

## The race is on for who will take the senate

Let's see now, it's David and.... what's that guy's name? Oh, Goliath! That could characterize the Aug. 3 primary election in the 40th Senatorial District against Ralph Ostmeier, Grinnell, and Dan Rasure, Goodland. Both are Republicans and one of them has to go to make way for the other to take on Democrat Tim Peterson of Monument in the Nov. 2 general election.

I say David and Goliath because Mr. Ostmeier was just completing his second two-year term as representative of the 118th House District. He had filed for re-election but withdrew to enter the Senate race after the incumbent, Sen. Stan Clark of Oakley, lost his life in a dirt storm collision on I-70 in late May.

Mr. Rasure, on the other hand, is taking his first bite out of the political pie. And what a bite he chose to take. He is 22 years of age. This should prove to be an interesting, very interesting, match up.

First reaction would be, "He doesn't stand a chance." That is in reference to David (Dan) beating Goliath (Ralph). But those of us who have dabbled in politics all our lives — or a good part of it — in this senate district said the very same thing in 1976 when another "David," Goodland novice Richard Gannon, a Democrat, surprised another "Goliath," veteran Republican Sen. J. C. Tillotson of Norton to win that seat. Gannon was 26. His parents, Bill and Geraldine Gannon still farm south of Goodland.

Tillotson was not only an 18-year veteran, but he was also chairman of the Judiciary Committee and vice president of the Senate.

A further reflection on that race was the fact that Peterson, who will face either Rasure or Ostmeier in the fall, was a member of a very, very small Gannon-for-Senate committee. The others were Peterson's mother, Richard Gannon's wife Martha, and the then-editor of the Goodland Daily News.

Ostmeier, at this point, would be the overwhelming favorite. He would have to be. He's got the credentials by way of service in the Kansas House, the experience, the know-how on the campaign trail. A tough guy to beat.

Rasure, at this point, has nothing on his side. No credentials, no experience, no know-how. Tough doesn't enter the conversation.

But before we place our bets, it might be wise to reflect on what happened in this senatorial district 28 years ago. A lesson hard learned for a powerful incumbent.

Never take anything for granted. Especially in the world of politics.

— Tom Dreiling

## Aging can hide an alcohol problem

Alcohol abuse by seniors and in the elderly is sometimes called a hidden epidemic because its symptoms often mimic or are masked by common physical and mental infirmities of aging, such as lessened alertness, depression, anxiety and diminished physical capacity.

Also, doctors rarely ask their elderly patients when and how much they drink or what effect it has on their lives. Circumstances common among older people can increase the risk of alcohol abuse, even in someone who has never had a previous alcohol problem.

Retirement may result in a loss of structure, self-esteem and income and an increase in loneliness and boredom. Other losses such as spouses, friends, physical well-being or independence as well as pain or sleep problems may also prompt older people to turn to alcohol.

The effects of alcohol can be exaggerated in an older person because the body that is consuming alcohol at age 65 or older is not the same as the one that drank at age 45.

In addition, as people age, there is a

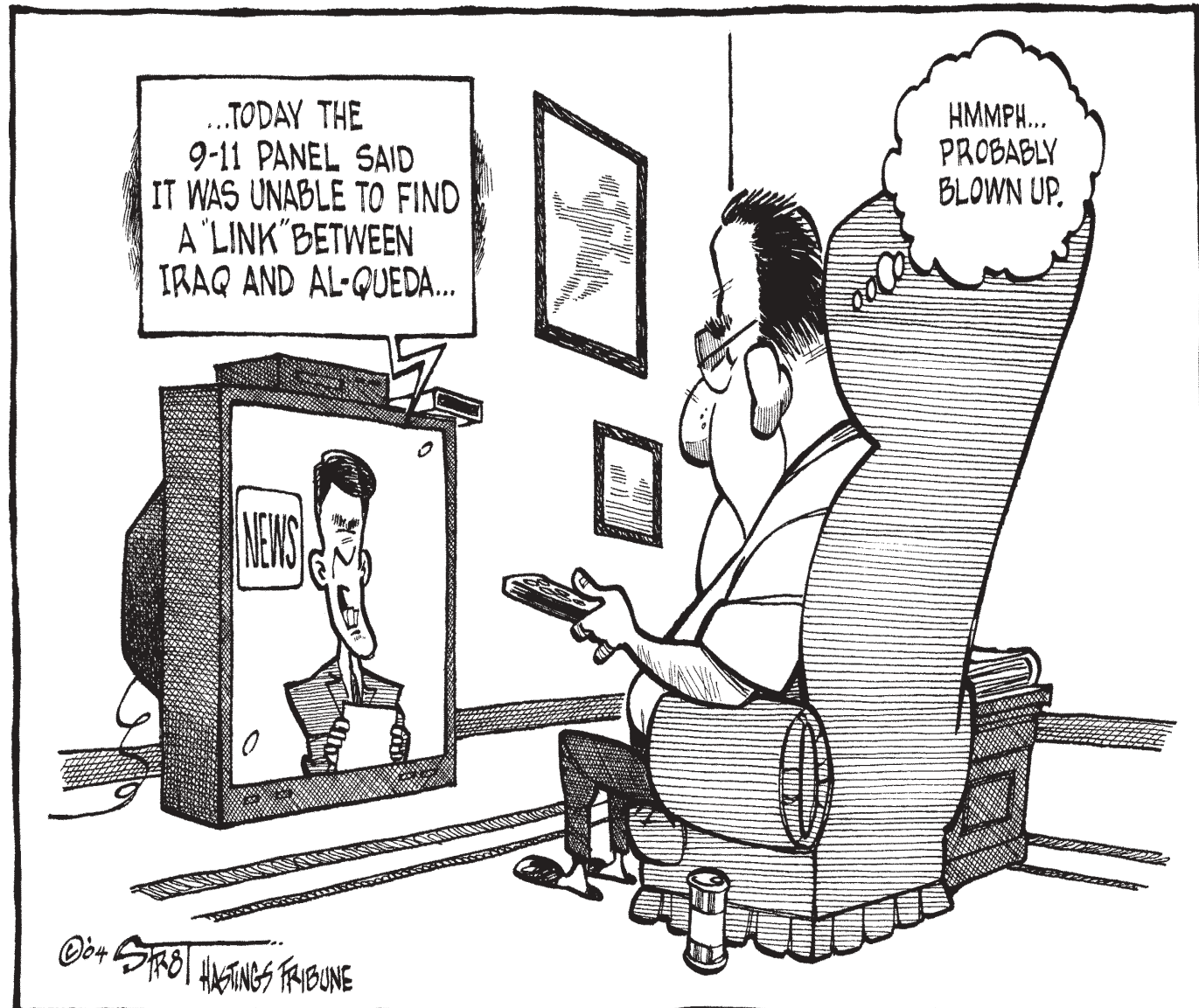
## High Plains Mental Health

Cora Lee Pfannenstiel

decline in a stomach enzyme that starts to break down alcohol before it reaches the bloodstream. Blood alcohol levels in older people are typically 30 to 40 percent higher than in younger people who consume the same amount.

But even at equivalent blood alcohol levels, older people are more likely than the middle aged to experience intoxication, cognitive difficulties and problems with balance and coordination.

In other words, tolerance for alcohol declines, and the risks of excessive drinking rise with age. In addition, an older person who takes medication for arthritis, depression, hypertension, heart disease and other ailments can also be at increased risk as alcohol can result in negative interactions with these medications.



## It's all enough to be thankful for

The Telegram had a tea for its correspondents and writers last month. Society Editor Carolyn Plotts told the group that I write a weekly column.

I beg to differ. I write a tri-weekly column. I write one week and try like the dickens to get one written for the next week.

This week it's been more like "try weakly". I know what I want to say but haven't been able to get it out.

And it has been a good week — it rained, Tricia is now officially enrolled at Kansas State University and we have two employed teachers in the house.

Amazingly enough it has only been about five or six weeks since these children have all been back in the nest.

Why does it seem so long? Our house used to hold them just fine.

Now there is no hot water and we have monumental grocery bills, fights over the phone and computer, and NOISE! And we are out of milk again.

They told us at college orientation that one of the biggest adjustments for freshmen is sharing a dorm room 'cause most kids have not had to do that before.

Elizabeth always said that she would make her kids share rooms even if she had a four-bedroom house and two kids because she saw it as such a problem with her dorm mate.

Interestingly enough they lived together all four years of college, they just got places that allowed them to have their own bedrooms.

So this experience of having everyone

## Back Home Nancy Hagman



home is good. It is making my children more tolerant. There is an upside to everything.

I realize, too, how short this time is.

Kate will be in summer school this month and wants to be at her job Aug. 1. She has to find a place to live, so she wants to do that next week. We are cutting what I remind her.

(Sometimes I think I am talking to myself no matter how many people are living in the house).

Tricia will be busy with fair projects. "Let's do the easy stuff first," she suggests.

Yeah! That's a good idea. We get along so much better when there is a lot of pressure on. Maybe the problem here is that mom needs to become more tolerant.

Elizabeth, as always, is the easiest. She got a job in Smith Center.

So I said, "You can live with us." (That is if we ever get moved).

"No," she says.

No? Why wouldn't she want to live with us?

Still, her dad is happy, she will be close enough to use on the weekends as a free

farm laborer.

At least we will have milk in the house. In fact we will have plenty until I learn to scale back how much I buy.

And when I think no one is listening to me it will be because it will only be me and J.R. and he never listens to me anyway.

Okay, here it is my weekly column. I hope I managed to get through it without sounding too weepy or full of self-pity. We needed all the laughs we could get in our house this past year.

Those parents who end up with an adult child back home for whatever reason: lack of employment, divorce, health problems, deserve a medal of honor.

It is devastating to the child's self-esteem and trying to the other members of the household to be in this situation.

A friend of mine has suggested we should start a political action committee to promote the candidates who will promise to get our kids out of the house and into jobs.

I have joked that this experience has been great for my prayer life. But it is not really a joke. The good news is prayers are answered.

Yes, it has been a good week. It's time for the most important prayer of all, one of thanksgiving. The rain has not solved the problem of the drought and these jobs will not solve all the problems in their lives but we are grateful.

We are grateful for the promise a college education holds for Tricia and for this time we are sharing together.

AMEN.

## Congressman meets with Medicare

Congressman Jerry Moran met with the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Dr. Mark McClellan, during a meeting in Capitol Hill. Dr. McClellan was recently appointed by President George Bush to lead the federal agency responsible for Medicare and Medicaid. The administrator and Moran discussed ways to improve Medicare reimbursements for hospitals, nursing homes, home-health care and ambulance services in rural areas.

"Access to affordable to health care is important to all Kansans, and Medicare reimbursements play a big part in determining what health care services are available across our state," Rep. Moran told Dr. McClellan. "As we work toward modernizing the Medicare system, we must make sure that Medicare payments to rural health care providers keep pace with the rising costs of health care."

## Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



During the hour-long meeting, the men discussed recent changes that would end reimbursements to Critical Access Hospitals for laboratory services, unless the patient is physically present in the hospital. In rural settings, laboratory specimens are often collected at health clinics, skilled nursing facilities and patients' homes.

Mr. Moran and Dr. McClellan also talked about improving the reimbursements for ambulance services. Before the meeting, Moran contacted health care officials in the First District to make cer-

tain that their concerns were raised at the meeting.

"Because some patients must already travel great distances to see a doctor, we must make certain that our hospitals receive adequate Medicare reimbursement and are able to stay in business," Rep. Moran said. "Kansas communities cannot afford to lose access to health care services."

Mr. Moran also encouraged Dr. McClellan to visit Kansas to learn more about Kansas hospitals and rural health care.

Dr. McClellan was on Capitol Hill to meet with Mr. Moran and other members of the Rural Health Care Coalition.

For more information, contact Congressman Moran at (202) 225-2715 or visit his web page at [www.house.gov/moranks01/](http://www.house.gov/moranks01/).

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