

Congress must act to save Social Security

The story comes around every year, and every year we — the people, Congress, the White House — shake our heads and tut — and ignore it.

Social Security is going broke. In as little as 21 years, the fund's \$2.7 trillion surplus will be gone, benefits will exceed tax income and, by law, will be cut.

If it gets that far, there could be riots in the street out front of nursing homes. But surely, we can fix a problem, given two decades to do it. Can't we?

Think so? Remember, the Postal Service is going broke this year, and Congress and the president have done nothing — nothing — to fix the problem.

We've known about the Social Security issue for the last 20 or 30 years. Actuaries and accountants could look at the size of the Baby Boomer generation piling up that surplus and see that the coming smaller generations could not pay enough to support them.

But did Congress or any president do anything? Of course not. Few problems are solved in Washington until the last possible moment.

But Social Security is already out of balance. Since 2010, payments have exceeded income. The huge reserve masks that fact, but it won't go away. Until the system is broke.

Administrators says it would cost something like \$3.2 trillion to start fixing the problem right now. Every year, the cost will rise and

the cure will become more painful. But there's no hope Congress will move on the issue in an election year, or any coming year, for that matter.

The attitude is summed up by Sen. Bernie Sanders, a liberal independent from Vermont who heads the Senate Social Security caucus, as quoted by the Associated Press:

"Compared to other crises — the collapse of the middle class, real wages falling ... 50 million people having no health insurance — how would I rate Social Security? Nowhere near as serious as these and many other problems."

In other words, "ignore it; maybe it'll go away."

But it won't. Instead the problem will grow each year until it's too late. Just watch.

All this should scare the bejebbers out of anyone who believes the federal government can and should solve all our problems. While growing bigger and more bloated every year, the government also becomes more dysfunctional each year as well.

The fact is, the government can't solve our problems. It certainly can't manage the economy. Mostly, it can mess things up. Yet Americans continue to have faith that if we only do more of the same, or get better people in charge, things will change.

But that seldom works, just as ignoring a problem like Social Security never works.

— Steve Haynes

Grandchild already missed

Taylor went home last week with her Aunt Halley. And I miss her already. Not because the house feels like a tomb, either. Taylor is not a boisterous child; in fact, she's very quiet. But her presence is felt in other ways. Mainly: stuff.

I don't know how one 13-year old can have so many little dribs and drabs of everything. Jewelry, hair things, clothes, shoes, make-up, accessories, nail polish and digital devices.

What to wear was always the decision of the day. Taylor would ask, "What do you like, Grandma? This pair of shorts or this pair?"

Frankly, I couldn't distinguish any difference between the two, but I would choose one pair with a definitive, "Oh, that pair, for sure."

Then we would move on to the top. Usually I had a choice of T-shirts; blue, red, pink, green, yellow, white or black. Occasionally, she would throw in something with a pattern or a little style. Next: to belt or not to belt. My reply: "If your pants fall down without it, wear a belt."

Shoes are always a big decision. In Taylor's case, what color of flip-flops. That child has worn flip-flops, almost exclusively, since she was about four. Her dress-up flip-flops have sequins.

We haven't even started on the hair. Up, down, ponytail, braided, twisted or curled.

One day Jim came in from working outside to use the bathroom. He waited and waited and waited. Finally, he asked me, "How much longer is she going to be in there?"

All I could say was, "Guess it's been awhile since you had a 13-year



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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old getting ready in your house, hasn't it?"

-ob-

Looks like Taylor left one day too soon. Baby chicks started hatching the day after she left. Right now, the head count stands at nine. Pretty good considering I wasn't hopeful of any hatching. Remember my last attempt resulted in complete failure. At this rate it'll still take two or three more "hatchings" to replace my flock.

It's too soon to tell if we'll have hens or roosters. At least it's too soon for me to tell. I'm just hoping for at least 50 percent hens.

Jim reminded me that he learned how to tell the difference from an Internet website. We raise barred rocks and as soon as the chicks get their feathers we can see the difference. Roosters have extra rows of white feathers and look a little lighter than the hens. Like I said, it's too soon to tell.

-ob-

When my mother got older she started speaking her mind a little more candidly. It was like she had lived long enough and had earned the right to say what she thought. My girls accused me of the same thing.

I had just met a friend of Halley's and besides being a slim, trim, pro-

fessional musician, it was revealed that April is a cancer survivor. That, of course, opened up a new thread in the conversation. One thing led to another and soon April was showing us pictures of her band and how she looked during her chemo treatments.

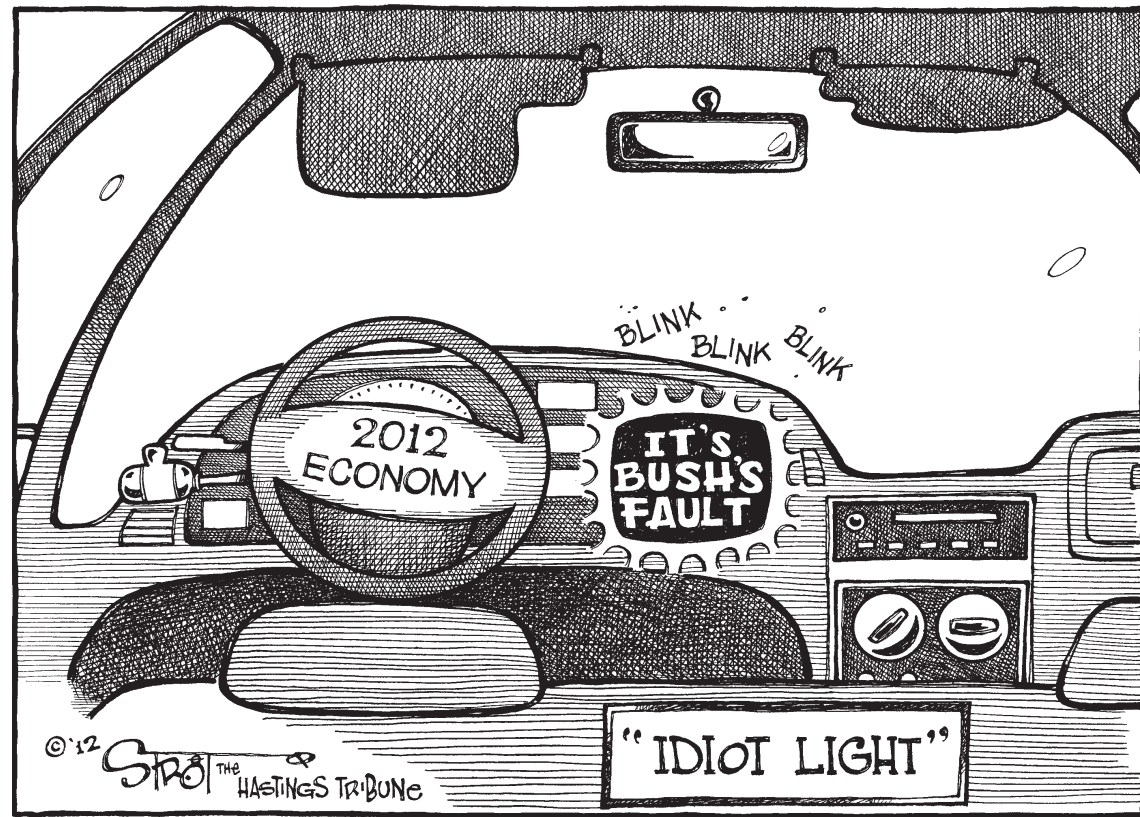
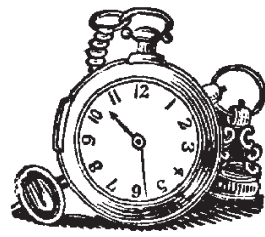
All I said was, "My, you were heavier then, weren't you?"

You would have thought I had accused her of robbing Fort Knox. Halley and Kara about fell on the floor in disbelief. In unison, they said, "Why didn't you just say, 'Boy, you were fat.'"

April and I looked at each other. She wasn't offended and neither one of us could figure out why they would have been.

All I could say was, "Look, if she had been skinny and ended up heavy, I never would have said a thing. What? Do you think I have no class?"

You don't have to answer that.



Now, she's feeling at home

Something wonderful happened this weekend.

I was walking through the fair, watching the kids scream with delight and hearing the roars of the cars in the demo derby. Winding around games and rides, I waved to familiar faces and recognized both neighbors and strangers alike.

I felt at home.

This is most likely brought on by a silly, simple thing — registering my car. But it was a big deal to me to take off those Colorado plates. That was where I spent the last seven years. It's where I found myself and learned and grew. It's where I blossomed. But now, the thick screws and new wheat on my plate told me, this is where I am, and where I belonged.

It was brought to my attention recently that my last few columns may have been taken in a way that I didn't intend. A reader told me that it seemed I felt the cooperation of our community was lacking somehow, and he wanted to talk to me about that.

I was both taken aback and deeply complimented. Taken aback because that wasn't what I meant to say at all, and complimented because this person, a virtual stranger still, felt comfortable enough with me to suggest that I might be wrong, and expect me to listen to what he had to say.

And this — the very act of assuming the best of someone, in trusting



Newcomer's View

By Stephanie DeCamp
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them as a fellow and a neighbor inherently — it was all he needed to say. This town does take care of its own. It does care about you and me. It wants us to drive on pleasant roads, reap great harvests and invite the Indians over for a turkey dinner. It's the kind of town that opens its arms up and gives you the benefit of the doubt.

So thank you, good sir, for pointing out what I had failed to articulate myself. There is a wonderful sense of community in Oberlin, you are right. It was only from this sentiment that I meant what I've said about banding together, making changes and reaching out to each other. It's because I immediately expect the best of Oberlin — and it expects the best of me — that I share these thoughts.

But you know what's better than thoughts? Discussion. I would still love for you to write in to me and tell me about Oberlin — the real deep-down Oberlin that's a part of the food you eat and the clothes you wear, that's in the way you talk

and raise your kids. This week, I'd like you to give me a shout, and tell me what really gets into the bones of this place. What makes it tick. Where the marrow is at.

Because I knew this place was good when I first visited it — I knew it in my bones.

From the Bible

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another. Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

— Ephesians: 4: 25-29

We took a special train ride

The horses, cattle and even the buffalo don't much care, but the antelope seem to enjoy racing us as we roll along.

Out the window, I can see a line of cars like a great herd of metal beasts rolling along beside us as we head for Cheyenne, Wyo.

Steve and I are headed for Cheyenne Frontier Days, a huge rodeo with parades, a carnival, food, demonstrations, food, artisans, craftsmen, outdoor cooks, an Indian village, folks in period costumes, barbecues and shops full of Western wear.

The best part for us, however, is the transportation from Denver to Cheyenne and back. We're going by our favorite mode — a train. And this isn't just any train; it's an 18-car 1950s streamliner pulled by a steam locomotive.

We leave from Denver at 7 a.m. sharp. If you're late, you don't go.

This year we're seated in Car 13, the City of Denver, named for one of those fabulous streamliners of yore. It's different from most of the others because it's a diner.

Most of the cars on the train have regular seats, with at least half a dozen dome cars. In the City of Denver, we sit around tables for six, but there are only four of us at this one. Katie, 10, and her dad are from Aurora, Colo. This is her first trip to the rodeo, and she's excited to see the horses. Her mom and two brothers have stayed at home, so it's just her and Daddy together for the day.

We don't know what happened



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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to the people who were supposed to be in the other two seats. There is a breakfast package of a banana, muffin and orange juice for each one, but nobody eats them, and the catering staff eventually picks the spare food up. Maybe they were late or maybe they had the date wrong or maybe ... who knows?

I'm enjoying watching the people out the window.

I don't think I'd be up at 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning to watch a train go by, but as we pull out of Denver and head down the tracks to Greeley, we pass by hundreds of people out watching, waving and taking pictures.

Since the tracks don't tend to go through the best parts of town, lines from "The City of New Orleans" go through my mind.

"Rolls along past houses, farms and fields. Passin' trains that have no names... And the graveyards of the rusted automobiles."

I'm sure watching a real steam locomotive, Union Pacific 844, go by which is quite a sight. For one thing, it's huge — 454 tons of steel with 80-inch driver wheels capable of running at 100 mph.

According to the booklet for the trip, the 844 was the last steam locomotive built for the Union Pacific. It was designed to haul high-speed passenger trains like the Overland Limited and the Portland Rose. Delivered in 1944, it has never been off the company's roster of active locomotives.

The train is a fund-raiser for The Denver Post Foundation. The train was started by the newspaper in 1908 and ran through 1970, carrying politicians, favored advertisers, the high and mighty, all men. In 1992, the train was revived as a fund raiser and to help celebrate *The Post's* 100th anniversary.

Several years ago, we heard Publisher Dean Singleton promise to keep the train running. "You give me a rodeo," he told the leaders of Cheyenne. "I'll give you a train."

And give Steve and me a train, and we'll take a ride, even when at the end of the day, we end up right where we started — in downtown Denver — tired, sunburned and satisfied with our ride and day in Cheyenne.

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