

Do we really need to see constant critique of war?

It may be an old American tradition to second-guess the generals, but frankly, we're tired of it.

And, we're willing to bet, you are, too.

Tired of has-been officers who weren't in on "the plan" critiquing the plan.

Tired of second-rank think-tankers explaining why the plan will never work.

Tired of left-wing correspondents explaining why America can never win.

Tired of endless talking heads shaking over a couple of casualties.

Tired of ceaseless prattle about whether the offensive has stalled or the plan has gone awry.

Are we supposed to be surprised that the enemy is fighting back?

That the war wasn't over in a week?

That in war, people get killed?

The president told us the first day, this could be a long and nasty encounter.

Didn't he?

Oh, television.

Television news is at its best and worst in war.

At its best in battle, when troops are moving, when bombs are flying and things are blowing up.

Television takes us there and shows us the face of war. There is no avoiding what's going on.

And with today's technology, we see it now.

We see paratroopers live as they jump, tankers on camera racing across the desert, starving Iraqis tearing apart food packages. We see

it as it happens.

And then again on the hour.

Between battles, television is at its worst. When nothing is happening, the anchors have to talk. To analyze. To proclaim.

And somehow — the Pentagon has to share the blame here — they got the idea this was going to be a quick and easy war, regardless of what the president said.

That Iraq would fold in a matter of days, that the "shock and awe" of massive, targeted bombing would scare the bejebbers out of a stone-cold tyrant and his bloody henchmen.

These people are fighting for their very lives.

What is the future of a Republican Guardsman in a free Baghdad? How long will Saddam's generals get to walk the streets in the new order?

These guys have everything to lose, everything. They will do anything to stop us. When the time comes, they will use their gas on us. Send terrorists to our cities. Use women and children as shields.

Of course they're going to fight.

That's a surprise only to the talking heads. Not to the generals, not to the troops.

It must make Saddam smile to hear them question "the plan," to doubt the generals at every turn, to play up every little setback.

But that's television. It's like horse racing.

They have to have something to do in the breaks between the action.

They do the one well, and the other poorly.

And we're tired of it. — Steve Haynes

Let parents be a teen's guide

Some days, they show a little common sense in Topeka.

It happened last week when a Johnson County senator refused to push a provision which would have made it illegal for parents to let their children sip a beer.

The plan was part of a package of tough measures being pushed by the anti-drinking lobby, tightening laws on teen-age drinking, drivers licenses and partying.

One section would have repealed the law allowing parents to give their own children (but not other people's) grocery store, or 3.2, beer.

The sponsor, Sen. Kay O'Connor of Olathe, said she had not heard any complaints or seen any evidence that there was a problem with the law.

"I think we live in a society where parents should be trusted to make that decision," she said.

Imagine that, trusting parents to raise their own children. What is this state coming to?

The drinking nazis were properly incensed, though the bill still contains sections with tougher penalties for teen-age drunk drivers and making it a crime to let teens drink at your house.

The law only allows parents to give beer to their kids under their direct supervision. They can't give a kid a six pack and send him out on the town.

And that seems fair to me.

If parents want to let their kids drink a brew at home, where they're safe and supervised, why not? Not everyone would do it. Not everyone would think it was OK. But isn't that



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
shaynes@nwkansan.com

just the kind of decision families ought to be able to make?

I suspect most of the kids would rather sneak off and drink the beer with their friends than with the folks. As with adults, it's a social thing.

But where would it be better for kids to learn about drinking, at home, under control, or at some wild party in the woods?

I know, it's not good for them. They could get hurt. They're not old enough.

But a lot of them are going to do it anyway.

Let parents have a role in this.

Anyway, the section is gone and the law stays as it is. It's a rare victory for common sense and individual liberty.

On another front, a "compromise" would allow school districts to get out of publishing their administrators' salaries for the public to read.

Instead of paying to have the salaries in the local newspaper, they would be required to just send the list to the paper, which could publish it or not.

That may sound like a compromise, since the state's school boards had wanted to do away with the list.

The law requiring school districts

to publish the information has been on the books for years, but apparently all of the state's school districts have ignored it.

Now, instead of getting slapped for breaking the law, it looks like they will get out of the responsibility.

The information is a public record anyway, and any citizen can go look the salaries up. But having the districts publish the list makes sense to me. Why shouldn't they have to tell people what they are paying the superintendent?

And while the school boards argue that the cost is a burden, the fact is, it would only be a few dollars per district. They can afford it.

They just don't want you to know.

From the Bible

As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people. The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days. Proverbs 28: 15, 16



The Saudis walk a very thin line

Each year I'm trying to visit a different country. This year it was Saudi Arabia.

No, I didn't grab a jet and fly to the land of sand. I signed up for an embassy tour during the National Newspaper Association's meeting in Washington.

Last year, I visited Chili and was enchanted by that long, skinny country which stretches nearly the length of South America and has everything from tropical to arctic conditions.

This year, I had my choice of three embassies — Saudi Arabia, Taiwan or Switzerland. (Actually Taiwan doesn't have an embassy, because our official diplomatic relations are with mainland China. But it has a "place" in Washington that looks and acts like one.)

I chose Saudi Arabia because it seemed the most topical. Back in December when I made by decision, there was a lot of saber rattling going on. I really didn't expect that there would be a war on when I got to Washington.

One thing that I've learned over the course of the last couple of years in dealing with diplomatic things — when people invite you to their place, they want to sell you something.

When I say sell, I mean ideologically. The Chileans wanted most-favored-nation trade status. The Taiwanese wanted respect and diplomatic relations. The folks in Hong Kong wanted to show how free they were from the mainland government, and the Red Chinese wanted our money to build their infrastruc-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
chaynes@nwkansan.com

ture.

The Saudis walk a thin line. They want to assure us that they are our friends, but still not make the guy next door so mad at them that he starts taking potshots at them, also.

We started our meeting with a short film about Saudi Arabia, the land of sand.

The country is a monarchy ruled by King Fahd bin Abdulaziz. Islam is the state religion.

Islam is to Saudi Arabia what Catholicism is to the Vatican. The country is founded on the religion and the ruler takes his power from the religion.

In the bimonthly newsletter of the embassy, the king is referred to as "the custodian of the two holy mosques." It doesn't specifically say where these mosques are but I'll bet at least one of them is in Makkah (which I've always seen written as Mecca)

Makkah is the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed and the most sacred place in the world to Muslims. This is where every year, millions of them go on pilgrimage. Saudi Arabia takes seriously the duties and responsibilities that go with having such a place within its

borders. Every effort is made to help pilgrims. No non-Muslim is allowed in the city or in Madinah, another holy city.

Saudi Arabia is an oil-rich nation with agriculture and tourism. It also contains one of the world's largest and driest sand deserts — the Rub Al Khali.

The nation says it is slowly working its way towards democracy, but it still has a ways to go. Universal health care and education are offered, but according to the newsletter, the country's budget will have a deficit again this year, although because of higher-than-expected oil prices, last year's deficit was only 8.25 billion riyals (\$2.2 billion). Much of the budget goes to education and to modernize the country.

The Saudi government extends an invitation to visitors to come see its camel races, mosques and marketplaces. I would love to take them up on it. I couldn't go to Makkah or Madinah and I couldn't drive myself — women aren't allowed to drive there, or to vote — but it would be a great trip.

Well, maybe next year or the year after.

In like a lion and out like a lamb

Ah-h, Kansas. Snow, wind and sleet one day; 75 degrees the next. But it looks like March is going "out like a lamb."

That's a good thing, because we brought lots of bedding plants home from El Paso a week ago. And I'm "itching" to get them in the ground.

Jim loves snapdragons, so we have a tray of variegated colors. Then I saw these tall, conical, evergreen-like trees that I thought were so majestic. I believe they are called Italian Cypress, but we're giving them a try. And, finally, the portulaca. We say "por-chew-lacka". In Spanish it is pronounced "por-tu-lacka".

I remember my Grandma Davison planting this first cousin to rose moss in my little tractor tire garden in the front yard at the farm. I just hope these southwestern transplants can survive our winters.

I dug canna bulbs last fall and it's time to get them back in the ground. Isn't there a numerical phrase to explain what happens to canna bulbs? They multiply exponen-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
Out-Back@webtv.net

tially.

—ob—

Taylor, 4, is our youngest grandchild and the only one still eligible to take part in the annual White House Easter Egg Roll. The cut-off age is 6, and her Aunt Halley wrangled a slot for "Tay" to be on the South Lawn along with the children of other staff members.

Someone asked me if I didn't think the event might be canceled due to the war in Iraq. Maybe a different president would cancel it, but I think, it's part of that "normalcy" President Bush is talking about. It's been a tradition for many years, and we're not going to let some terrorist

take it away.

I wish I could go with Kara and Taylor. There are lots of places in our nation's Capital I still want to see.

—ob—

My first speaking engagement to share my experiences at the White House Christmas party is scheduled for this Thursday. I had my pictures put on videotape so that I can easily narrate while the video runs. It sure beats trying to operate a slide tray and projector.

Now, if I can convince little Taylor to work up a program about the Easter Egg Roll, we can get our act together and take it on the road.

Make an investment for the young

To the Editor:

April 6-12 is the Week of the Young Child, a time to recognize that children's opportunities are our responsibilities, and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that each and every child experiences the type of early environment — at home, at child care, at school, and in the community — that will promote early learning.

Quality early childhood education is one of the best investments Decatur County can make for our children's future. Research shows that children attending high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to develop the language, premathematics and social skills they need to succeed in school.

Early childhood experiences lay the foundation for later learning. The nurturing and educational experiences young children get in their early years build a foundation for their educational opportunities to become effective citizens in society,

Letter to the Editor

capable workers, and loving parents to the next generation.

The time is now to be a child's champion.

As parents, take quality time to listen to and appreciate your children. Read to your child every day. Reading together not only increases your child's language and knowledge but also creates strong emotional bonds. Keep tabs on the amount and type of television your child watches. Watch with your child and talk about what you've seen. Appreciate the power of play. When your child is playing, she is learning. Play increases self-esteem, cooperation and problem-solving.

Early childhood professionals, invite parents to spend time in your classrooms or your facility so they

can recapture the magic of childhood.

Employers, provide time for parents to be with their families in their child's school or programs.

If we value our young children, our families, our schools and our community, we must make accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood education a priority. Improving early education for all children builds a better future for all of us.

Early years are learning years. Let's make them count.

Cindy Schafer, Colby Project Director
Smart Start Northwest Kansas
Jeanne Thyfault, Colby Director, Kansas Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Agency

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E-mail: obherald@nwkansan.com

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Nor'West Newspapers

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- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Brandt news editor
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