

commentary

from other pens...

Investors must wait for agent's restitution

The Junction City Daily Union on a securities case:
A Lawrence resident and former insurance agent, was sentenced this week in Douglas County District Court for defrauding investors — including Kansas investors — out of \$1.223 million.

His means: Worthless promissory notes issued as part of a scam known as a Ponzi scheme. A Ponzi scheme is one in which early investors are paid promised interest rates on their investments with money obtained from new investors. When there is not enough new money to keep paying old investors, the scheme collapses.

That's what happened, and 72 investors in 15 states found themselves victims of trusting a salesman. One Kansas family — a mother in her 90s and her two daughters, both in their 70s — invested \$490,000.

Hoorah, because the culprit was caught, convicted and sentenced — and the investors may get their money back.

But, boo because this man will only serve 48 hours of a 38-month sentence in a county jail, then be in a community corrections program for 60 months while he works to repay the investors.

Boo, too, because the state normally would allow only two years to make restitution; but, in this case, it agreed to extend that period to five years. Because Kansas prosecuted the suit, Kansas investors will get paid first.

All that is OK, if investors get their money back. It is not OK if they don't, then have to wait five years to see if the salesman they trusted will pay for his crime.

Like these investors, we'll just have to wait and see. We hope not for five years.

In the meantime, this case is one more reason people must be very careful in business dealings.

Manhattan Mercury on issuing bonds for university projects:
Here's hoping the Kansas Legislature's one-day session in Manhattan next month is as productive as it is unusual.

No one can remember when or if the Legislature has ever traveled en masse, as it will do Jan. 17, when lawmakers gather at midmorning in Forum Hall at the K-State Union. Then again, it isn't every day that the Legislature contemplates what would be a \$100 million bond issue to subsidize construction of facilities that are every bit as important as the state's major universities, the Board of Regents and some key lawmakers say they are. ...

Their visit to Manhattan will be in the first week of a legislative session that will be dominated by debates about whether and how much to cut state programs and about the fiscal and political wisdom of tax increases.

Our hope is that, rather than wonder whether the state can afford this plan, legislators recognize that Kansas can ill afford not to invest in these sorts of facilities, which would, after all, build on the existing strengths of the state's research universities.

As for the timing, interest rates are at historic lows. Moreover, under the proposal, the universities would, with money to be generated from research grants, begin making the bond payments after five years.

... The proposal, which members of the Board of Regents and some lawmakers have been working on for more than a year, is a worthwhile and timely, even overdue, investment.

Letter Policy

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She defends freedoms she can't exercise

A woman in a foreign land finds out she is pregnant. She is young and single. She cannot support a child. But abortion isn't available to her. She has no reproductive freedom where she lives. To terminate the pregnancy, she must travel to the United States, where abortion has been protected as a constitutional right for nearly 30 years.

This woman is not an Afghan, nor a Saudi, nor an Iraqi. She is a U.S. soldier.

The federal government prohibits military hospitals from performing abortions. In other words, soldiers stationed on foreign soil are prohibited from exercising a right guaranteed to all other American women.

If she is in the United States, a soldier can get the procedure off base, paying for it herself — even though two-thirds of all types of private insurance cover abortions.

But if she is posted in a country where abortion is illegal, obviously she cannot go off base to get one. And if abortion is legal, she risks her health by going to a local facility where standards might be questionable.

So if a soldier gets pregnant overseas, she has to inform the base commandant. The commandant then has to agree to give her time off to travel to the States at her own expense, have the procedure, and travel back. The abortion is likely to be delayed as arrangements are made and paperwork processed.



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• commentary

The more advanced the pregnancy, the more complicated the procedure might be.

"Essentially, the situation for a female in the military is, 'I have signed up to defend my country, and yet my country doesn't give me the same rights as every other American woman,'" Rep. Loretta Sanchez, an Orange County, Calif., Democrat, said yesterday.

A version of the law has been on the books since 1979. In 1993, President Clinton issued an executive order allowing abortions at military hospitals as long as they were privately funded. Three years later, Congress again banned all abortions, except in cases of rape, incest or if the woman's life is endangered. Every year since, Sanchez has introduced an amendment to lift the ban, and every year it has lost.

In unveiling the Afghan Women and Children's Relief Act last week, the president bemoaned the nightmarish existence of Afghan women.

"America fights not only for our security, but for the values we hold dear," Bush declared.

The waiting is the hardest part



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green

• north of forty

I know there are a lot of educated theories as to why men and women are different, and these differences are never more evident than when a woman goes into a store "just for five minutes," while her significant other waits in the car. If they haven't been married very long, he'll even leave the car running. We veterans know better.

So, if you're one of those men who's spent many hours sitting in your car at the mall, staring at the dashboard, waiting while your wife to looks at every item in every store with absolutely no idea of what she went in there for, well here's something you might try.

Before your wife goes into the mall, stop at a grocery store, where you go in and buy chips and soda pop and chocolate bars and one of those used truck magazines. Put all of that stuff beside you on the front seat and fold the top of the grocery bag over.

Then before your wife goes into the mall, get her to synchronize her watch and tell her if she's longer than the promised five minutes, you'll be in the bag. (Let me know if this works for you. It sure didn't for me.)

HELP WANTED

We have a municipal election going on in our town right now, and a lot of the candidates are doing local television ads. One guy was in a suit with a hardhat on. Another one had a chicken and a donkey. And it occurred to me political campaigns are like job applications. The voters are hiring and the candidates are applying. They each give us their resume and why they're the right person for the job

and why the other ones aren't. The only problem is that neither side of this equation is in any way suited for these assignments. Most of the voters have never hired anyone and most of the candidates have never had a real job.

THE RESTFUL YEARS

There are a lot of retired people in my community, and I've noticed retirement is an entirely different lifestyle. I'm also concerned that it's not easy to make a radical change during the later stages of your life. So I suggest we all start practicing for retirement now. Here are a few exercises you can try that will get you ready for when the time comes:

- Sit and stare for long periods of time.
- Eat supper at 3:30 in the afternoon.
- Get a really ugly bicycle.
- Complain about the weather or whatever else occurs to you.

— Drive at half the speed limit.

— Talk to total strangers about your personal medical problems.

— Buy really bright-colored clothes. Old men like to be able to find their pants in the dark.

— Have long conversations with your spouse and nap whenever possible. You may be able to

combine these.

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

I was on a flight last week, and I couldn't help but notice all the gray-haired guys who were wearing jeans. That must be a generation thing. I don't think my dad ever wore a pair of jeans his whole life. Or shorts. Or even what we would call casual pants. He wore a suit and tie and hat to work. And he wore a sports shirt and dress pants on the weekends. Never a T-shirt. If he had to do something messy like change a tire, he'd take his shirt off and do it in his undershirt. It was a more formal time. In my dad's generation, everybody tried to look important and dignified. These days we all try to look relaxed and confident. If the trend continues, we'll reach the ultimate in relaxed and confident wear — nudism. All of our efforts to beautify the planet will have been in vain.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "The problem with jogging is that the human knee never anticipated the invention of concrete." - 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."

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