

'Most' isn't the word to use with prescriptions

Vioxx struck out. Celebrex faces a full court. Aleve is in the bullpen. What's next? They keep telling us we need to keep our congressmen in check so they don't pass legislation allowing importation of "unsafe" drugs from Canada and elsewhere. Elsewhere? We must be the 'elsewhere'!

The Food and Drug Administration is supposed to be the safety net. But it looks like the drug makers have yanked the safety net away and it's everyone for himself. Or so it seems.

This drug mess isn't going to go away anytime soon. And the deeper the investigative minds dig, the more concerned the American public will get.

There will be lots of questions in the public place, lots of suspicious eyes.

Reports on CNBC this week told of the drug makers kicking in countless sums of money to the Food and Drug Administration so it can do its job.

It's job is to make sure what the drug makers make is safe. But when the makers become financial partners with the very agency that determines the safety of their product, wouldn't it be safe to assume that they'll say, "Ah, it looks pretty good."

This could be just the tip of the iceberg. It could become so expansive that it could involve more than anybody ever imagined.

The unmasking of Vioxx — the so called miracle drug — alerted this country, the country considered the safest depository of drugs, that something is amiss.

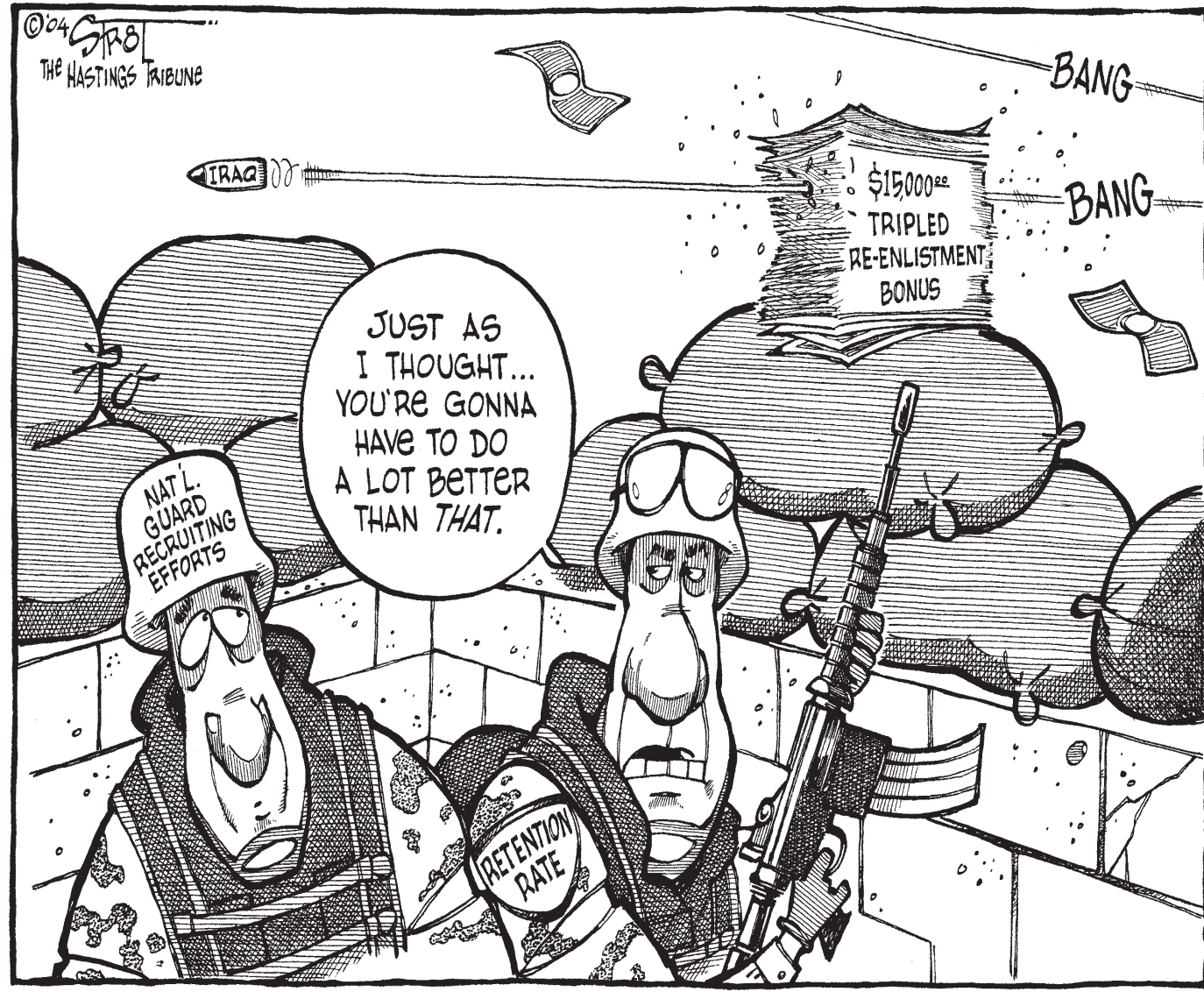
Any more revelations will certainly drive millions of users away from the counters.

Let's see if Congress has what it takes to bring this thing to the forefront and call those in the Food and Drug Administration and the drug making companies on the Hill for a fiery clash.

The television report softened the punch some by declaring that most of the drugs used are safe.

Sorry, but 'most' isn't good enough.

— Tom (TD) Dreiling



Letter gives a shock when re-read

There are two kinds of people: those who send Christmas letters and those who don't.

Those who do send Christmas letters think they are a great way to let the rest of the world in on their joys and sorrows in the past year, and yes, brag a little.

I haven't a clue what those who don't send letters think because I am not one of them.

There is evidence some of them think those of us who send letters are huge bores with egos the size of Texas. Some of them may like the letters but just don't feel equal to the task of producing such an epistle themselves.

Back Home Nancy Hagman



Whatever!

I haven't done my letter this year. But I have gotten some. Usually, I enjoy these letters but yesterday I discovered a conspiracy.

A week or so ago I got a letter from my cousin, Joyce.

She has a sister, Linda. Handwritten at the bottom she says "Why don't you join us in Boston."

I guess I didn't read it too closely because I thought she went on to say that she and Linda were planning a trip and my sister, Sue, was going along.

I remembered thinking it would be nice if they were going in the summer because daughter Elizabeth went to Boston last spring and wants to go back.

Daughter Kate (a history teacher) also wants to go.

In fact, I knew they had talked about going and taking Aunt Sue.

Why go to Boston?

Well, Sue and Joyce are interested in genealogy and one of our grandfathers, Thomas Dexter, came to America in 1629, and settled in Massachusetts. He was a person of some note or notoriety depending on how you look at it.

Paul Revere was a sixth-generation descendant.

Alas, the branch of the family we come from was not quite so patriotic.

They remained loyal to the king and

went to Canada when it appeared the colonies were going to revolt.

So I can't join the Daughters of the American Revolution, still life didn't seem so bad.

Until I got my sister Rachel's letter.

Right there, mass-produced for everyone to read, she writes, "Sister Sue has a trip to Boston in the works for this summer, so I'm looking forward to that."

Wait a minute.

I thought Joyce was planning this trip. I reread her letter. After she suggested I join them she said, "Linda and I were invited by Sue."

Well for Pete's sake. Now I am wondering — are my daughters going too?

I am not blaming Joyce. After all she did invite me. (She has always been my favorite cousin.)

As for the rest of them I am plotting how to get even.

My sisters may get a lump of coal this year.

And Linda lives far, far away so I don't have to talk to her at all.

Bah Humbug!

Maybe those Christmas letters aren't such a good idea. Sometimes you find out things that you don't want to know.

From now on I am going to have my letters pre-read and censored so I don't find out anything that might annoy me. I just wonder; can I find a family member I can trust to do it.

Oh well, no matter. Please keep those cards and letters coming.

I am going to try to get mine out before the weekend.

If you are on my list and have heard enough of me this year feel free to just toss it. Just don't tell me — I'm just a tad sensitive right now.

Kitchen evokes emotions, gratitude

My daughter-in-law, Gabrielle (Bri) Woodyard, wrote the following when my Mother died. Bri and my son Matthew live in the home where my father was born and where my parents were living when I was born. The holidays are always a time of reflection and probably no place in our homes evokes as much emotion as the kitchen.

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



As I pulled the fourth carton of eggs from the fridge, I thought of the many meals she had prepared in this very kitchen years before me. My own mother was visiting and we spent much of our time in the kitchen making the recipes my grandmother made.

My mother's mother was a professional chef whom I named my own daughter after, just four short years ago. As a child I knew my Italy-born grandmother was special for being the first female member of the Chef de Cuisine. What I didn't know was how memorable those times in the kitchen would be and how it would later give me the connection to past generations. If it weren't for the special grandma my children call "Alice the Great" (my husband's grandmother) I wouldn't be standing in this old farmhouse kitchen now with my mother and my own daughter.

I never imagined, when Matthew and I were married, moving to Kansas, let alone fixing up a family adobe home and raising my children out here.

Grandma gave us this opportunity and we took it and have gotten more from the past seven years than some get in a lifetime. I have learned so much in this life; the life I feel only comes from an experience like mine.

It was a leap of faith for us to change our lives but I felt it would be an adventure. I always said I would go anywhere with my husband and it didn't include being picky about where that might take us. When we came to Norton I never imagined I would or could be this happy since it also meant living so far from my own family.

Over the last few years, Grandma (Alice the Great) came to the house of ten and although it was probably hard to

watch us change so many things, she always told me it was very comfortable.

Even though I knew she couldn't see, she said she liked the way I decorated. I think she was proud and I've gotten the sense she approved of what we've done.

So now as I stand in my kitchen, I am reminded of all who have impacted the direction my life has taken. Alice gave me something very special — the ability to see how you ultimately make your own happiness. Instead of making a tough situation worse, I now look at life and embrace it. I found the purest happiness within myself.

In the hospital room as I visited her for the last time, I thought of how different my life would have been if she hadn't offered me so much.

I am forever grateful for the gift she has given me, not for the four walls around me, but for the eternal love growing inside those walls.

Christmas causes muffin madness

Has holiday madness infected your house yet? It has ours to the tune of 700 muffins, give or take one or two. At least one, since it fell in the washer and got wet. Cranberry cream cheese, I think it was.

Mom gets a little nuts over the holidays and feels the need to bake — a lot.

Last year it was sweetbreads. This year — muffins. Lots and lots of muffins.

I couldn't stand the sight of them once she was done and we still have a couple of bags left.

People would ask, "Oh, your mom likes to bake?"

No, she doesn't. She just gets a little crazy, that's all. And now that she's made 700 muffins — the one that fell in the washer still counts 'cause it was made — she probably won't be cooking for at least a couple of months.

There goes Christmas dinner.

—nn—

I'm really excited for Christmas to be over, 'cause then it will be New Year's Eve.

Mom got kind of miffed when she heard me say that because of the time and effort she put into presents this year. We can be

Night Noise Veronica Monier



a very materialistic family when we need to be.

I'm excited about presents, but I'm also excited about my little vacation.

This year for New Year's, I'm going to Omaha and then down to Salina for my birthday.

Usually I just go to Salina. But this year I decided to spice things up a bit. Nothing like spending New Year's Eve at your brother's work while he slaves away.

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★ U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

Once I get to Salina, my friends and I will be going to Kansas City to go gambling. I can hardly contain my excitement.

I'm going to lose my shirt playing blackjack, I'm sure. I'm not lucky enough to win and I've never played at a casino before. Usually I just hit the slots and lose my money that way.

But, I've been getting advice on what to do like when to stay and when to hit. I really have to start writing it all down...it's getting jumbled and I can't remember what to do when.

Ah well, I'm sure I'll have had a beer or two by then so I suppose it doesn't really matter.

I have been boning up a little on my blackjack skills, losing to the computer chip in my cell phone. It's really helping me to build up my tolerance to not winning.

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