

Rain dampens everything but spirits

You just can't get anything done around here this month. Farmers would be able to get their wheat in, such as it is. If it weren't for all that pesky rain.

Most towns can't even have a proper Fourth of July, with fireworks rained out for two days straight. Norton was one of the few in western Kansas to get their show over before the downpour.

City officials can stop worrying about what day it is. Nobody's watering the lawn.

Go figure.

For five years, it would hardly rain at all. Now it doesn't want to stop.

Yet, with the inconvenience and the loss in quality of what wheat there is, we don't hear anyone complaining.

Not at all.

Corn is growing. Milo is sprouted. Sunflowers are reaching for the sky. Pastures are green.

No one thinks it is too wet, at least not so far, as if such a thing is possible in western Kansas.

So, it seems, everything has changed. And curiously, nothing has changed.

Farmers still gather to talk about the weather. Crews wait to get combines back into the fields.

The price of wheat will be the same tomorrow as it was in May, or nearly so.

The government keeps trying to make things right, but the farm population keeps dwindling.

There'll still be a lot of 60-something farmers out there, with darned few 30-somethings to buy or lease their land. There's one more big shakeout coming.

But there will be a fall harvest this year. The corn probably won't die and shrivel like it did last year.

Combines will reap corn and milo as the weather turns cool, at least, if the rain stops long enough to let them into the field.

Heck, at this rate, there could be some wheat standing in September.

Nobody's complaining. The drought may not be over, but things look a heck of a lot better than they have been.

We'll take the rain.

— Steve Haynes

Children need comfort, help during a divorce

Dear Plain Sense:
I am in the process of divorce and wondering how this might affect my children. What do I tell them? How do I explain what is going on?

While the adults involved in ending a relationship might be devastated as well as relieved, the children who are involved will probably be feeling, in the least, confused, worried and even frightened.

Divorce can be misinterpreted by children unless parents provide some explanation. Children often believe they have caused the conflict and feel that the divorce is their fault.

Parents do not have to explain all the personal problems, but they do need to reassure their children that they are not to blame.

Children most often worry that they will have to move to a new house, leave their friends or attend a different school.

It is important that parents talk to their children about pending changes, as well as allowing them to ask questions.

Very young children will react more to the obvious changes, such as a parent's continuing absence or a move.

Older children, who have a more ma-

High Plains Mental Health

Karen D. Beery

ture concept of the issues, will have reactions related to their personal sense of loyalty and fairness.

Parents should be alert to signs of distress.

Young children tend to react with behavior changes such as angry outbursts, being uncooperative or withdrawing.

Older children will experience more of the sense of loss and feeling of sadness; their schoolwork may suffer, or they, too, may exhibit some behavior changes.

When things settle down and life is back to a sense of normalcy, such behaviors should diminish.

If problems continue, and especially when parents become concerned about their children, it may be necessary to seek professional help. Counseling and therapy for families and couples dealing with divorce can be very beneficial for all involved.



Milk cap color makes all the difference

Taylor asked, "What color is the cap on your milk, Grandma?" "Red," I told her. "I'm going to tell my mom to get that one, 'cause it's the best milk in the world!"

That's probably not going to fly with weight and health conscious Kara. So far, it's always been skim milk at her house and she will be aghast at the thought of her daughter guzzling gallons of whole milk.

—ob—

Saturday we traded one for two. Taylor's three weeks were up, and we were scheduled to pick up Angelia and Chantelle. Sometimes it's a logistical nightmare to coordinate everyone's schedules, but with the help of cell phones, we all zeroed in on the same location.

The scenario started Friday with Becky, Jim's youngest daughter, who lives in San Antonio, transferring possession of her two daughters to my youngest daughter, Kara, who lives in Dallas. That was the

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



first leg.

The second leg began Saturday morning when we headed south with Taylor, her belongings and all the "stuff" she accumulated during her stay.

She was most proud of the Indian arrowhead given to her by a man who let us come see his buffalo herd. He probably keeps a pocketful of replica arrowheads just for kids, but Taylor believes it was dropped by a real, live Indian who used to ride the Plains.

She also had to take home all her Sunday school papers, Happy Meal prizes,

pine cones she had gathered and some of the rocks she picked up.

Adam and Kara, along with Angelia and Chantelle, arrived before us at what we had determined was the half-way point. Cell phone communications allowed us to tell them, "Keep on a'comin'," because we weren't as far along.

Eventually, we made the connection and did the trade: one 5-year-old for a 13-year-old and a 10-year-old. Pretty much even-steven.

That completed the third leg, and now our house is buried in suitcases, clothes and all kinds of "girly" things. We have church camp planned for both of them, two county fairs, wiener roasts, and hopefully, lots of fun.

The fourth and final leg, I suppose, will be when we have to return them to their mother, but that's almost five weeks from now.

We'll be fine as long as we don't falter.

Rain makes yardwork inevitable

Happy as I am that we have gotten some rain, it has some unfortunate side effects. For the first time in three years I have to mow after the Fourth of July.

Three years ago the drought was not the problem but we were visited upon by a plague of locusts, or in this case, grasshoppers.

I tried everything to get rid of the nasty little creatures but nothing worked. They particularly liked the currant bush and the bleeding heart. They did not care much for mums.

The next year the drought worsened and the grasshoppers thrived. They pretty much ate everything, even the rhubarb leaves that are supposedly poisonous.

Last year I was recuperating from surgery and having knee problems. I told the husband he had to take care of the yard.

Uh Huh, that was a good idea.

Good news — he immediately bought a riding mower. But then he decided that wasn't good enough so he used the tractor and bush hog the first time he mowed.

I reminded him of the little fenced iris bed, which by this time was pretty much overtaken by weeds.

A while later he came in, "About the iris bed. I thought you were talking about the plantings next to the four-foot high fence to the east."

Back Home Nancy Hagman



I didn't even hear the rest. Not my finest moment I admit.

Last fall when I started putting containers away and couldn't find the blue enamelware pail I had marigolds in I asked him, "Do you know what happened?"

He looked very sheepish. Apparently it was a casualty of the same swath but at the time he felt he had confessed as much as he could and still live.

The grasshoppers came back, the current bush died and even the mums were eaten back to nubs. But the dry weather or the cold winter finally got the best of them. We are grasshopper free this year (so far).

Another problem with our yard is an abundance of walnut trees. We have some squirrels (rats with tails) but apparently not enough as there are walnuts all over. It's like trying to walk over golf balls.

Then there is the issue of size. On a

farmstead it is difficult to decide where to stop mowing. I always use a push mower even now that we have the riding mower because I find you make fewer mistakes when mowing and it is easier to do edges.

I remember reading about a diet/exercise program once that said mowing did not count as exercise. Obviously they haven't been to my house.

I don't really enjoy yard work all that much. It astounds me that people who have a choice would live somewhere where they have a yard to take care of.

Recently my daughter and I were talking to my cousin and her daughter about how difficult it could be to get elderly people to give up driving. My cousin remarked that she never cared to drive anyway so she wouldn't mind at all turning in her keys.

The daughters both agreed that they would be happy to live in places where there was no yard to care for.

It is interesting to see what people would be willing to give up.

As we get older we start to think about what we could live without. It is certainly much easier to give up things and responsibilities we never cared about in the first place.

I'm neutral about driving, but I hope I live long enough for someone to take my yard work privileges away.

Congressman looks at selling wheat to Iraq

Congressman Jerry Moran participated in a House Agriculture Committee hearing to review the state of agriculture production in Iraq and the likelihood of resuming commercial sales of U.S. agricultural products.

The hearing also focused on allegations of improprieties by the Saddam Hussein regime, resulting in corruption of the United Nations' "Oil for Food" Program. The United Nations is investigating the alleged corruption.

"Years of financial neglect and an ab-

sence of a commercial market in Iraq have damaged the country's agriculture sector," Mr. Moran said. "While the agriculture sector is rebuilding, Iraq will have to rely on imports of food and agriculture products. As the combines roll in Kansas, there is potential to sell Kansas wheat to Iraq."

Witnesses testified that they are confident that commercial sales of U.S. agriculture products will resume in Iraq. They expect that Iraq will need to import 2.6 million tons of wheat and one million tons

of rice this year.

Earlier this year, the U.S. sold 325,000 tons of wheat to Iraq. Prior to the 1991 Gulf war, the U.S. sold three million tons per year to Iraq.

The U.S. agriculture industry is attempting to foster relations with Iraqi buyers. The Kansas Wheat Commission and others have been working to sponsor a group to visit the United States, but problems associated with obtaining visas and clearances have forced the group to postpone the trip until later.

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