

Opinion

Memories with mom

By John Schlageck

My mom is in her 80s and each time I travel to western Kansas we have plenty of time to visit. Our conversations are varied and we cover plenty of ground, however, we always seem to revisit those bygone days of her youth — especially that period during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl days.

Like my dad who farmed in Sheridan County all his life, Mom grew up on a farm northwest of Logan in Phillips County — western Kansas. As a teenager in the midst of the Great Depression, her family along with others throughout our state and the Plains region were also hit with a multi-year, devastating drought.

Still, she was fortunate to live on a farm. The good part of living on a farm was her family grew or raised nearly all of their food. The unfortunate part was there was little moisture to grow much of a garden during this dry spell. That's when she and her younger sister, my Aunt Edna, used to gather greens that grew in the grader ditch — lambs quarters, etc.

Mom often talks about the cows they had for milk and butter and chickens for eggs and meat. Her older brother, who was a dead eye with a .22, helped put meat on the table by shooting jackrabbits. She also talks about raising a couple of black and white Hampshire pigs each year.

It was an exciting event when fall finally came, temperatures cooled and the family all gathered to butcher the hogs. There was an old expression back then that folks used during the butchering process. "We'll save everything but the squeal."

Her family made sausage and rendered the fat outside in a big, black iron pot. They had gallons of lard to store and use throughout the year. They hung the hams to cure and salted the bacon down in the old meat box for the winter.

Everyone worked a full day cutting, trimming and cleaning. That night, my, what a feast — thick-cut pork chops, mashed potatoes, gravy, fresh-baked bread.

While most of this list of food was a treat, gravy was a staple in her early diet and for many years to come.

She never used a recipe. She used bacon fat that she kept in the refrigerator and put these drippings in an old cast-iron skillet that had been her mother's. Mom added a handful of flour, salt and pepper and poured in the liquid — part milk and water. For many during this period, water gravy was all they had. There is another saying for this period and I heard it often from her, "Gravy saved more lives during the Depression than antibiotics do today."

One meal I can remember my grandmother making — seems every time I showed up she made it — and that was what some people called Irish stew. This staple, cooked in heavy, tin-like pots and pans consisted of boiled cubes of beef, onions, potatoes, carrots, salt and pepper. Later in her life, my mother made what we called mystery stew almost every evening meal.

You never knew what would be in this the next time, maybe chicken, maybe beef, maybe steak — no one knew. It didn't taste half bad but I couldn't understand how she never got tired of it because it always tasted the same. Being of good German stock, my mother knew how to stretch the meat, beans, potatoes or vegetables to make a good meal.

We often had a plain white cake with chocolate frosting or a delicious apple pie with a crust that crumbled when your fork touched — made of lard of course.

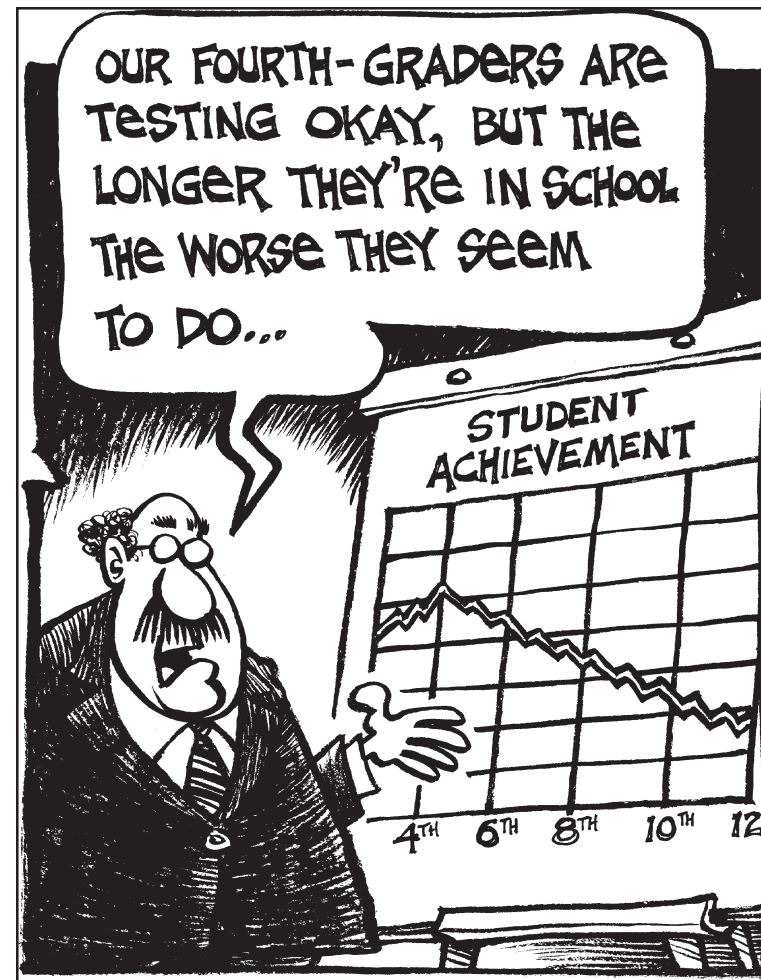
While often the companionship and fun was more plentiful than the food on the table when Mom was a youngster, still mealtime was mighty important. It was a measure of a woman's worth — keeping her family fed.

Mom took the good things from this period and used them later when we were growing up — she was never one to complain and regardless of the situation, she always found a solution.

Like so many of her peers across Kansas, Mom grew up going to church and school learning the values common among all children of the Depression. She was thankful for what she had, saved everything and still does, shared whatever she had and was compassionate for others.

We learned from our parents too. We learned to work hard and smart and never give up when things were tough. The examples set by our parents and grandparents serve us well today.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years.



Watch for some new columns

We are always looking at columns, cartoons, and entertainment-related articles that offer our readers diversity. Once again, I have run across some that might be of interest to many, but I would like to know what you think.

In the next couple of weeks, the Free Press will be sampling three columns: *Help Me Harlan!*, *Dr. Joyce Brothers*, and *Dear Seventeen*.

The *Help Me Harlan* column is written by Harlan Cohen and offers candid, informative and honest advice from a male perspective. In researching this particular column, I was impressed with its unique form centering on the issues affecting younger readers.

Another column, *Dear Seventeen*, is written by Atoosa Rubenstein and is also aimed at the



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

younger reader. The reason I selected this advice column was because of its question and answer format specifically aimed at helping teenage girls. In addition, the column boasts that it would also be good for parents looking for insight into what's going on in their teenager's mind. Dear

Seventeen claims to deliver big-sister advice to girls — but, let me know what you think.

Dr. Joyce Brothers, known as being "the mother of media psychology" was another choice I decided to try. When I was younger, I recall reading her column every day.

With the addition of these three new columnists on a trial basis, I sure would enjoy knowing what you, the reader, thinks.

Consequently, once the articles begin appearing next week, please let me know your opinion about any or all of them.

Enjoy these new additions to the newspaper.

Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.

Hospital administrator answers questions

By Janice McCart, CEO

Citizens Medical Center, Inc.

In the July 17, 2006, letter to the editor, Jim Smith had a number of questions about services that Citizens Medical Center, Inc. provides for the community of Colby and the surrounding area.

I invited Jim Smith to come to Citizens Medical Center for a tour so that I could answer his questions and show him our advanced services. I extend a personal invitation to anyone who has questions or would like a tour to contact us and see what we have to offer.

The following are answers to those questions from Smith's letter.

"Why was an Orthopedic Surgeon brought to Colby?"

Each week emergency room physicians from around northwest Kansas have a number of patients present with complicated fractures, dislocations and other bone and joint injuries, tendon and ligament injuries, and amputations. These patients have had to travel (oftentimes by personal car and in a lot of pain) to Denver, Hays, or other distant communities to be evaluated and treated. With Dr. Saba (the new surgeon) being available in Colby, a lot of time, money and grief can be saved, and injury and pain can be taken care of more immediately. The first week Dr. Saba was in Colby, he had five emergency room consults where he was called in to evaluate the patient.

Due to the percentage of elderly living in northwest Kansas and the active lifestyle that we live, there are a large number of orthopedic cases that need to be evaluated and treated on a daily basis. The sheer numbers of patients requesting these services demonstrates the need for this service to be offered locally.

Patients have continually requested that we offer more services locally so they do not have to venture into the city to get their medical care. By having Dr. Saba perform cases in Colby, friends and family do not have to navigate city streets and pay for unexpected travel costs.

There are communities in northwest Kansas that are not served by visiting orthopedic surgeons and Dr. Saba will be able to meet that need in those communities that are lacking those services.

"Concerning Dr. Saba, what happens if your patient having a total knee starts to hemorrhage?"

As with any surgical procedure, all patients are screened by the physician prior to any surgery. If a patient is considered a high risk they are referred to a higher level of care.

"Where will the blood supply come from?"

The hospital's laboratory is supplied with blood from the American Red Cross in Wichita. Our laboratory routinely stocks thirty units of blood as well as eight units of plasma. Our Laboratory crossmatches nearly 400 units of blood every year and gives nearly 75 percent of that amount to our patients. In addition to these products, our lab is responsible for procuring nearly 30 units of platelet's packs each year for our patients. The Wichita Red Cross relies on Citizens Medical Center to be a supplier to most of our neighboring hospitals in northwest Kansas. Colby's hospital normally ships about 60-80 units to area hospitals each year.

"What happens if your patient has medical complications such as a heart attack?"

"Where will you get the specialist you need?"

We treat medical illnesses and complications daily. Forty percent of all heart attack patients in the past year were treated at the Colby hospital and returned to their homes. Patients having heart attacks are usually seen in the emergency department or placed in intensive care unit status if they are an inpatient. The Colby hospital knows that time is of the essence with any heart-related illness or heart attack. Immediate treatment is initiated to promote heart function and health. Treatment includes medications used to dissolve clots causing heart attacks and strokes.

"Is the hospital staffed with specialist to take care of these emergencies?"

Citizens Medical Center is staffed with very competent physicians who staff our emergency department 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These physicians handle all the emergencies, stabilize patients, treat patients and transfer those patients that need higher levels of care.

"What happens if your patient has respiratory problems, is there a ventilator available?"

Citizens Medical Center has many life support systems to include both adult and infant ventilators as well as BiPap and CPAP systems. The Cardiopulmonary Department is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. Our scope of practice includes both routine and highly advanced interventions including but not limited to, oxygen delivery, medication delivery procedures, volume expansion therapy and other secretion mobilization modalities. The Colby hospital can provide immediate diagnostic testing with real time interpretation to include arterial blood gas analysis, electrocardiograms, cardiac stress testing and pulmonary function testing. Our therapists are trained in life support management to include non-invasive and invasive procedures for all ages of patients. The hospital's therapists are all board certified, nationally recognized seasoned therapists with over 150 years of combined service in caring for the cardiac and respiratory compromised patient. Each therapist is proficient to provide every modality of therapy and diagnostics for all ages of patients from the neonate to geriatric. Each practitioner works along side our physicians and other hospital staff in caring for patients in our intensive care unit, emergency room, nursery and medical ward. All of the full time therapists have their Advanced Life Support and Neonatal Resuscitation certification. Several have their Pediatric Resuscitation certification.

On staff we have two therapists who instruct certification classes. Two staff members are former Adjunct Faculty Professors at the collegiate level and one of our staff members is a Neonatal Pediatric Specialist.

"Is there an intensive care unit available and staffed with nurses with that knowledge?"

Citizens Medical Center has an Intensive Care Unit. Our intensive care unit is staffed with experienced registered nurses who are Advanced Cardiac Life Support certified. Advanced Cardiac Life Support is a certification that is required by the hospital for nursing supervisors and nurses working in the intensive care unit. Advanced Cardiac Life Support teaches nurses how to monitor and treat acute heart related syndromes with the use of medications and/or elec-

trical defibrillation. The hospital currently has 37 nurses on staff who are certified in this area.

"Who is going to give anesthesia, nurse anesthetist or anesthesiologist?"

The hospital has a full time certified registered nurse anesthetist who is dedicated entirely to the patients of Citizens Medical Center, Inc. John Patterson, the nurse anesthetist received a bachelors degree in nursing in 1985. He worked as an intensive care unit nurse for eight years before going to anesthesia school. He graduated cum laud in 1995 with a Masters of Science in Anesthesia. Since then John has worked in a variety of settings both large and small. This is the first hospital John has worked at that did not have a strong orthopedic practice. He is experienced in all forms of anesthesia and has given anesthesia for hundreds of total joint replacement and orthopedic trauma surgeries.

Certified registered nurse anesthetists are anesthesia professionals who personally administer approximately 65 percent of all anesthetics given to patients each year in the United States. These professionals are the sole anesthesia providers in approximately two-thirds of all rural hospitals in the United States, enabling these healthcare facilities to offer obstetrical, surgical, and trauma stabilization services.

"What about all the specialists that have served western Kansas on an out-patient basis all these years? Are we going to ask them not to come out and serve?"

With the addition of Dr. Saba, we can now provide orthopedic services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The addition of Dr. Saba at the Colby hospital now allows for consults that are needed in the hospital's emergency room, as well as orthopedic consults from the local clinics any day of the week. The out-of-town consulting orthopedic surgeons already have surgical privileges at the hospital and may now do even more surgical procedures here with the additional orthopedic equipment. The Radiology Department at Citizens Medical Center is fully staffed with nationally registered and Kansas licensed technologists.

Each of these technologists has been trained in the area of orthopedics and surgery with regard to Radiology. Citizens Medical Center has purchased a C-arm which will provide the usage of x-rays during surgical procedures. This will assist the surgeons in "real time" x-ray localization during orthopedic surgeries, gallbladder surgeries, central line placement, and many other procedures.

The most commonly performed surgeries at Colby's hospital include c-sections, postpartum tubal ligations, laparoscopic tubal ligations, laparoscopic gallbladders, hernia repair, cataracts, colonoscopies, upper endoscopies, carpal tunnel releases, port-a-cath placements, excisions of skin cancers, lesions and cysts, ear tube placements, trigger finger releases, liver biopsies, incision and drainage of wounds, adenoidectomies, hydrocelectomies, stab phlebectomies and arthroplasty of toes. Citizens Medical Center provides quality health care in a healing environment with caring people. Our doors are always open to you.

Close to home by highly trained and skilled medical professionals. It is, without question, amazing what these men and women do daily: saving lives, comforting lives, and changing lives.

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