

There are bigger issues to think about

Such a stir one middle-aged woman's breast can cause. Congress wants an investigation, new laws, stiffer fines for indecency. Federal Communications Commission chair Michael Powell wants new rules, slaps heavy fines on foul-mouthed radio jocks. Across the country, people howl and wail. OK, it was tasteless and tacky, but not a whole lot more. If not for the fact that millions of Americans were watching the pathetic halftime show, not much mention would have been made. It wasn't a whole lot more than the family would see on a Sunday trip to the beach. Nudity has become a staple on cutting-edge television, on cable but also on network drama. Just because NYPD Blue airs later, do your really think the kids aren't watching? It probably wasn't such a good idea, but a national emergency? Hey, the country has greater problems. Domestic violence, for one. It was three weeks after the Janet Jackson flap before anyone even mentioned that the song and dance routine she and Justin Timberlake were doing bordered on abuse. He was singing about tearing her clothes off, and no one seemed to mind. So, is it OK to talk about roughing your woman up, as long as you don't show any skin on television?

Hardly. Domestic violence is a major problem, though society still tends to look the other way. Domestic cases often are not reported publicly and far too often, no charges are filed. There's still a feeling that what people do at home stays there. Is sex on the air a problem? The feds levied huge fines against a disc jockey who calls himself "Bubba the Love Sponge" last week. We haven't heard his program, but how does it compare to the dozens of people shot and killed by cops, bad guys and good guys during the average television week? Why is all this violence OK? Why do video game producers pander to our violent side? Maybe blood sells even better than sex. Compare the two, and decide which is more harmful. Wife beating, or skin? Murder as entertainment, or Bubba the Love Sponge? In a world where children die every day of disease and hunger, where women are abused in country after country, where cheating amounts to business ethics and lying passes for statesmanship, is a little skin the biggest problem we have? After the outcry this year, a repeat is unlikely at any future Super Bowl halftime. But is anyone getting worked up about the real problems we face?

— Steve Haynes.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

To the Editor:

Where does your food come from? If you're like many Americans, the answer is the grocery store. And frankly, that disturbs me. The grocery store isn't where food comes from — it's just from where it's distributed. In reality, far too many people are unaware of the role of American agriculture in their daily lives — and what it really takes to have food on their dinner table. Just a few generations ago, most people were a part of, and had friends or relatives involved with, agriculture. Today, that's no longer the case. That's why I'm writing, because agriculture is responsible for providing the necessities of life — food, fiber, clothing and shelter. And it's about time Americans recognize that contribution.

American farmers are working harder than ever, and it shows. Today, each American farmer feeds more than 120 people. And the need for food produced

in the U.S. is dramatic. Agriculture is this nation's No. 1 export and vitally important in sustaining a healthy economy. And it's not just the farmer who makes our food possible. The entire agriculture industry, all the way to the grocery store, are vital links in a chain that brings food to every citizen — and millions of people abroad. Frankly, it's easy to take agriculture for granted in America. Our food is readily accessible and safe. For this, we're unbelievably fortunate. But that doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to recognize how it's made possible. This Saturday is National Ag Day, hosted by the Agriculture Council of America. Ag Day is a good time to reflect, and be grateful for, American agriculture — and to share that message with others, especially young people.

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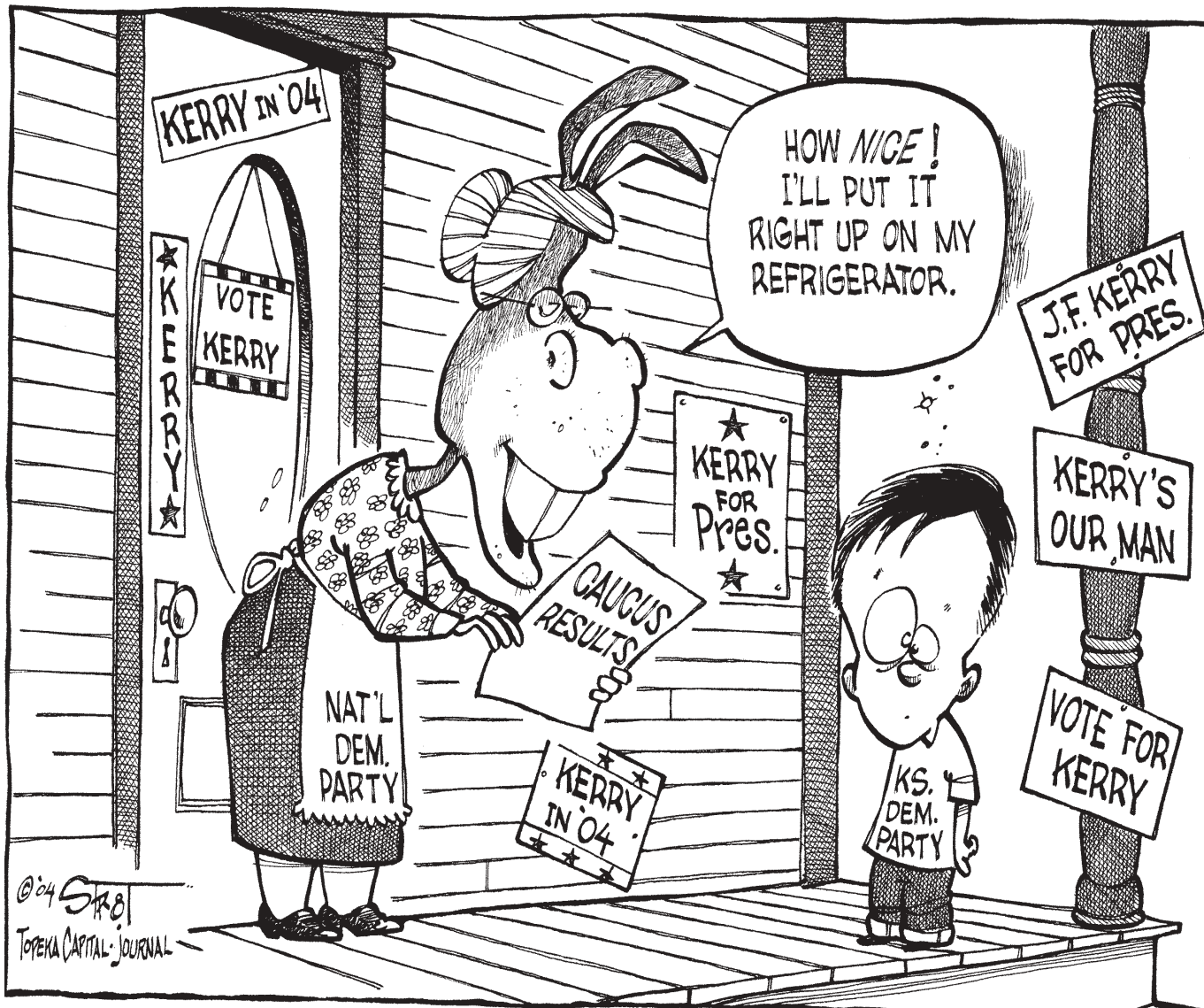
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A good dog is a hard thing to find

I'll be the first to admit it — I'm hardly the type, but today I became a hero. I saved Smiley's life. It certainly gives one a feeling of satisfaction. And my whole family is really proud of me.

Okay, Smiley is a dog. But she is not just a dog, she is our dog.

She helps my husband out a lot. For instance, when he is trying to load or sort cows Smiley will get right in after them. Of course if she makes one mad she quickly runs behind him giving the cow the impression he was the one who was biting her heels. What usually happens then is I have to tie her up until we are done.

So, maybe there are better ways to describe what makes her so special.

She hates coyotes.

She can bark all night. Sometimes we don't get any sleep at all. Come to think of it, that is really not all that helpful, either.

Well, she is a good welcoming committee. She likes to roll over right in front of people so they can scratch her belly. They say contact with a pet helps relieve stress. So if you don't fall over her and break your neck, she can definitely make your day better.

Before Smiley we had Ripper (don't let the name deceive you). We got her as a puppy when daughter Kate was about 2 years old. Ripper was a really good dog — good for absolutely nothing. But how

Back Home Nancy Hagman



we loved her. We had her for 16 years.

Before she died we started looking for a new dog. We thought Ripper would be a good influence on a new dog and company. Ripper was a border collie and we tried to get that breed. We paid a lot for a pure bred registered dog. It was very aggressive to other animals, the mowing machine and passing cars. Then, it got run over.

We got a dog from the Humane Society. That costs money also. It got run over.

Ripper died the same week Kate went to college. Of course that upset her, but

somehow it seemed right. They grew up together, and they moved on together. Now that Kate has come back do you suppose Ripper could be reincarnated?

Never mind, that is a whole other column.

After Ripper died we started looking for a new dog in earnest. Elizabeth found a stray; it was in terrible shape. We nursed it back to health. It got run over.

We got one we heard about on the radio. It got run over.

My mother-in-law found a stray puppy.



Smiley

Cravings are satisfied on the way south

When we travel, one of our favorite things to do is try new foods and eat at restaurants some franchises haven't seen fit to locate in western Kansas.

We are on another trip to Juarez, Mexico, and spending an extra day in El Paso before crossing the border with the team of college kids from Wisconsin.

Red Lobster and the Olive Garden are on my list of "must do's". Long John Silver's and a little mom and pop taco joint we found last trip are on Jim's. We both thought Chinese food would be good our first night in town and drove to a nearby establishment for carry-out.

We neither one noticed the "Mongolian Chinese" notation until we were back in our room and it was too late. Most of the dishes were way too spicy for us. More like flaming tongues of fire. It made us appreciate, all the more, the excellent Chinese restaurants located in our part of the country.

We've already hit the Long John Silvers and will pick up Red Lobster on way out of town. Jim got his hankerin' for good Mexican food satisfied yesterday in Juarez when we stopped at several little roadside stands for chicken, chile

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



rellenos, tortillas and ice cream. (Mexican ice cream is fabulous.)

One of the reasons for coming early was to drive out to the house of the family we built for in February.

It was wash day for Graciella. She had laundry hanging on the fence and tubs of water in the yard, but she dropped everything to welcome us with warm hugs and continuous "Gracias, gracias."

She proudly showed us her home. She

It got run over.

My brother told me, "You know you only get one good dog in a lifetime."

We were ready to give up. Well some of us were. By then it was almost three years later. Elizabeth who always took the deaths of the dogs the hardest was crying on Mrs. Coleman's shoulder at school one day. Mrs. Coleman had a stray dog. They didn't want it. She brought it to us on Mother's Day weekend. This mother didn't want it.

You see, Elizabeth, the great pet lover, was graduating and would be going away to school. So whose dog do you suppose it was going to be?

Guess what? She turned out to be a great dog. We named her Smiley because she looks like she is smiling. We have had her for almost four years.

For some odd reason Smiley likes to run around on top of the ice in the above-ground pool. However she has never been swimming to my knowledge. What she failed to realize today is it's warming up. I was on the phone and heard her yipping like crazy. But it was a business call and I felt obliged to carry on to its conclusion.

When I got off she had quit, but luckily I went to the door and hollered. She started up again and I realized she was in the pool. And she was in the middle of it. I would have gone in after her, but fortunately she remembered she could doggie paddle, so to speak. She swam right over to the side and I pulled her out.

Poor baby, she was cold but she was alive. I got the husband's big bath towel and dried her off as best I could. (I'm kidding, honey!)

My brother is wrong. You get at least two good dogs in a lifetime. I'm sure thankful I didn't have to start looking for a third.

had a refrigerator, a table and three chairs, and a china cabinet with no glass in the doors outfitting her kitchen. The living room contained a bed, a dresser, a television and pictures of her children on the walls. The back room also contained a bed and some free-standing closets.

Keep in mind this is a three-room, 15-foot-by-30-foot house with no plumbing. But Graciella thinks it is a mansion.

We had a few more gifts for her. A friend's grandmother sent a handmade quilt that brought tears to Graciella's eyes. It was so "bonito" (beautiful) she said.

My friend, Teresa, sent a sewing machine along. It was an older model, but still in good shape. Graciella was so appreciative. I foresee her making many beautiful things with it.

WRITE:

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