

commentary

from other pens...

Old-fashioned lady: 'Women don't need to vote'

The Hutchinson News on women's vote:
Citified Johnson County residents typically cringe when they have to rub shoulders in Topeka with their country cousins from around the Sunflower State. ...

But the comments of a social conservative who represents part of the Kansas City area in the Kansas Legislature leave us country cousins wishing to disassociate from the simpletons of the suburbs.

State Sen. Kay O'Connor, Olathe Republican, put Kansas in the national limelight last week by expressing the archaic 18th-century attitude that women don't need to vote.

O'Connor, who describes herself as an "old-fashioned conservative lady," made her remarks in response to an invitation to a League of Women Voters' "Celebrate the Right to Vote" luncheon.

It turns out that O'Connor does not celebrate the enactment of the 19th Amendment. She thinks that giving women the right to vote began a societal shift that eventually encouraged women to trade home-maker roles for careers.

... Last time Kansas earned such national fame occurred in 1999, when the State Board of Education unwisely voted to water down science education standards.

Another social conservative from Johnson County, Linda Holloway of Shawnee, chaired the board at the time....

The elections of O'Connor and Holloway show what can happen when busy voters decide that they have no time for political debate, civic life or public involvement. ...

Now other Kansans, rural and urban alike, have to bear the brunt of the national reaction to O'Connor's shallow statements. As country cousins, we know who to deal with.

We'll think of it as shoveling out a barn stall.

The Wichita Eagle on state budget:

Next year's state budget outlook was grim before Sept. 11. Now it's downright scary.

As a result, lawmakers must consider all budget options when they return to Topeka, even those that many of them would rather keep off the table — including tax increases, slot machines and cuts to needed programs, such as the state transportation plan.

Budget estimates last April projected that the state would collect about \$120 million more in revenue next fiscal year than it will this year. But while that may seem like plenty of money, it doesn't cover required spending increases. ...

Now, after last month's terrorist attacks, a good share of that extra \$120 million likely won't materialize. Sales-tax collections could be lower than projected, due to the decline in consumer confidence. Personal and corporate income taxes likely will also drop, due to layoffs, stock-market losses and declining sales. Even severance taxes may be less than projected, as natural gas prices are expected to be lower this winter.

To make matters worse, the terrorist attacks and resulting job layoffs will require more spending on social services and security at airports and state buildings. ...

Given this new reality, lawmakers will need to look at all budget options. That means rethinking each spending program and making painful cuts. ... It also means being open-minded about a targeted tax increase. ...

Balancing the state's budget will require unpleasant choices. And it will require leaving sacred cows and inflexible ideologies at home.

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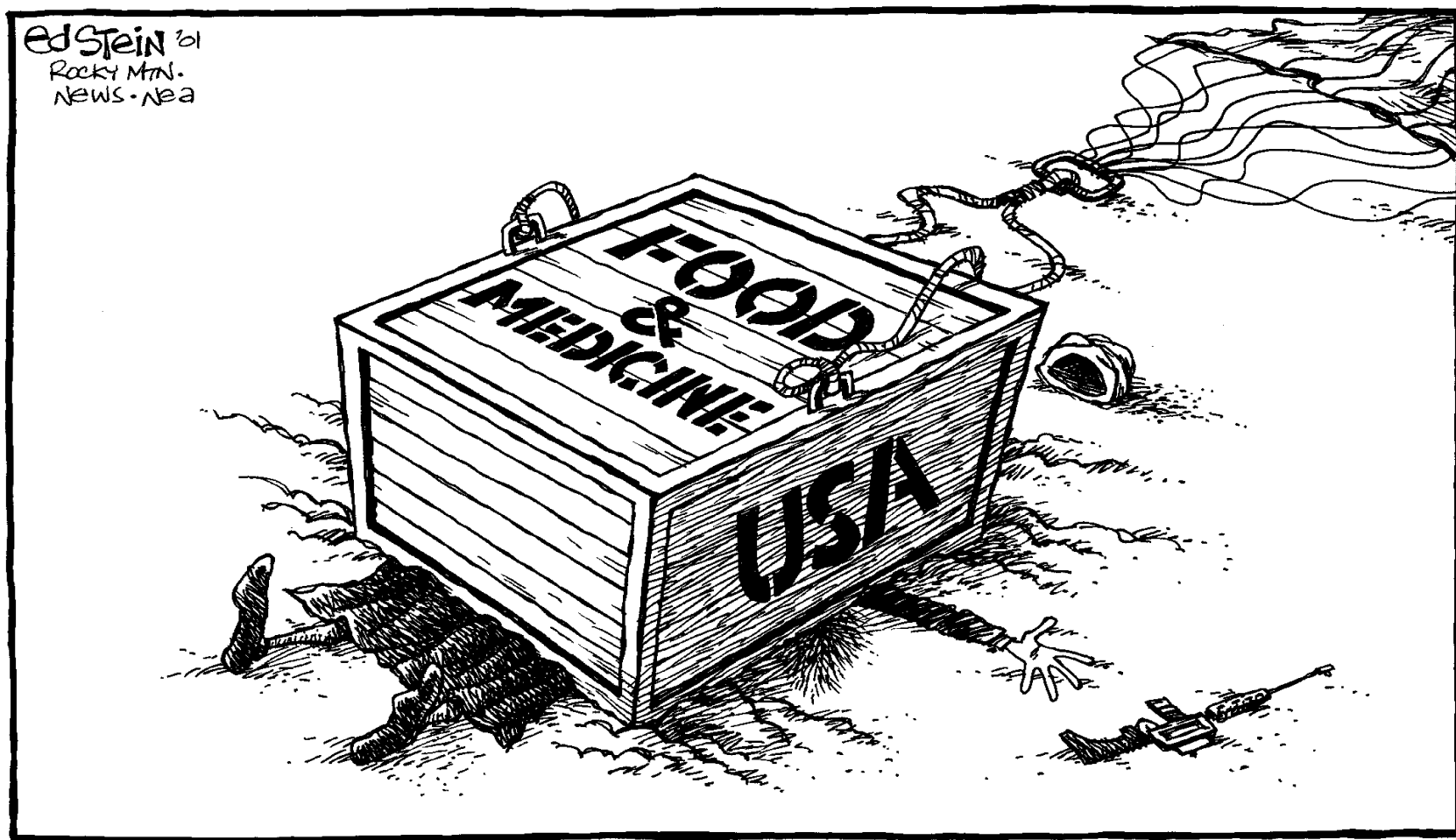
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BEST-CASE SCENARIO

Hiding in the sand lets terrorists win

Ter'rorism - (n) use of force or threats to intimidate, esp. as a political policy.

Ter'rorize - (v) 1. terrify 2. coerce by terrorism.

I have been hesitant to put pen to paper on Bin Laden and his cohorts. Sometimes it's better to avoid reading about or seeing images and ideas of disturbing things. With the wall-to-wall coverage of the attacks and the aftermath, I wanted to deal with other topics.

I am normally a news junkie, but that has changed since Sept. 11. I have little desire right now to turn on the news channels, read newspapers and magazines, and listen to radio talk shows. Why? Because I cannot get away from these terrorist acts, and I desperately want to.

Every program I watch has something to do with them. I want to get away from those acts. I want to get away from analyzing the mindset that the terrorists have, where they would kill innocents in the name of higher power. I want to get away from talking about the Taliban, Muslims, the geography of Afghanistan, al Qaeda and anthrax.

I want to talk about things that used to seem important, like cutting the capital gains tax, school uniforms, the role of the United Nations and the horrors of a disease called depression.

But no matter how hard I try, I cannot peel Sept. 11, 2001, from the front of my consciousness. To be more precise, the words terror, terrorism, and



**mitch
hixson**

• the soundgarden

terrorize have been imprinted on my brain. How often have you heard these words uttered since Sept. 11? I have heard them so often I hope I don't start to space off what these words truly mean.

The master plan of Bin Laden is to get the United States out of Saudi Arabia, and out of Israel's hip pocket. To do this, he wants to use non-conventional warfare. He wants to use "terror" to disrupt the confidence and security we feel in our everyday lives. He wants to use "terrorism" to intimidate the United States into bowing to his whims. He wants to "terrorize" us by beaming images back to us in our own homes by the Internet and television of dead Americans and burning American flags. He wants to keep us from going about our everyday lives, he wants to preoccupy us with fear so we become passive in our actions towards him and other terrorist parasites around the world. They want a "fortress America," where we retreat from not only our world responsibilities, but from our own individual lives.

So how do we respond as a culture?

What we don't do is what I have been doing. We cannot stick our heads in the sand. Instead, we must educate ourselves to the best of our ability about what this war is about and what we are doing to fight it.

We must visibly and vocally support those whose lives were forever changed on Sept. 11. We must fly the American flag and send letters of support to our military personnel who are going into harm's way. We must work with our neighbors and families to reassess what is really important in life.

Our government is embarking on a plan to rid the world of terror for you, our families, and me for now and in the future. Bin Laden is part of a network, and our government is going about the process of smoking out this network, so terrorists can be cut off from their resources and eliminated.

The President of the United States has a plan to bring terrorists to justice. The president is being active, vigilant and is ready for a long battle that will have ups and downs.

We must do the same. Terror, terrorism, and terrorize are words that will have their desired chilling affect only if we retreat. Otherwise they are just words on a page or in a speech.

Our job as citizens is to try to keep it that way. The president can worry about the details.

Comments may be sent to Mitch Hixson at <hixsonpooms@yahoo.com>

Is that all there is?



**red
green**

• north of forty

A lot of men my age start feeling disappointed with life, as if they somehow got cheated. They often ask the piercing question, "Is that all there is?" This is a very dangerous thing to do. And not just because the answer is yes. I've learned over the years that you should never ask a question that you are not prepared to answer yourself. That's why I never ask questions like "How much do you weigh?" or "How old are you?" or "Is that your real hair?" I would never ask the world, "Is that all there is?" out of fear that the world would ask me the same thing. "Is that all there is?" is not a question you want to hear when you hand in a business report, declare your income, or step out of the shower.

A LITTLE WORRY IS A GOOD THING

When I was younger, I used to have trouble sleeping because I had too many worries. Financial pressures, uncertainty at work, and wondering whether or not the police were going to press charges. Now that those worries are gone, I'm finding I still have trouble sleeping. But, for a couple of months, there was a time when I was sleeping like a baby. It was a time where I still had things to worry about, but not too many of them. That seems like a good place to be. We all need a certain number of manageable worries. They help us get to sleep because we're motivated to forget them for a night. If you have more than that, they're too hard to ignore, and if you have fewer than that, you have nothing to escape from. You'll go to sleep only if you're tired, and you're not about to do enough to cause that. If that happens to you, you need to take on a few more worries to reach your quota. Luck-

ily, worries aren't hard to find — just ask your kids what they did today, or ask your spouse what she's planning to do tomorrow.

EXPOSED SECRETS

Every man has a bunch of secrets that he naively thinks he's keeping. In fact, there are very few things middle-aged men do that aren't painfully obvious. Here's a list of tricks you're using that aren't fooling anyone:

- Combing your hair in such a way that people might think you have some.
- Modernizing your wardrobe by adding a new tie to an old suit.
- Sitting in the chair closest to the television so your wife can't see that your eyes are shut.
- Thinking that if you can get a pair of pants to zip up, they must still fit you.
- The skateboarding T-shirt.
- Smiling and nodding to people you can't hear.
- Bagging your shirt out around your waistband to hide the ominous overhang.
- Staring at a menu as though you're deciding, when, in fact, you can't make out a single word.
- Wearing sweatpants with a towel around your neck even though you're coming home from an all-

you-can-eat buffet (your favorite type of restaurant because there's no menu to read).

EASY RIDER

I saw an elderly couple on a motorcycle yesterday. Now, some people think it's dangerous for seniors to be riding around on Harleys, but I see a lot of sense in it. I've ridden a motorcycle, and I know you've got to have your faculties working to be able to pull it off. I always worry that maybe some of the older folks who are driving cars while leaning over the steering wheels and doing half the speed limit with their turn signals perpetually flashing are not at the top of their game. That's not a problem with the motorcyclists. If they make it out of their own driveway, they're obviously competent. So, leave them alone, and let them have their fun. If you're looking to get dangerous seniors off the road, start with the octogenarian in the 60-foot Winnebago towing a golf cart and a fishing boat.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Nothing changes your priorities faster than an intestinal flu." — Red Green
Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

berry's world

