

## They're just way too young to drive

It shouldn't happen, but ....  
Underage drivers.  
Over a four-year stretch, 33 drivers age 15 died in car crashes. Not passengers, pedestrians or innocent bystanders, but drivers.  
Kids hardly old enough to see over the steering wheel.  
Kids not old enough to drive, even in this state, except to and from school or on a farm errand.  
The statistics don't break it down, but chances are the majority of them were driving illegally, either without a license or in violation of their restrictions.  
It happens mostly because parents allow it.  
It's convenient for them if they don't have to haul their kids to town.  
They think their kids are safe drivers.  
They think it's silly to follow the law.  
Until they see their 15-year-old on a slab.  
It's not pretty, what an accident like that does to a family, a school or a community.  
We've made life a lot safer for our kids, but it could be safer yet. Why let 15-year-olds drive at all?  
Kansas is one of the few states left that hand out restricted licenses to kids 14 and 15. Many are cutting back on privileges for kids 16 and 17, making them earn the right to a full license.  
Not Kansas.  
Why not?  
Don't we care about our kids?

Then there is the case of the 16-year-old hit by a train Saturday down by Solomon.  
He was trying to put a coin on the track when the speeding freight clipped him. Luckily, the boy was struck a glancing blow by the steps of the engine and lived.  
Many who get on the tracks are not so lucky.  
Out here, people tend to be careless about railroad crossings. It's a foolish thing to do. Being hit by a train, even one going 20 mph on a weed-covered branch line, almost always kills.  
Along the Union Pacific line from Solomon to Oakley, and in Nebraska just north of us, even freight trains are clipping along at 50-60 mph. They can't stop in less than a mile.  
Get in the way, and you could be the next statistic.  
As the railroads say, "Stop, Look, Listen and Live."  
Just one mistake at a railroad crossing is too many. You won't get a second chance.  
And don't be putting coins in front of a moving train.

— Steve Haynes

## Thumbs Up to . . .

- ✓**Dale and Margaret Vincent**, on your 50th wedding anniversary!
- ✓**Rick Schwab** — good showing! (e-mail from friends)
- ✓**Jill Lively and her swimming pool crew** — for pulling weeds and sweeping sidewalks around the pool. Looks great! (called in)
- ✓**Joe and Rosetta McFarland** — on your 40th wedding anniversary!
- ✓**Jim and Peggy Ninemire**, and the **New Almelo CYO**, for doing such a great job on painting the playground equipment at New Almelo. (e-mail/Greg Otter)
- ✓**A Nebraska-born Nortonite** who discovered after an out-of-town trip that he was wearing two different shoes and never noticed until he removed them at home that evening. Maybe this column should be "Eyes Open" instead of "Thumbs Up!" (e-mail/friend)
- ✓**Teachers, Students, Administrators** — good luck as you embark on the 2006-07 school year. (called in)
- ✓**Small Town, America**, such as Norton — where you can safely leave your spouse's checkbook at a business place for him to pick up after it was discovered that he left the house without it. (walk in)

E-mail tomd@nwkansan.com, call 877-6908, drop by the office, fax 877-3732, or mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654. If you want your name used, please let us know, otherwise you will remain anonymous. Thanks!

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## Food for thought from college professor

I was wondering how I would start today's column. Lots of ideas took root in my head. But then an e-mail arrived that caught my eye. It came from a friend who happens to be a college professor. "Friend Tom," he wrote, "while this may be somewhat of an exaggeration, it should give all those moms and dads in your readership something to think about as we begin a new school year. Far too many parents fail to appreciate or understand the role of a teacher. I think this sums it up quite well."

Here's what he submitted:

After being interviewed by the school administration, the eager teaching prospect said, "Let me see if I've got this right. "You want me to go into that room with all those kids, and fill their every waking moment with a love for learning, and I'm supposed to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, modify their disruptive behavior, observe them for signs of abuse and even censor their T-shirt messages and dress habits."

"You want me to wage a war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for weapons of mass destruction, and raise their self esteem."

"You want me to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, fair play, how to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook, and how to apply for a job."

"I am to check their heads for lice, maintain a safe environment, recognize signs of anti-social behavior, make sure all students pass the state exams, even those who don't come to school regularly or complete any of their assignments."

"Plus, I am to make sure that all of the students with handicaps get an equal education regardless of the extent of their mental or physical handicap. I am to communicate regularly with the parents by letter, telephone, newsletter and report card."

## Good Evening Norton

Tom Dreiling



"All of this I am to do with just a piece of chalk, a computer, a few books, a bulletin board, a big smile AND on a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps!"

"You want me to do all of this and then you tell me.....I CAN'T PRAY?"

Some guy bought a new fridge for his house. To get rid of his old fridge, he put it in his front yard and hung a sign on it saying: "Free to good home. You want it, you take it."

For three days the fridge sat there without even one person looking twice at it. He eventually determined that people were too un-trusting of this deal. It looked to good to be true, so he changed the sign to read: "Fridge for sale \$50." The next day someone stole it.

I was so sorry to hear that Kate Hudson and Chris Robinson are going their separate ways. Weren't you? Who are these people? I was told that Kate is an actress and Chris is lead singer of The Black Crowes. Shame on me for not knowing that. Also, that Kate is the daughter of Goldie Hawn. I recognize that name.

I also thought this comment was interesting: 'Mothers who pack school lunches for their kids should use some creativity to make sure the kids don't get bored with lunch.' What kind of sense does that make? I thought lunch had a very definite

purpose, and I never once factored boredom into it. If they're hungry they'll eat it. There's something loony going on.

I guess I should be laying awake nights because Katie Couric hasn't yet decided on a signature phrase to end her nightly newscast. Talk about something that'll impact our lives!

As you know, Couric becomes anchor of the "CBS Evening News" on Sept. 5. I have a suggestion: why doesn't she just jump up on her desk and do a little dance. That would be different!

The children of a Sunday school class were tested to see if they understood the concept of getting to heaven.

Their teacher asked them, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?"

"NO!" the children answered. "If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?"

Again, the answer was, "NO!"

By now I was starting to smile. Hey, this was fun!

"Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, and loved my husband, would that get me into Heaven?" I asked them again.

Again, they all answered, "NO!"

I was just bursting with pride for them. Well, I continued, "then how can I get into Heaven?"

From the back of the room a little boy stood up and shouted "YOU GOTTA BE DEAD."

'Have yourselves a merry little weekend...' (that tune keeps rolling around my head). Little early for that.

So, in the meantime, the weekend is upon us, so gather up the clan and head out to church.

## Youngest daughter's turn to say 'I do!'

## Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



Now I can say, "Please meet our youngest daughter Lindsay and her fiancée, Bradley Blake."

Actually, that pair decided that they belonged together a year or so ago. It's just taken them this long to make it official.

Lindsay seemed more ready than Brad. She was hoping for a declaration and a ring for Christmas, Valentine's Day, her birthday.

He bided his time and, I think, did some talking to a couple of co-workers, including her sister and brother-in-law.

So on a Tuesday, as she was getting off work at the library, a limousine pulled up. There before her and the world, Bradley got down on one knee and offered her his heart, his hand, his name and a beautiful ring. Then he took her home in the limo.

A bit more romantic than most, I'd say, but I think that's what she wanted.

Now they're deep into the heart of wedding planning — poor Bradley.

So far, we know that the wedding will be in Augusta, Ga., where they both live. We will be expected to contribute the same amount of money we gave her sister, who had a small wedding and then went to Italy on a two-week honeymoon.

Other than that, I think we're expected to show up and shut up.

Of course, I'm the mother of the bride and that isn't going to happen. I don't plan to be a pain, mind you. I'm just hoping to offer some unwanted advice and provide unsolicited suggestions on everything from the cake to the caterers.

It's my job.

Meanwhile, I'm packing up an old dress that's been in my closet for many years. It's long and white. The underskirt is 60 years old and was worn by my mother at her wedding on June 14, 1946.

The overskirt was put on in time for me to wear the whole thing on July 31, 1971. The darn thing's barely been used.

Maybe we can get one more day out of it.

I hope so.