

With all this help we may not survive

Once again, the state government drives a dagger deep into the heart of rural Kansas. With friends like the governor, we'll be lucky to survive at all. In the latest assault, the governor is trying to rob Peter to pay Paul and in the process will probably close the Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas homes for the severely mentally disabled — those adults who have to learn to eat, dress and bathe themselves. Not only will these people be uprooted but the jobs of the people, who help them, will be lost to rural Kansas. The new jobs made by the transfer of money will certainly not be here. They never are. The towns that will get the jobs don't really need them — Lord knows, there are enough bureaucrats in Topeka already — and the towns that will lose them by and large can't replace them. That's a pretty good economic development move. Worse yet, rural Kansans will continue to be taxed to pay for those jobs, and that tax money now will be spent, not here, but in Topeka, Kansas City or Hays. Why is the state doing this to our communities? First it was the highway patrol. There used to be a patrol office in Norton. When an officer was needed, he was dispatched from here by a person, who knew the roads and the surrounding countryside. Now everything is done out of Salina and half the time the dispatcher doesn't know anything about the area. We're lucky if we get someone, who knows where U.S. 36 is. Then it was the Social and Rehabilitative Services offices. They are being closed as fast as the state can ax them and the jobs. Gee, where do you think they're going. On the one hand the governor and Legislature says it wants to help us. On the other they take jobs out of our communities as fast as they can. Please stop. We can't stand anymore of this kind of help.

— Cynthia Haynes

Fear can be used for both good and bad

When I was a little girl I was petting a baby bunny and my father told me to be very gentle because if I scared the rabbit he would jump out of his skin. I resumed petting the bunny, but with considerably more tenderness. It wasn't until I was an adult and relaying my "wisdom" to my husband that I reexamined my "knowledge".

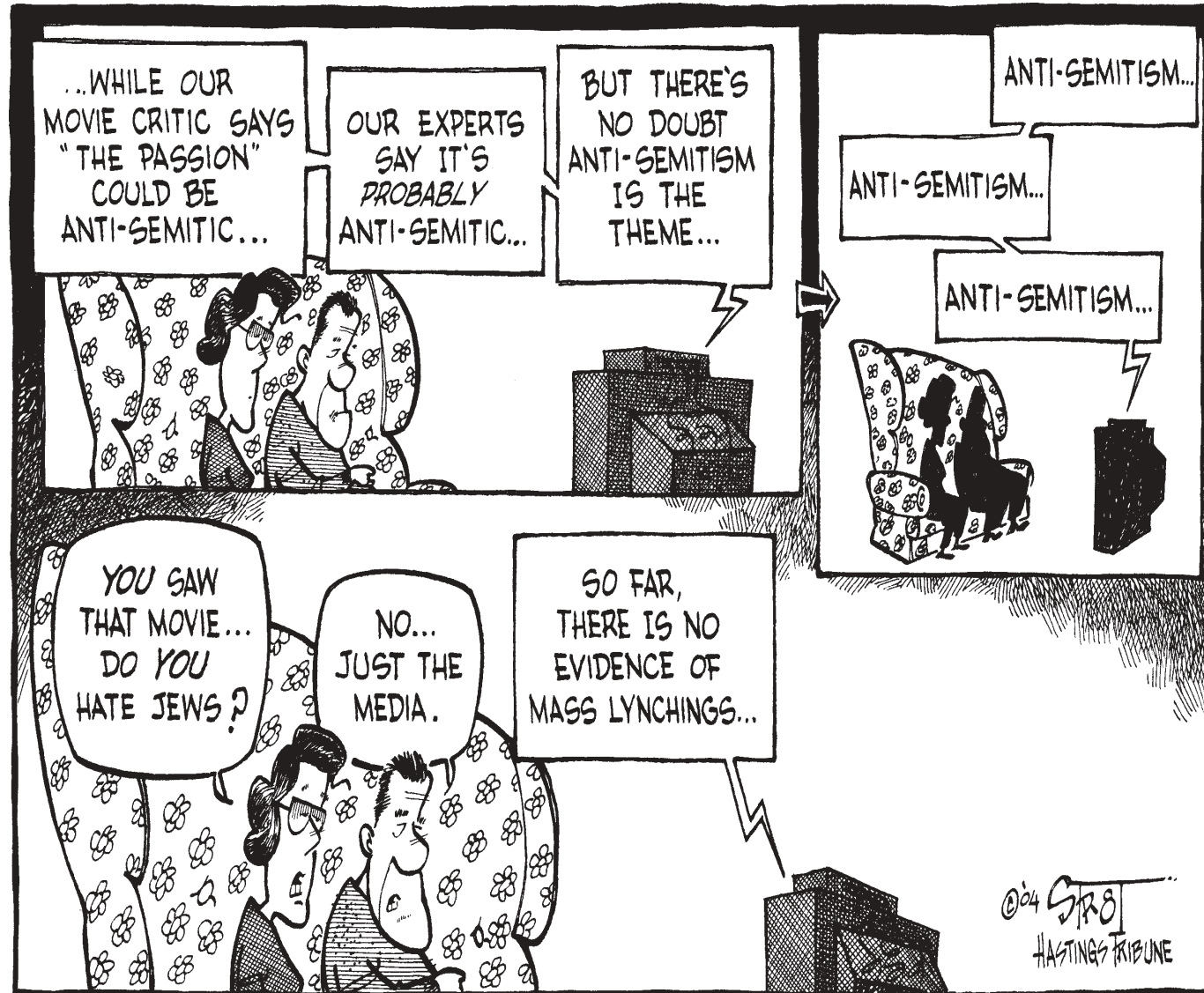
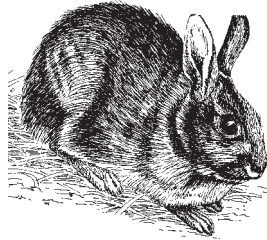
No one ever said I was a fast learner. Fear is a powerful tool and we all, at times, use it to our advantage. I tell my young grandchildren to wash their hands because they have little bugs on them. It is true, but it is designed to create fear, hence action. Each fear carries a little truth, the rabbit may die, you can get sick from little bugs, but it carries far more emotion than fact. We seem to live in a society focused on using fear as a changing tool. Forget that God is love, forget our common sense of decency, and forget our innate abilities; the fear factor reigns.

How many people can we "convert" when we scare them into obedience? Do we eat less fat because of the threat of heart attacks? Newscasts focusing on elevated threat levels, dangerous criminals and suspect politicians are designed to "inform", but they also know fear will in-

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



crease the number of viewers. Fear changes things, momentarily. True I didn't go back to roughing up rabbits, so it protected the rabbit and me. The major difference is the messenger was a trusted source. When strangers and do-gooders and politicians try to focus on what is best for me, as an individual, I become quite suspicious. They are not trusted sources. As is evidenced in our society, fear, as a motivator, is still alive and well. We as individuals must examine the source, trust our judgments and handle the bunny with care.



Is there anyone out there with a clue?

Maybe I'm just easily annoyed, but have you tried to get through to an actual person who knows what they are doing by means of the telephone or online lately?

Example — as the parents of a senior, we have been trying to fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid or something like that). The process has taken two weeks, and do we know if it is right yet?

No! I applied for a pin number to sign the form electronically. You check in a day or two to see if the pin has been assigned. The application went well, but for some reason I could not retrieve the pin.

Call FAFSA Help-Line — the guy about had a hemorrhage because I was trying to get my daughter's pin. This is highly privileged information and apparently it is a very bad thing for a parent to know a kid's pin. If I had known the magnitude of my crime I would have pretended I was Tricia. I guiltily got off the phone and laid low for a couple of hours, hoping the police did not show up with guns blazing.

In the meantime we made a college visit. We met with a nice lady in financial aid, we explained that we had some trouble retrieving the pin but planned to try again that day, therefore, the application could be completed by the March 1 deadline.

On returning home I was able to retrieve the pin and complete the application. The next day we received two confirmations that the application had been received,

Back Home Nancy Hagman



one said, however, that in addition to the child's pin we had to have a pin for the parents.

We also received a letter from the lady in financial aid, thanking us for the visit and telling us that she was our financial aid advisor. It suggested we could meet again if we had "questions or concerns about the financial aid process." It gave her office hours, e-mail address, and phone number if a personal appointment was not practical.

I tried to apply for a parent's pin; they wouldn't let me because they said I had already been assigned one.

Call FAFSA help — How do I find out my previously assigned pin? He got me through the application process and explained exactly what I needed to do after I retrieved it. He was sooooo helpful.

"What's your name?" I asked. "I want to talk to you if I have to call again."

He laughed, "Oh, there are so many of us, you'll probably never talk to me again." But, he assured me that every one of the help people was just as competent.

Yeah, right! (Is this how Internet romances start?)

The next day I checked and sure enough

I had a pin. I retrieved the application just like he told me. I went to the place where I was supposed to sign. I signed. The computer told me that the parents have already signed the application.

Call FAFSA help — this guy tells me to go to the pin web site. The one you use to retrieve the pin. He starts telling me how to sign the application. I tell him that the application is on another web site. He seems bewildered. I go back to the application web site and do what he tells me to do, which is exactly what I already did. When it comes up that the electronic signature has already been submitted, he says, "Well you are okay then." In fact, he points out the one e-mail that confirmed it.

"Yeah, but what about the e-mail that said I needed a pin?"

"Never mind," he says, "You are probably OK."

I decided to call the university financial aid lady. The one I had the letter from, the one who said she was our advisor, the one who gave her office hours, phone number and e-mail.

I got a young man (probably on work study, a financial aid program my daughter will never get if this application isn't right). He wouldn't let me talk to our financial aid advisor. But he assured me it was probably OK, even though according to the records, he was looking at the application still needed an electronic signature from the parents.

Yeah, I'm just easily annoyed. We are probably OK.

A child's heaven, a parent's nightmare

Chucky Cheese, what a nightmare. On our most recent excursion to Omaha, my brother's friend Al's 7-year-old daughter was having her birthday party at Chucky Cheese. We were ordered to go.

Now, when I was a kid, I remember going to Showbiz Pizza (which is where Chucky Cheese actually came from) and this was nothing like that fond experience.

After waiting in line for what seemed like hours and was actually about 10 minutes, we were finally allowed entry. We squeezed past impatient kids and entered what could be considered someone's (or several someones') personal hell.

Screaming kids, loud game noises and singing mechanical puppets all combined to make this into an especially horrid place to be.

Now, I'm normally not a very claustrophobic person, but all of this was making me a bit sick and dizzy. I really just wanted to find Al and sit down away from the game area. Unfortunately, we were late and Al had already left. My brother went to call him, leaving Mom and I to weather the swirling eddies of child-like things that couldn't possibly be children alone.

We finally got to leave and I've never been so thrilled to see the blue sky. Chucky Cheese is not a happy place for anyone over 10 to be.

— nn —

The main reason we went to Omaha

Night Noise Veronica Monier



was to see the once-Broadway musical, "Cats". It was great. We took my brother and his girlfriend, who's a music major.

We're going back in May to see, "Riverdance".

— nn —

Who knew that spending a lot of money in a very short time could make a person feel ill?

Well, I suppose I did since it seems that this is one of the little genetic flaws I inherited from my mother. Although I suppose it could be considered a good thing

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if you look at it as kind of a safe guard on the check book.

After four days in Omaha and more money spent than I should have, on who knows what, I was feeling a little nauseous at the thought of having to spend anything more. We were supposed to go to a Japanese steakhouse that night, but changed our plans because no one really felt up to it.

So instead my mom cooked a lovely pre-Mardi Gras meal — black beans and rice, shrimp piquant and bread pudding in a hard sauce made from rum. We also had real French bread — chewy on the outside, soft on the inside — which I don't think you can get anywhere around here. The true test of French bread is you should be able to brain a person with a loaf without harming the bread any.

We left the next day.

It was fun but it's nice to be home again.

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