

Sen. McCain was right: torture never an option

Here's one where John McCain is right and the White House is just plain wrong.

The administration finally gave in and agreed to McCain's language barring any use of torture by the U.S. government.

Well it should have. There's no conceivable circumstance where torture by U.S. officials or military personnel should be sanctioned.

Sen. McCain ought to know. As a Navy pilot, shot down over Vietnam, he spent nearly seven years as a prisoner of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese.

Few Washington decision makers can say they've been tortured, unless you count having to sit through innumerable committee hearings and floor debates in the Capitol.

McCain knows whereof he speaks. He thinks America should set a higher standard.

It's scary that, in a recent Associated Press poll, a majority of Americans (61 percent) said it might be OK "sometimes" for U.S. officials to torture suspected terrorists. Of all the allies polled, in fact, only South Korea had a higher tolerance for torture. Ninety percent of Koreans thought torture might sometimes be OK.

What are we thinking about, folks?

Torture is not just wrong. It's poor policy. It seldom produces the desired information. It can harden a victim, or make them say anything to stop the pain. Either way, the nation that uses torture never wins.

While President Bush maintains torture is not U.S. policy, Vice President Dick Cheney

argued that it might be necessary in extreme cases. There's a lot of that "what-if" stuff, "what if a terrorist knew the location of a nuclear device in a U.S. city, and the only way to save millions of lives was to torture him?"

It's not good.

A devoted terrorist likely would die rather than tell.

Or lie to stave off the inquisition until it was too late.

These are people, after all, who are willing to blow themselves up for some demented idea of God and country.

In most of Europe, a majority is firmly opposed to torture in any form, any time. We should join that union.

Fortunately, there's no credible evidence so far that the U.S. government in fact uses torture against prisoners, even terrorists.

The midnight follies at that Iraqi prison, though wrong and stupid, hardly rise to the level of torture. The same can be said for treatment of some prisoners held in Cuba.

We need to make clear, though, what the President says already is U.S. policy. This is one time we need to take the high road.

Thanks to the administration's agreement with Sen. McCain, that'll soon be written into federal law.

And that is no loss to our effort in the war against terrorism, or any other war.

— Steve Haynes

What was in that package?

I had a reminder Sunday of the true meaning of Christmas.

Jim and I were in chapel services at the prison where we minister, and one of the inmates got up to give a testimony. He said he was able to make a phone call that day, and that was his present.

Later, a visitor leaving the prison at the same time we were asked us where she could get something to eat in town. I told her the only places open were convenience stores. I said, "I'm sorry, a bologna sandwich isn't much of a Christmas dinner."

"That's all right," she said. "Just getting to visit my husband was more than enough."

Kind of puts things in perspective, doesn't it?

—ob—

Part of my Christmas presents this year were homemade. I came across my old 4-H Master Mix recipe and decided the kids would like it. We bought 50 pounds of flour, 25 pounds of sugar, two large cans of shortening, four cans of baking powder and a new jar of cream of tartar.

I may have burned up the motor of my food processor, but each family now has a super-size plastic container (suitable for reuse) full of mix.

The only thing missing is the recipe to tell them how to use it. I simply ran out of time, but I did stick a note on each container that said, "Instructions to follow."

Everyone's first question when I talked to them Christmas day was, "What's the stuff in the jar?"

Those recipes are tops on my to-do list.

—ob—



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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We had a wonderful Christmas dinner at our daughter Jennifer's house. She had a spiral-cut ham, and between the two of us, we had all the trimmings.

I can admit it now, but I forgot to take the deviled eggs. I found them the next day, pushed to the back of a refrigerator shelf. Jim's not complaining, though. He loves deviled eggs. And we sure didn't miss them during the meal.

Of course, we all ate too much. Couple that with the fact that the week leading up to Christmas had been a real "cruncher," and you have exhaustion written all over it.

Our granddaughter, Alexandria, wanted to play Uno after the meal and we agreed. It sounded like a good idea at the time, but after an hour of play, and no end in sight, I nodded off, sitting straight up. That's tired.

—ob—

In less than a week, it will be a new year. I know it's cliché but, "Where has the time gone?"

Used to be, I thought only old

people talked about how the older you got, the faster time passed. Now, I am one.

From the Bible

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Luke 2: 8-12



Use friends network for delivery

When you want to send a parcel, you have several choices. There's United Parcel Service (UPS), FedEx, DHL, the U.S. Postal Service — and then there's the friends network.

Of the paid delivery systems, the post office is almost always the cheapest. However, you have to pay extra for fast service. Still, you can't beat the friends network for cheap — it's almost always free. The speed of delivery varies a lot, however.

Back when we were living in a tiny hamlet of Creede in the mountains of Colorado, all our medication was delivered by the friends network. The pharmacy in Del Norte, 45 minutes down mountain roads and in another county, would give your prescription to whomever showed up from Creede. That person was supposed to leave the package at the Standard station.

Then you just picked up your prescription at the gas station, as long as the person picking it up remembered to deliver it. Occasionally, there would be some long-distance calls to find out where Johnny's antibiotics were or Aunt Sarah's arthritis medicine. Usually, it was just someone who forgot to stop at the gas station when they got back to town.

Everyone in town helped move stuff. Steve once brought back a



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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truckload of shingles for someone reroofing their home.

We still do that today.

Our offices are connected by our drivers. The Oberlin driver takes stops by St. Francis and trades mail sacks and picks up inserts. Then she goes to Goodland and trades mail sacks, drops off the inserts and picks up *The Oberlin Herald*. Then it's on to Colby to trade mail sacks and leave off a few papers. Then back to Oberlin. The Norton driver picks up mail and inserts in Oberlin on other days and delivers all of it to Goodland.

Last week, I noticed a sack on a desk in Oberlin. It was for an employee's sister, who would pick it up later in the week. The sack was from her daughter in St. Francis.

That sack had been delivered to our office in Sainty, driven to Goodland and Colby before getting to Oberlin, and would eventually be picked up by its intended recipient

or delivered to her by her sister.

Our family does the same thing.

I made my son take a package to his grandmother after Christmas. He was stopping by Concordia on his way from Oberlin to Lawrence, so I sent the package with him. His sister in Augusta, Ga., sent to me for her grandmother, along with other presents for the rest of the family, knowing someone would take it to Concordia.

When we've had Oberlin kids going to the junior college in Concordia, we've sent stuff with them and delivered stuff to them. When a high school senior told me that she planned to attend Emporia State University last week, I was elated. Now I had someone to send stuff to my brother-in-law and sister-in-law in Emporia.

Poor girl, she just thought she was going to college. She didn't know she was joining the friends transportation network.

Feeding the masses fills fridge

You'd think that when the children come home, the refrigerator would empty out.

Not so at our house.

No, when the kids come home, our 'fridge gets so full you have to maneuver the milk past the extra salad dressings and the orange juice just to pour a glass.

If one child comes home, a couple of shelves will fill up.

If two come home, the whole thing is jammed.

When all three get here — not a frequent occurrence these days, thank God — we have to rent space in the walk-in down at Raye's.

It's not the kids who fill the shelves, not mostly anyway. The girls will cook, especially Lindsay, but that's not what causes the ice-cold traffic jam.

It's their mother.

Obeying Nature's command to feed her offspring, Cynthia starts hoarding food and squirreling away supplies a week or two in advance. She plans menus and asked the kids what they want to eat.

"Food" is the usual reply, so she stocks up.

Even in their 20s and 30s, or especially in their 20s and 30s, kids like mom's home cooking.

And so she buys chicken for Lacy and steak for Christmas dinner and leeks for some new recipe, and pretty soon you can't jam a tomato



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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sideways into the crisper.

Not that you'd want to jam the tomato, exactly, because that could be messy, but you get the picture.

Just cooking does not relieve the refrigerator, because there are leftovers and extras and still food for tomorrow. Only departure brings any relief, and it can take a week or two to clear the shelves.

When Lacy comes, he will help clean out the ice box. He's single and 25 and lives alone and thinks taking home mom's leftovers is pretty slick. Sometimes, in fact, she buys stuff just for him to take home, but at least he takes it.

This year, I have to admit, she was pretty organized. She cooked chicken and steak and swiss steak and brisket and ham, but most of it was either frozen and stored or shipped out by the end of the week. Lacy hadn't been gone a day, and you could find room next to the butter for the cream cheese.

Cynthia sorted out the freezers,

counting one bowl of chili for us and one for Lacy, one serving of swiss steak for us and one for him, and so on, until she had everything neat and cataloged and it its place, with plenty of room for brisket and a few leftovers from this week.

I think she set some kind of modern-era record for organizing the fridge after a visit, which was good, because it had been mighty full.

It helped, I like to think, that if found and dumped the blue-spotted green chili she had left in there, along with the extra dressing from Thanksgiving, the old turkey wings and the old slice of old lime, which looked quite, ah, tangy.

That made some space.

So Lacy left with a couple of coolers full of soup and beans and chicken and steak and goodies. We got space in the refrigerator, with still an ample supply of leftovers and sandwiches frozen for the long winter to come.

Until the next visit, at least.

In memory of a very good friend

To a Friend:

The news hit us like a thunderbolt, The words cut through us like a knife.

When we heard to our bewilderment, Our friend and neighbor had lost his life.

It happened on an icy stretch of country road, Made slippery by the recent storm and snow.

Our friend had passed this way many times, Except on this trip, how was he supposed to know?

That God has a plan for all of us, And he said, Rich I need you home today.

As for all the rest of his family and friends,

Letter to the Editor

It is often difficult to understand God's way.

It is so heart wrenching to lose someone dear, That is grandpa, father, brother and son.

We have all those wonderful memories, Of the kindness and deeds he had done.

So it is with sadness, sorrow and tears, That his life came to such a tragic end.

All of us left on this earth, Take comfort in remembering Rich as our friend.

Jim and Pam Wesch Traer

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They

must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author. Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749.

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