

commentary

from other pens...

Teachers must be paid like other professionals

The Topeka Capital-Journal on teachers:
There are some legislators who are openly hostile to public education, and who would probably just as soon starve it. Most of us, however, realize that education can be the difference between a life and a life well-lived. And that the public education system is still the backbone of education in America. But even when it comes to private schools, the question is the same: When are we going to start paying teachers like the invaluable professionals they are? The answer: Hopefully before too many more of them retire, leave the state or simply exit the profession in an understandable effort to make a living. ... The Kansas Legislature certainly didn't help. Lawmakers, more worried about their own political reputations, failed to address the issue of teacher recruitment and retention in Kansas this year. The result is that local school districts may be forced to raise local property taxes just to keep up — if they have any room to do so under the law, and some districts do not. ...

Accountability is the buzzword in education today. Everyone is looking for ways to hold schools — read: teachers — accountable for the performance of their students. The state is looking at raising standards for teachers by the 2003-04 school year.

When will we hold ourselves accountable for paying teachers what they're worth?

The Garden City Telegram on Timothy McVeigh:
Don't think for a second that it won't happen again. Timothy McVeigh's execution (June 11) may have closed a chapter in American terrorism, but there will be others that are far more violent and deadly. You can count on it.

McVeigh's legacy as a martyr was immortalized by his calm demeanor at the time of his death. By most accounts, he took his last breaths, then died with eyes wide open. There was no struggling, no desperate plea for mercy. ...

For the families of the victims of the Oklahoma City tragedy, McVeigh's execution brings little solace. ...

McVeigh not only stripped a nation of its sense of security, but it showed other aspiring anarchists that one person can forever change the course of history. In that, he achieved his goals of making the government pay for what he believed very strongly were gross misdeeds at places named Waco and Ruby Ridge.

To reasonable people, McVeigh is a monster; to others, he is a hero whose name will be virtually deified in the annals of mass murder. ...

Someone will come along who wants to claim that mantle as their own, and modern technology will make it possible. It's just a matter of time.

Next time it could be a school, or a crowded sports venue, or a church. It could be another fertilizer bomb, or plastic explosive, or even, God forbid, some sort of nuclear device.

McVeigh exposed our vulnerability. All we can do now is be ready to deal with whatever comes next.

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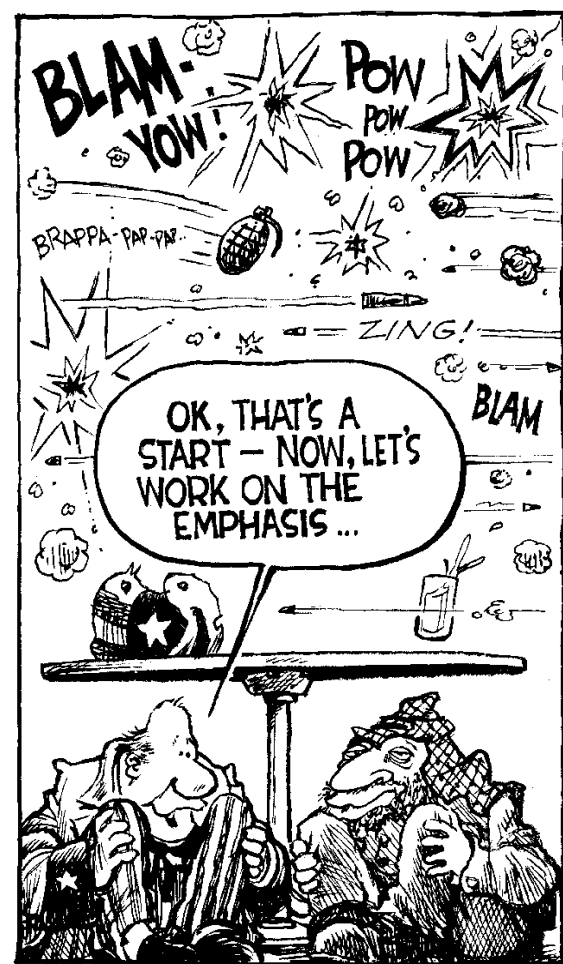
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Death reminds us that our time is fleeting

I don't know about you, but my calendar says another month is half gone. Where does the time go?

Death is coming, and we're involved in trivial things, pretending that it will never happen to us. But it will. Eventually we will all die.

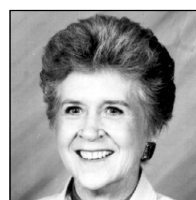
Yet we put off doing and saying the things that will make others — and ourselves — happy.

My family recently had a tragedy — the unexpected death of three members.

A few short moments erased them forever from the earth — though not from our hearts. We reel with the news, God's "shock system" making us numb and unbelieving. We reach back in thought for all the happy memories, the good times, the smiles and hugs that we would never share with them again.

But of course there are also the feelings of guilt when we remember the things we didn't do, the things we wish we'd have said more often, the times when we ignored or were too involved in other things. Tragedy has a way of putting us all in our places.

We realize that our lives will get back to normal, and life will go on.



lorna g. t.

• commentary

We can never replace the loss, but we also can't live with the constant pain. The disbelief that was followed by numbness will give way to acceptance. We will kick and scream against it, but eventually, we will either accept the loss or die ourselves. There's a part of us that will never be the same, a hole of grief which will never be filled, but we will go on.

We will feel mortified when we begin to laugh again. We will feel we've betrayed them when the first day goes by without remembering and hurting. When we mix up the family stories by putting in the wrong names, we'll be embarrassed. We will feel guilty when their faces begin to blur in our memory.

These things will happen at some time or other. They are part of the coping mechanism that God has graciously built into our bodies and minds.

State law lifts veil from most juvenile crime

One of the least understood changes in Kansas law in recent years has been the movement to allow the names of older juveniles charged with crimes to be made public.

Reversing a trend which became the standard for most of the 20th century, the Legislature decided that kids tempted to do bad things might think twice if they knew that everyone in town would read about it in the newspaper.

This was a conscious decision, made because juvenile crime rates were soaring and people were just not sympathetic to those kids who were causing the problem.

The thing is, many people in the system — police, sheriffs, prosecutors, other officials, parents, juveniles — seem to be unaware of the change.

Maybe it's that the idea of juvenile cases being sealed became so ingrained that no one noticed the change. Maybe some people don't agree.

A lot of people have the idea today, years after the change, that anyone under 18 is entitled to private handling in the courts. But the Legislature decided that secrecy was, in effect, encouraging



steve haynes

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juvenile crime. Members viewed publicity as a deterrent.

Many newspapers actually are not aware of the change, and when they seek information, they run into law officers and county attorneys who are not informed.

The Legislature actually made two changes. First, it made open the records of anyone 16 or 17 charged with an offense in juvenile court. Still frustrated with juvenile crime, the Legislature changed the law again, allowing county attorneys to release names and details in cases involving kids 14 and 15.

But years later, it's possible to walk into a courthouse, police station or sheriff's office and be told you cannot see records in these cases. Sometimes

Continual living with the first stunning hurt would be absolutely unbearable. The shock has to lessen, or we will be throwing ourselves into the grave with the lost ones.

God's Word says that we are to give thanks in all things. We can already give thanks for their lives and their love, but our hearts reject giving thanks for their loss. All we can do is thank God for sharing them with us. They were gifts to us to enjoy and mold — and be changed by.

We would not hurt at their loss if we hadn't loved them. And that love was so precious that it is worth the pain. We would not give up the pain if it meant missing the love.

Maybe someday we will understand this heart-break, but right now, we're still asking, "Why?" And all we can do is love even more the ones who are left; who knows when we will be separated? We are not guaranteed even the next moment.

I have wondered what the readers think of my writing, and with the help of the Goodland Daily News and nwkans.com they have established an e-mail box for me. If you have any thoughts on what I write or suggestions please write to me at <lorragt@nwkans.com>

you have to go to the county attorney or judge to see them, and carry a copy of the law.

Is it right to reveal juvenile's names?

I think so. I think publicity is a deterrent to a lot of juvenile crime. I've heard from enough juveniles stung by having their name in the papers to think that it can work.

And I think any teen big enough, tough enough and mean enough to be out committing a felony ought to have to face the opinions of his peers, his community and his county. It's only fair. Some of these kids have committed murder, assault, rape and robbery, after all. They aren't just misguided; they're mean.

And those who are just starting down this road may think twice when they find out that the entire town will know what they did. I've seen it happen.

That's probably mean, but juvenile crime is mean. Just ask the victims.

But right or wrong, in Kansas and in a growing number of states, cases of older juveniles are no longer handled behind closed doors. That's the law. And that's the way it needs to be.

U.S. to share missile defense?

President Bush could utterly disarm his critics by offering to negotiate a missile-defense sharing arrangement with Russia and China.

Democrats at home and allies abroad are opposed to Bush's national missile-defense proposal mainly because he seems bent on unilaterally abandoning the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, much as he dumped the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global warming.

Democrats such as Sen. Carl Levin, Mich., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, are also opposed to rushing toward deployment of a system that has not proved to work and might be enormously expensive.

However, if Bush offered to renegotiate the ABM Treaty with Russia and to share missile-defense systems with that nation and eventually with China, he could substantially quiet his critics and gain their support for speeded-up research.

A careful reading of statements by such adversaries as Levin and Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del., suggests they would go along with a negotiated missile-defense arrangement.

Levin said he favors "robust research and development" of defensive systems, particularly those designed to destroy missiles in their early boost phase to counteract threats from potentially troublesome nations such as North Korea and Iran.

He has argued that "it makes sense to try to modify the ABM treaty to permit development of limited NMD systems while preserving strategic stability and a cooperative relationship with Russia."

Similarly, Biden said last year that "a cooperative missile defense could knit Russia into a Western defense framework. ... It might just pave the way for a worldwide shift from pure deterrence to a mix of offense and defense."

In fact, in some speeches Bush has sounded as if



morton kondracke

• commentary

he is willing to talk with Russia and China about missile defense, though he's made it clear he wouldn't give them a veto on U.S. plans, as the Democrats seem inclined to do.

At other times, however, administration officials — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for one — have suggested we would rush to deploy missile defenses as soon as possible, regardless of anyone else's views, breaking out of the ABM Treaty even though America isn't ready to conduct tests in space yet.

Critics can't figure out whether shifting administration statements represent conflict between the hawkish Rumsfeld and moderate Secretary of State Colin Powell or a good cop/bad cop act designed to make Bush look like a centrist.

Lacking certainty, they've assumed the worst — that Bush is like a tennis ball being knocked back and forth between his top advisers and that he could as easily end up siding with the unilateralist Rumsfeld as with the diplomatic Powell.

Even though Bush has described missile defense as being designed mainly as protection against attacks from "rogue" states such as North Korea and Iraq, Democrats and overseas allies worry he intends to develop a system directed against China and Russia, which would encourage a new arms race.

Such a system would be huge, costly and, its critics say, ineffective because Russia would maintain its missile arsenal and China would develop one to overcome it.

Bush could strike through the fog of suspicion by

telling Russia, China and U.S. allies that they'd be defended by the system under terms to be negotiated in a successor to the ABM Treaty.

When Bush first unveiled his new nuclear strategy in his May 1 speech at the National Defense University, he promised to "consult closely" with allies and said he was "not presenting ... unilateral decisions already made."

He added, "We'll also need to reach out to other interested states, including China and Russia." Russia and the United States, he said, "should work together to develop a new foundation for world peace and security in the 21st century."

He did not offer to "work together" with China, presumably because some in the administration are convinced that the United States and China are destined to become strategic adversaries later in this century.

Nevertheless, the offer should have been made (and still could be) as a carrot to encourage better behavior by China. It would cost the United States nothing. And if China pursued a hostile path, negotiations could be broken off.

Lately, Bush has reversed some other early unilateralist positions, taking Powell's side by agreeing to keep U.S. troops in the Balkans, negotiate with North Korea and take an active part in Middle East diplomacy.

In Europe last week, he also agreed to international cooperation on global warming while continuing to reject the Kyoto agreement, which even our allies haven't ratified.

A missile offer to Russia and China could help convince critics that we do not plan to go it alone in foreign policy, but to maintain the traditional U.S. role of world leader.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.