

Other Viewpoints

Flu needs plan, however mundane

Maybe H1N1 will turn out to be another Y2K — all hype and no havoc. But with the virus having been confirmed in nearly half of Kansas counties and blamed for one death, public health demands that officials prepare for the worst. The University of Kansas already has found itself with more than 30 suspected cases just a few days into the semester, raising fears about the virus' potential to sweep through student populations this fall. At least at KU and elsewhere, officials now can use electronic messaging to alert students, faculty and staff about outbreaks and more.

(The) H1N1 summit in Topeka, broadcast to six sites around the state, made it clear that Gov. Mark Parkinson, state health officer Jason Eberhart-Phillips and other leaders hope up-to-date information will empower those on the front lines of the fight statewide.

Of course, Kansans have to hear that information, then act accordingly....

And the recommended precautions sound so mundane that people may not take H1N1 as seriously as they would some exotic disease.

But the steps also sound easy, if only people will follow them: Wash hands often and thoroughly. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Sneeze into a sleeve. Stay home if sick, and until temperature has returned to normal for 24 hours (without medication). Get the H1N1 vaccine when it's available, likely in October....

Meanwhile, in case of large outbreaks, Kansas schools should be thinking about how they might move learning on-line and isolate ill students within buildings. Former governor and current Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius also urged businesses Monday not to penalize parents who need to miss work to be with sick children or to get well themselves....

With state officials having warned that 1.1 million Kansans might become infected over the next two years, the H1N1 threat is real, if manageable. Just don't call it "swine flu," a term not only scientifically inaccurate but also bad for Kansas agribusiness.

—The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press

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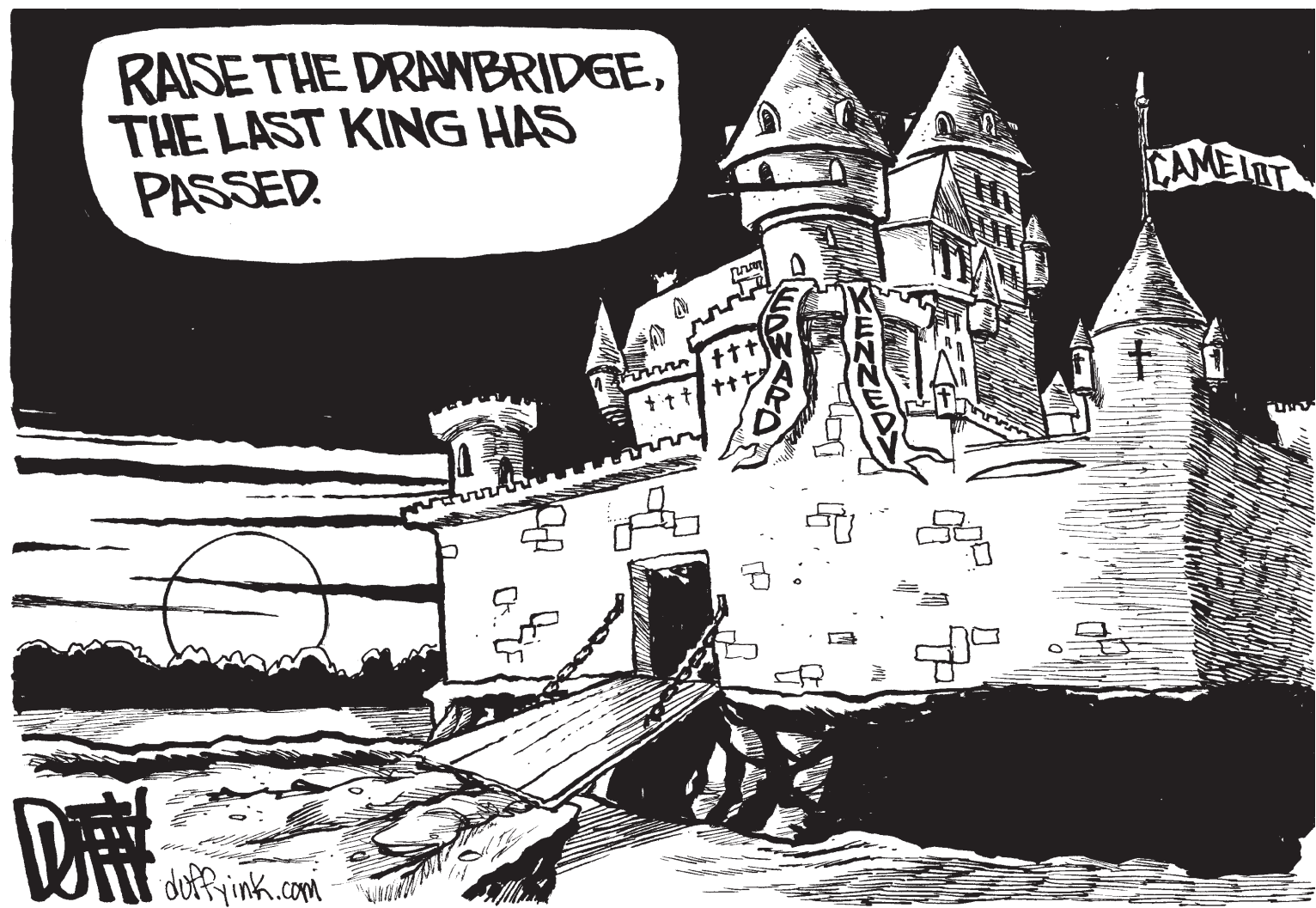
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Now where did I put that?

There are a few things that, when mislaid, are just going to drive you crazy.

Your car keys. The sheaf of papers you were carrying when you went for coffee. Your watch.

I don't think this has anything to do with age. Age affects your short-term memory, causing those "hereafter" moments.

You go to the basement, and when you get there, you wonder what you're here after.

You go back upstairs and notice you needed flour and worcestershire sauce for the recipe you're making. You go back to the basement.

You see the load of clothes in the dryer needs to be taken out. You unload the dryer, folding the pants and hanging the shirts. Go back upstairs. Remember you were cooking. Check to see what you need. Go to basement for flour and worcestershire.

You know the drill. The older you get, the more trips you make to the basement.

You get a lot done this way.

But losing the car keys? Anyone, any age can do that.

One theory is that once you set them down, they can move on their own, at least as far as a decent hiding place.

If you have cats, you can blame them. Cats can and will move car keys. Cats will push about anything off a shelf, just to see what happens.

Telekinesis might explain some of these things. Your wife might be willing the keys to go into hiding. Or the cat.

If you don't have cats, maybe it's best to stick with the keys-can-crawl-into-hiding theory. It works for me.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

Anyway, I lost my watch the other day, and it was driving me crazy when I couldn't find it.

I was running around the house, looking under, on and beside everything, because it's just a nuisance to not have your watch. I mean, you look at that bare wrist at least three-four times an hour and — it's not there.

We were on vacation in Colorado, where our daily routine includes a hike up some trail, usually with sandwiches for lunch. Cynthia had put the lunch in the pack, freed the dog and loaded the car.

The only thing that was missing was me — and that darned watch.

So I looked on the couch where I had been reading. On the table. In the bedroom, where I'd changed to go to the hot tub. Around the hot tub. In the hot tub.

Nothing.

I think I was driving Cynthia crazy. She said, "You're driving me crazy. Though I admit, it's not a long trip."

Now when Cynthia is ready to go someplace, Cynthia is ready to go. Period. And you should be ready to go, too. Period.

She said she feared the lunch would go bad in the hot car. I said I'd go nuts without my

watch. She mumbled something about the "go" part, went out and retrieved the lunch.

Eventually, I gave up. I went crazy without my watch, but still managed to enjoy the walk. Cynthia says it's important not to let small things spoil your day, so I try.

When we got home, we looked again, but we were too tired to search much. Took a nap. Got up and went to church. Went shopping. Stopped, had a glass of wine and an appetizer. Went home, turned on the ball game. Rockies behind 5-1. Then 6-1. Then the game got interesting. Almost forgot the darned watch.

Legs stiff from walking, etc., I decided to get in the hot tub. Looked over. Saw the watch on the step, under water, right up against the wall.

"Watch!" I shouted.

"Where?" she asked.

I held it up, dripping. She shook her head.

"I hope it's still running," she said.

"It says it's 9:02," I replied.

Apparently, I'd taken it off to keep it from getting wet when I'd taken that first dip.

Maybe it jumped in.

Maybe the cat pushed it in.

I'm pretty sure I didn't put it there in the water.

I looked at Cynthia. Would she have willed it to jump in?

Naw. Too much effort. I think.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Tell Congress: oppose health plan

To the Editor:

I strongly urge you to oppose any legislation that would enact a government-run public health care plan.

A small business surtax would devastate small businesses already struggling with a severe recession. This surtax would hit those who create jobs especially hard because more than six of every 10 affected are small business owners, who have led America out of the last seven recessions and create two out of every three jobs during a recovery.

Other problematic provisions include the public plan, which would be an unfair competitor, shifting costs to the private sector as it becomes big enough to drive down reimbursements. Consumers would flock to the public plan because its premiums would be cheaper, and ultimately no private plans would remain.

Also, any mandate to employers that requires them to offer a one-size-fits-all "minimum benefits package" to all their employees is the wrong idea. The solution isn't to force people to buy into an unaffordable system; the solution is to improve the quality and affordability of health care through market-based changes. Employer mandates, by their nature, limit flexibility and innovation, the foundation of voluntary employer-provided health care.

This legislation will not address the nation's health cost explosion, will steeply hike taxes in an already precarious economic situation, will fail to lead to more affordable, accessible, quality health coverage, and will lead us toward government-run health care.

In short, it will make a bad situation worse, at great cost to the nation in jobs, taxes, and



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

freedom.

I strongly urge you to oppose any legislation that favors a government-run, public health care plan.

Curtis J. Walter, Norton

Directives help make the end easier

To the Editor:

I am perplexed and bewildered at the dissonance over advance directives that everyone should have in case a person is in a coma prior to death.

I told my doctor that if I was ever in a coma and there was little or no hope of my coming out of it, I wanted to be released from life supports. My doctor told me that I would have to have an "Advance Directive" for that.

So, I went to my lawyer, got the papers signed and settled the matter with my doctor.

I don't recall if Medicare paid for the service or not, but it wouldn't have been expensive anyway. So, what is the hubbub about? When I talked to my doctor about the release of life

supports, it was not a special visit. I was at the hospital for a checkup after an operation. The operation had been an emergency; I was sedated and flown to a hospital in Denver.

It was surprising when I woke up to see my son and a neighbor standing a few feet from my bed and they told me I was in Denver.

I was unconscious from Colby to Denver. Death must be that way, completely peaceful, but if I were in a coma lying in a bed, my subconscious mind would be thinking, viewing the past. I don't want that.

I am thinking of my Aunt May, who, years ago, was in a car accident going to Denver and lay in a bed for about a year in a coma before she died. What agony that must have been — not able to communicate — and the past popping up — pleasant and unpleasant.

I don't want that. I remember an incident at my Aunt May's and Uncle Jim's farm when I was about four years old. They had told me not to feed too much oatmeal to the goldfish in the horse's tank because the goldfish would die.

Their son told me, too, but I didn't realize that the oatmeal actually caused them to belly-up. One day when I was feeding the goldfish, Marion walked up to me and bit me — hard!

I was angry at him for a long, long time. But once I realized I had been killing the goldfish, I was heartbroken.

I don't want to be in a coma being remorseful about dumb things I've done.

Besides, being in a coma is probably uncomfortable. I believe in Advance Directives. Let Grandma go to heaven.

Edna A. Hatcher, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

