just one thing: pregnant females are the only ones who can pull this fat man — in a red velvet suit — around the world in one single night without getting lost.

## Teacher, mother provided guidance

As I think about writing a column, I find myself very apprehensive, as if I were writing a "lesson" for Miss Doris Ballard.

What a teacher — she taught English and journalism at Norton Community High for many years.

She was so knowledgeable, but I was always very nervous when I handed in my articles for the high school paper, *The Nugget*.

I was always concerned whether she would read my article as I thought I wrote it, or would she read something else into it.

Now I find myself wondering the same thing.

I think Miss Ballard probably thought I should stick to math, bookkeeping or music classes.

Fall is here, or at least the calendar indicates such.

We need moisture in any form so much, but if it can't rain, we will be content with the beautiful temperatures.

## Memories

Sonya Montgomery



My mind goes back to the farm as a child. Fall was always so beautiful, but a lot of work.

My mother grew acres of flowers and a big vegetable garden.

We used to say to her that my Dad would have been able to farm another five acres if we didn't have flowers, garden, fruit trees, strawberries, grape vines and raspberry bushes.

When fall came, all the old foliage had to be taken up and destroyed.

I always thought it was way too much work. However, our cellar was always full

of delicious vegetables, fruit, juices, jellies and jams for our family and to be shared with many friends and relatives.

There were also a few more flower bulbs to plant in the fall, so we would have even more daffodils, tulips, crocus and other bulbs flowers.

Many people benefited from the beauty of the abundance of the flowers. My mother took flowers to shut ins, church and other places for people to enjoy. The flowers also made our farm home more beautiful inside.

When I was very young, one of my chores at the farm was to keep fresh flowers in a vase in each room in the house all spring and summer.

I wonder how many mothers find such "jobs" for their children these days.

Sweet peas were always my favorite to pick and arrange in a vase and we always had plenty of them because the more you cut them, the more they bloom.

May your memories also bring you a sweet aroma.

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