

Solution is simple: just call in the Army

Government officials say it'll be different the next time. When a big disaster strikes, they'll have all sorts of plans, crews ready, command structure, transportation, you name it. Sure.

"We're FEMA. We're from the government, and we're here to help."

Sound familiar?

The truth is, in a disaster, as in battle, nothing goes according to plan.

It makes no difference how well the feds plan, the volumes will go on a shelf somewhere to be forgotten.

When a disaster the size and scope of Katrina comes around again, the bureaucracy will have settled in. No one will know what to do, and there won't be time to dust off the plan.

As one area official said, the thing he'd learned is all disasters have to be handled first by local officials, city and county. It takes hours to get help from the next county, and a day at least to have state troops on the move. Local workers need to be trained and practiced for emergencies.

There's just no substitute for that kind of preparation, but all too often, it doesn't happen. Katrina and the threat of a terrorist attack have many people working on the problem, but interest is apt to die down in a year or two.

It shouldn't.

Every county ought to have a disaster plan and hold a disaster exercise every year, focusing on what is most likely to happen and on the unpredictability of combat. You just never know what will happen. You might prepare for a tornado, then a tanker-load of chemicals explodes the next week.

Every agency should be practiced to work together. Commanders should be trained, but they earn their stars by dealing with the unexpected. Everyone must be able to communicate with everyone else — radios that talk to only one team will be useless — and did we say, practice makes perfect?

That's why only the Army seemed capable of making sense out of Katrina. The same was true after the San Francisco earthquake and fire a century ago.

It's because the Army trains and drills for combat, and good officers know how to make decisions and deal with the unexpected.

If we want results, we probably ought to hand preparation for real disasters, like a multi-state hurricane or nuclear explosion, over to the military and relegate the bureaucrats to some lesser role.

A Kansan, Gen. Fred Funston, was in command at San Francisco, and he led by all accounts a sterling response to the devastation there. The same was true in New Orleans. Nothing much happened until the Army rolled into town.

Perhaps no one could have been prepared for the awesome power of Katrina, but we need to learn some lessons from it.

One should be that every town and county needs to drill, practice and be prepared. The effort will pay off when it is needed.

The other is that when the big one comes, we should rely on professionals trained for the task, not on a bunch of bureaucrats with dusty plans. Leadership must be bold and move quickly.

Federal Emergency Management Agency indeed. Just call the Army. — Steve Haynes

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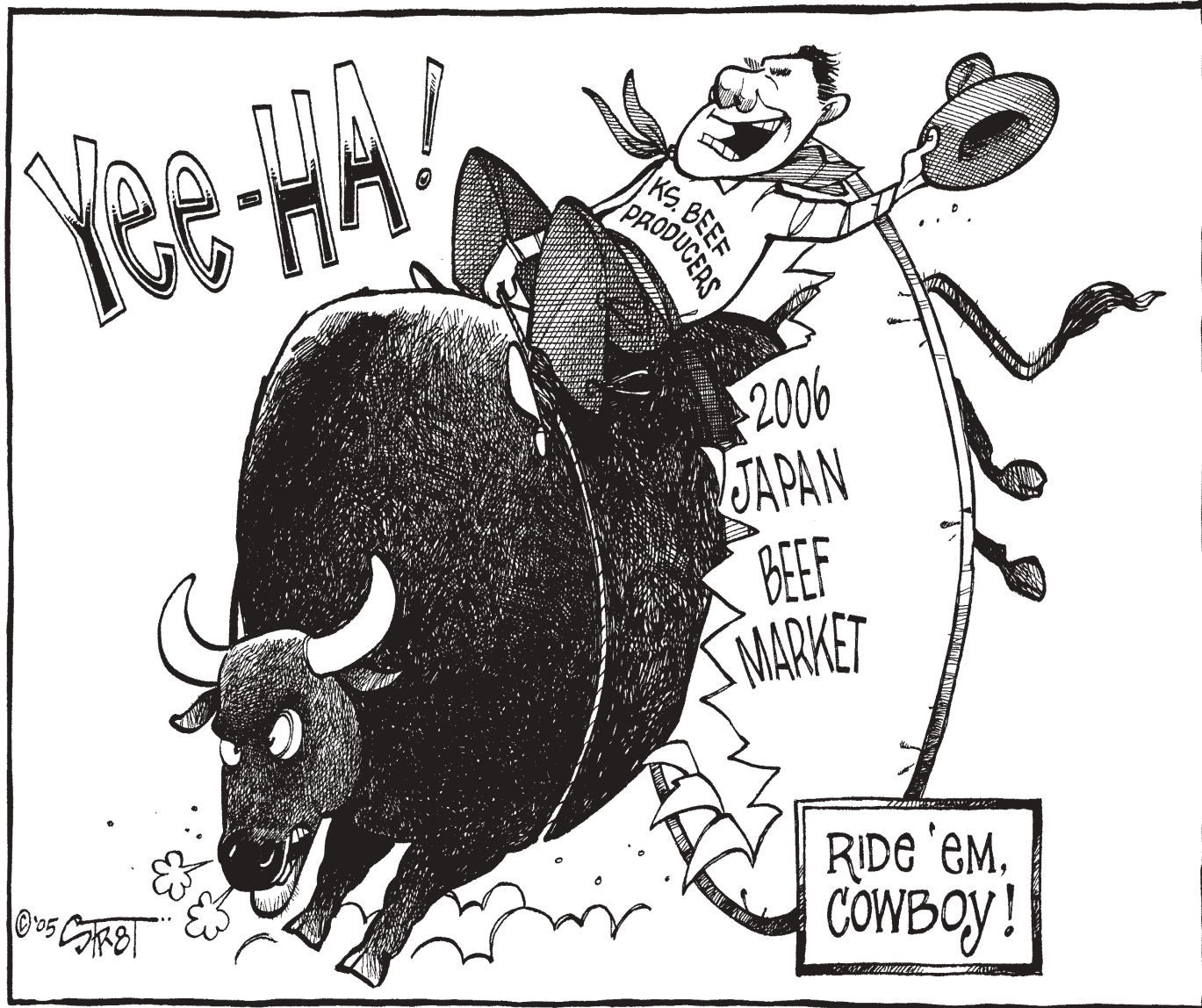
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Hey, ladies, be careful what you say

Women of the world — unite! After Saturday's Super Bowl play-off games, men across America are beginning to calculate what team will be playing what other team, where. The possibilities are endless.

This morning my husband began "explaining" the intricacies of how the teams are seeded. He was talking about the best records vs. the worst records.

I summarized it by asking, "You mean the worst of the best records, don't you?"

He countered, "Well, the advantage goes to the teams with the best record."

"Yes, but it's still the worst record of the best team, isn't it?" I asked.

"Yes, but you don't understand," he added.

I know I don't understand, and I probably should have left it at that. But, you know, that's so hard to do.

I had to push the envelope, just a little by saying, "No, I don't understand. Here's a quarter, why don't you call someone who cares?"

Now, that was wrong. I admit it. And, I tried to apologize almost as soon as I had said it.

I do care. Sort of. If a certain team from

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



our neighboring state to the west is playing, I care. Well, at least, I watch.

So, girls, guard your words.

— ob —

This e-letter has been circulating for awhile, but it has some merit. The writer said a friend commented on the drug problem in our country. The friend then asked, "Why didn't we have a drug problem when you and I were growing up?"

The writer answered, "Oh, I had a drug problem. I was drug to church every Sunday. And, I was drug to every family reunion and social event in the community. I was drug to the woodshed if I was disrespectful to a teacher or the preacher.

I was drug to the sink and my mouth washed out with soap if I used foul language. I was drug to our elderly neighbors

to mow their lawns or shovel snow from their sidewalks if they didn't have anyone to help them. And, if I had even tried to accept a ten cent tip for doing so, I would have been drug to the woodshed again.

The writer concluded by saying those drugs were still in his veins and they were stronger than cocaine, crack or heroin. Perhaps, if today's youth had this kind of "drug" problem, America would be a better place.

— ob —

Jim and I have officially crossed the line into the geriatric set. This New Year's Eve we didn't even make it to 11 o'clock before we succumbed to the temptation of slumber.

The next morning, though, I roused to the thought of it being the first day of the new year.

Carefully, opening one eye I detected Jim was still sleeping but in that fitful state right before you wake up.

Gathering my energy I sat bolt upright and yelled at the top of my lungs, "Hey! Happy New Year!"

I think I gave him a heart attack, but he laughed, so 2006 is officially off to a good start.

Retirement can be strange animal

Where do I start? On Sept. 1, 2005 I opted out of the work place to enjoy all the benefits of retirement. You know the litany: Travel. Golf. Sleep in. Volunteer. Coffee. Pester those still working.

Generally, do-what-you-want-when-you-want, or don't-do-what-you-don't-want-to-do-when-you-don't-want-to.

Sounded good. So good I decided that was for me.

Could hardly wait to adopt that lifestyle.

The first 30 days were like being in heaven. OK, I don't know what heaven is like, but likewise I didn't know what retirement was like either, so I thought just perhaps retirement was prep for the ultimate.

Far from it.

The first part of October wasn't bad, but I did notice a pinch of irritation when someone would suggest something to keep me busy. The last two weeks of that second month started a tailspin that carried through November and into December.

That's when I said to myself, "Myself, you've got to do something." So I did and the end result was moving back into the newspaper business that I've been in for 40+ years. And that meant moving to a new community, Norton, but a community that I have some degree of familiarity with.

So, I sit here today as the editor/publisher of *The Norton Telegram*. Prior to this location, I served as publisher of the *Colby Free Press*, editor of the daily *Sheridan (Wyo.) Press*, editor of *The Goodland Daily News/Sherman County Herald* (now *The Goodland Star-News*), city editor of *The Hays Daily News*, and editor to *The Ellis County Star*.

As you can see, most of my journalism career was serving communities in north-

My 2¢

Worth

Tom Dreiling



west Kansas. No place like it, believe me.

If you are planning retirement, do yourself a favor. Be sure it's what you want to do. I jumped into it because I thought I owed it to myself. And that is the worst of the reasons to retire.

So, here I am. And happy to be back. And happy that Norton figured into my plans.

-td-

My columns won't deal with a specific topic. I'm all over the place. You might laugh. Chuckle. Giggle. I may even cause a tear or two to roll down your cheek. And I invite you to share with me any items that might do the same with my readers. Don't be bashful. The format has been well received at my prior locations.

-td-

This is a true story. I am a United States Air Force veteran, eight-year commitment (Feb. 1, 1955-Jan. 31, 1963). Being a supporter of the Air Force Falcons at the

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

academy at Colorado Springs, I wear a blue and white AF cap. I also have a pin on the cap (1-inch square) presented by the Air Force for having a son in that branch of the service (he is in his 15th year and just left Monday for Kurdistan). The pin features the letter "P" for parent of a child in the AF, followed by the logo and the lettering U.S. Air Force. I was at a gathering several weeks ago made up of people of varying ages. A boy named Kirk who later I learned was a fifth grader, had his eyes locked on my cap and finally asked what it meant. I explained that it was a cap in support of the football team at the Air Force Academy. He wanted a closer inspection so I took it off and handed it to him. He tried it on (more than a couple of times), closely studying it each time. He eventually handed it to his grandmother for her inspection. As she looked it over, she asked what the letter "P" stood for on the pin. Before I was able to answer, her grandson said, "Grandma, It means he's in the preserves!"

-td-

Just a thought: Next time you ask your doctor if (plug in the name of the medication you saw advertised in a magazine or on television), is right for you, and he writes a prescription, should you perhaps earn a commission as a sales agent?

-td-

Have a good evening!

WRITE:

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.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.