

'For our own good' isn't always the case

Secret laws? Well, the war on terrorism has given us secret courts and secret detention camps, so it shouldn't be any surprise. Americans are finding that, under the rather badly named Patriot Act, security regulations are written and put in place without the public ever knowing. A former member of Congress from Idaho was denied boarding at a western airport when she asked to see the regulation that allowed screeners to pat her down. "That's secret," they said. She reportedly hasn't flown since. Some of this may make sense. If it's the actual operating plan we're talking about — how screeners select which persons to pat down — there may be information there that we don't want terrorists to know. The authority to search is something anyone who asks should be able to see. As is usual, though, the bureaucracy tends to expand the definition of that which requires secrecy. Give them an inch, and they'll take a mile, as it were.

As federal control over all types of transportation expands, people are beginning to realize that the government has a reason to keep secret whatever it wants. Opponents of hauling nuclear waste around, for instance, fear they'll never again have any idea when and where shipments are moving.

People who like to watch trains and planes are being reported to the police, possibly entered into national databases, maybe earning a file at the FBI. Screeners probably make a record of anyone who protests security procedures.

Security is important. The threat of terrorism is real, but while there are things that should not be made public, there are dangers here.

The government may not want terrorists to know how security operates, but it's impossible for Americans to judge the quality of our security services when their work is secret.

We need to know that these things work.

The government might argue that it doesn't want terrorists to know our weaknesses, but it's just as possible to use secrecy to cover a bad job or a bad plan.

Our open society is going to suffer as secret government grows, and the worst part is, we won't have any idea how big these operations have become.

The government, for our own good, isn't going to tell us what it's doing.

It'd be easy to dismiss these fears, but the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. If we don't keep an eye on our government, we may wake up some day to find that it is keeping more than an eye on us.

Maybe the terrorists won't win, but if we let that happen, we won't, either. — Steve Haynes

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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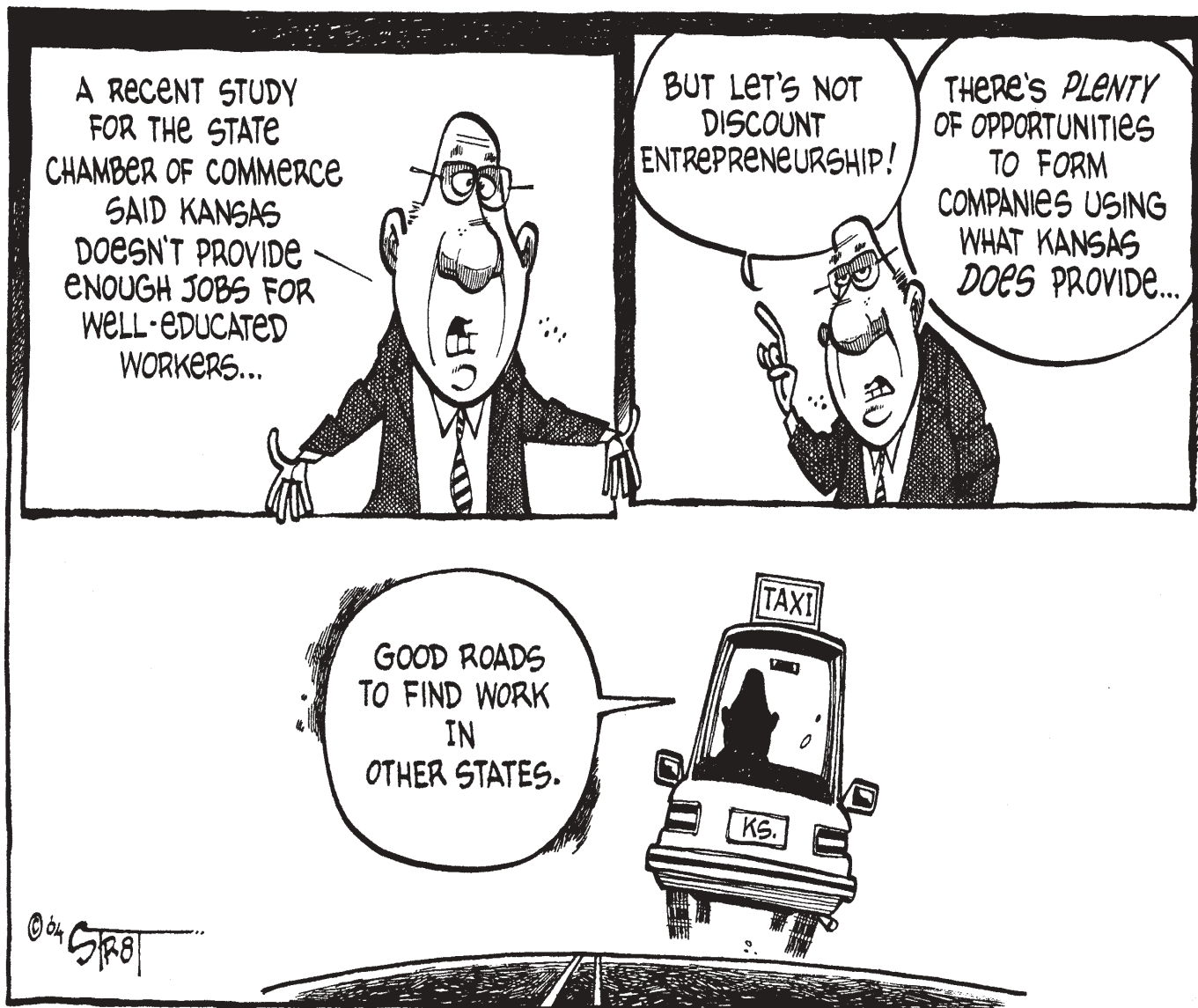
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Decorating is done in a frenzy

When our daughter Jennifer moved here a little over two years ago, she had no idea that the historic Victorian house she bought would put her in such high demand.

From the very first year, the Christmas Homes Tour committee had been asking her to let them put her house on the tour. She didn't feel like she was ready until this year. And even then, she had reservations. But, I kept "knoodging" (it's an old Jewish saying) her to do it with promises of, "We'll (meaning, mostly, her dad) help you get ready. It'll be fun. Don't worry (another old Jewish saying)."

Jennifer always has projects going. Her vision for her home has developed in stages. First was interior painting, then window coverings, crown molding in all the rooms, staining interior doors, installing French doors, a new front door and a swinging door into the kitchen. That was just the first year.

Landscaping began her first summer with the total removal of the front yard, new grass, new shrubs, a berm, rocks hauled in and flowers planted. I get tired just watching her work, because all this is in addition to her regular 60- or 70-hour work week for a major software company.

Now, fast-forward to the first of November. "Mom, Dad," Jennifer began, "the Homes Tour is less than two months away. Do you remember what you said? I really want doors put on those shelves, and I want that chandelier moved, please."

Integrity is important to have in life

As I grow older, I wonder from time to time if people still have good character and integrity. At one time I believed I could believe everything someone told me.

I learned some very difficult lessons that proved that was not true and probably never has been in time, but it changed my outlook on life.

I still believe most people most of the time and that's good.

A few weeks ago I attended a funeral that was a memorial service led by children of the deceased.

They told of the wonderful influence their father had on their lives and on the lives of many around him. He was 93 years old. It was a joy to hear of this testimony. This person was not made out to be perfect and yet had a tremendous influence in a large part because of his in-

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



"Sure, sure," we said. "No problem. We're there for 'ya, honey."

Next thing we knew, it was Thanksgiving. Then I hurt my back. Before we knew it, two more weeks had flown by and the doors still weren't on the shelves, the chandelier still hadn't been moved, and Jennifer was starting to get nervous. Very nervous.

Since Jim and I both work best under pressure, we weren't worried. Last week, Jim got started on her doors, and she and I designed her "tablescape" according to protocol on Home and Garden TV.

Saturday, the day before the tour, brought a decorating flurry unlike anything I had ever seen before. Greenery garlands were everywhere, Victorian Santas filled corners, the chandelier was moved, a new fixture hung, sterling was polished to a gleam, and china was placed just so.

About 6 p.m. Jennifer said, "I don't know. The tree still needs 'something.'"

About that time, "Decorating the White House for Christmas" came on television.

Memories

Sonya Montgomery



tegrity and faith.

A few weeks later I attended the service for a friend who died at age 47, a victim of cancer. Again, even at this young age it was a service talking of the great influence this young man had with his business associates, his work as a community leader, school board member and very influential among his church friends.

His children did not speak of his influence in their lives, but in visiting with

Guess what they were doing? Pouring bushels of artificial snow over the 30-odd Christmas trees on display at the White House.

Jennifer and I looked at each other and, simultaneously, said, "Snow. It needs snow." Another trip to the store produced two bags of "snow" and one bag of glitter. It was the final touch, the *pièce de résistance*. At 1 a.m., we were done. The next day, it needed only dusting and vacuuming. Well, you and I both know, there was more than just that. But, it was little things, and by "showtime" she was ready.

Except for one thing. We were in the car ready to leave and Jennifer couldn't find her keys. Obviously, they had been put out of sight in the last cleaning sweep. A spare set was found and all was well.

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Now, for the rest of the story. Everything went off without a hitch. About 100 women (I swear, not one man braved the tour) came through the house, and judging by all the positive comments, she passed with flying colors. Almost 10-year old Alexandria was the self-appointed guide for the upstairs, and she did a fine job.

Jennifer's dad and I were very proud of her and glad to be part of it. But, secretly, we hope she doesn't volunteer to be on the tour again for, oh, let's say another five years.

I don't think we have the stamina to do it again anytime sooner than that.

them, I am convinced he was a very big influence and that influence will stay with them as they continue in adult life. And what about his life, no doubt influenced by his parents and others.

All people have faults, but everyone of us will have an influence on other people, and we can dwell on our faults and the faults of others or we can work to make our influence remarkable and of value.

This Christmas Season might be a good time to renew ourselves to spreading peace and goodwill among those we meet.

You might be surprised that you will be a tremendous influence for good to someone you might know only briefly or maybe not ever meet, but because of something you did or said somewhere.

Sometime, you were that good influence.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Pastor supports new youth center as place for kids to go

Wouldn't you love to have a place for your teenagers to go on Saturday nights where you wouldn't have to worry about where they were, what company they were in, where alcohol and drugs weren't accessible and where the games and recreation were wholesome?

Such a place is being created through the prayers and support of Christians

throughout our county.

This place will be known as "The Rock" Christian Youth Center. This center will not be sponsored by one church, but by many churches and people throughout northwest Kansas.

As a father with two daughters and now four grandchildren, I know how important a place like this will be in helping our kids

grow spiritually and giving them a wholesome place to go on Saturday nights and other occasions.

Please consider supporting this effort.

Pastor Terry Worthington

Norton

