

Determination, commitment necessary to hold it all together

The first article I ever wrote for this column focused on the divorce of good friends. It shared the personal feelings of watching friends go their separate ways and of children, although adults, torn between mom and dad. Here it is a few years later and I feel the anguish again. This time not of long-time friends, but of young people in my own town.

About a year ago a woman said to me, "My children are living proof that children from divorced homes can grow up to be good people."

My response to her was, "How difficult it must have been for you." I would like to have added and how disappointed you must have felt either in your partner or yourself or both. No one, or at least I don't think anyone, says, "I can't wait to grow up and be divorced and alone with three kids."

Divorce is never easy. One of our sons has been divorced, fortunately without children, but still it was painful to feel his anguish; to look at things they shared and of unrealized dreams, but at least there weren't children involved. When a couple divorces without children, it is sad, but the effect is on adults. In my job, I frequently see the effect of divorce on children as they are thrown into poverty or at least financial stress, at the center of custody battles and their loyalty torn between mom and dad.

Divorce is not always bad. There are times when it is the only answer and hopefully a couple realizes the time to do it is before children. This summer Norton County has seen a number of divorces and often within a certain age group and most with children involved, step or otherwise.

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Everyone's marriage is put in jeopardy when a family disintegrates. A friend of mine has a son who has watched as several of his friends are navigating the tough waters of their family division. I remember my own children struggling with those issues and asking if their dad and I were going to get a divorce. I always told them no one can say never, but that I couldn't imagine that happening.

We can't make guarantees to our children, but we do have an obligation to work on the relationships which affect them. Every marriage has, at one time or another, been faced with what seemed like impossible differences. Those people with 40, 50 or 60 years of marriage did not get there because they did not have hardships or face threats to their relationship. They reached those milestones because of determination and commitment.

Anyone who has been married knows marriage is hard work. We never fully appreciate the highs if we haven't also experienced the lows. Alan Alda said it best when he said throughout the years you fall in and out of love with your spouse. The best thing is when you fall back in love with him or her, because you know them so well that it is a delightful reconciling.



This farmer came up with the right answer

A very young, ego-inflated federal employee, stopped at a farm and told the farmer that owned the land he was checking it out for a new highway the government was planning to build. The farmer said, pointing, "Well, OK, but just don't go into that pasture over there."

The young man quickly pulled out a card and showed it to the farmer. "I am a federal employee and this card gives me the right to go anywhere I want to," he informed the farmer. So, the farmer went back to his chores and the young man went to look at the pasture. Pretty soon the farmer heard a scream and looked up to see the young man running for his life, with the farmer's prize bull, right behind him and gaining with each step.

The young man was shouting at the top of his lungs, "What'll I do! What'll I do!"

The farmer yelled, "Show him your card!"

-td-

I sometimes shake my head watching the weather guys stand in the midst of a hurricane trying to describe what's going on. The latest episode dealt with Hurricane Dean. Maybe it's just me, but the strength of killer storms would dictate cover, first and foremost. 'Dean' was an F5 capable of ripping off arms, legs, shattering heads, taking lives, while these guys stand there telling us nothing new; we've seen it before. They talk about the flying objects but weren't wearing any

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



protective headgear. One reporter was even holding up a coconut he said could kill if it hit you in the head. Where was his helmet?

I'm not making light of their coverage, I am simply questioning their need to be pushing the envelope to the max. The day will come when we will see one of those people killed right before our eyes as they try to confront Mother Nature at her worst moment. Is the competitive nature that strong among the networks to put one's life on the line? Remember a year or two ago when weatherman Al Roker was felled by the force of wind as he stood before a camera reporting on a hurricane? It wasn't pretty.

So what made 'Dean' so special?
Beats me.

-td-

I'm going to do something today I rarely do in this column, and that's to say "hello" to a good friend of many years ago when we were neighbors in Goodland. "Lucille (Leitner), I hope all is going well with you. Time and distance doesn't erase

fond memories. It was a good neighborhood filled with lots of good kids. Take care."

-td-

Well, we have a week of school under our belts. Most kids were excited to get back, and rightfully so. One mother was telling about her son who entered kindergarten. At dinner after his first day ever in a classroom, they asked him how he liked school. As only a child could answer, he said, "It was nice, but how long does this go on."

-td-

Enjoy watching truck drivers, the ones piloting those 18 wheelers, especially the way they maneuver around traffic, around corners, etc. My fascination was heightened this past week when traffic (other than local), was detoured away from the main route through downtown, due to work on a sewer line problem. It made for interesting viewing at Madison Street/U.S. 283. There was just enough room for the big boys to get around the corner — if the coast was clear. Wow! I could just see myself behind the wheel, well...in my dreams, anyway. No one likes detours, but in this case it made for some good viewing for this 18-wheel junky.

-td-

Have a good evening and a good weekend. And no matter what you drive, drive it to the church of your choice. There's always room for you in church and for your vehicle outside

Thumbs Up

Norton County Health Department and staff, for your blood screen clinic. Great program for Norton County residents. Thanks. (e-mail)

Valley Hope, on your recent 40th birthday celebration. Let's HOPE for 40 more. (e-mail)

Norton Senior Citizens, hope your balloon launch is successful. Let the community know. (e-mail)

Sen. Pat Roberts, welcome back to Norton. (called in)

(To submit a name for this biweekly salute, e-mail tom@nwkansas.com, fax 877-3732, call 877-6908 or 877-3361, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks for your continuing input. -td)

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Our military people deserve only the best

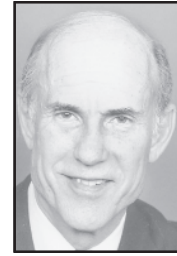
As you know August in Kansas is synonymous with hot. We all seek relief in swimming pools and air conditioning. Everyday when the mercury rises, I think of our men and women in uniform serving in Iraq and Afghanistan where it is really hot, with temperatures reaching 110 or more on a daily basis with little relief available. As a former Marine, I can tell you, with a full pack, gear and armor, our brave service members are working in intense conditions. I hope and pray these men and women return to their families safely and despite the challenges, are able to fulfill their missions.

In the Congress, I have long said our first priority is national security and that we need to take the steps necessary to support our troops. This year we have passed a pay raise for our men and women in uniform and other critical bills to improve the quality of life for our military and their families.

The pay raise was a 3.5 percent across-the-board increase for uniformed military personnel in the Senate version of the Wounded Warrior Act. The legislation now goes to a conference committee to resolve differences with the House passed version of the bill. It is my hope that this long overdue raise will have final approval in the Congress by the end of the year.

From the Capitol

Sen. Pat Roberts



Passage of the Wounded Warrior Act itself was an accomplishment. The Act tackles the care for those injured on the battlefield. It addresses many of the problems uncovered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and seeks to improve the quality of healthcare our men and women in uniform receive from both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I am also pleased that legislation I authored to create a scholarship program for the families of service members was attached to the Senate's version of the Higher Education Act reauthorization. We are set to debate and vote on this bill following the August recess.

The Military Family Members Scholarship amendment establishes need-based scholarships for spouses and children with the maximum award for each academic year being \$5,000. The scholarship was the brainchild of ThanksUSA,

a non-partisan, charitable effort to mobilize Americans of all ages to "thank" the men and women of the United States armed forces by providing college, technical and vocational school scholarships for their children and spouses.

Also, legislation I sponsored passed the Senate to expand family and medical leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks over a 12-month period for our veterans injured in combat and their families. The leave is expanded to include not only injured veterans and their spouse, child, or parent, but also their next of kin. For those that have already sacrificed so much for our country, it is only right to protect their jobs while they provide care or heal from wounds sustained in the defense of freedom. The amendment passed the Senate as part of the State Child Health Insurance Plan reauthorization bill. The bill now goes to a conference committee to resolve differences with the House passed version of the bill.

These are just a few of our efforts this year that will really make a difference to those who wear the uniform and their families. Semper Fi.

If you would like to know more about issues before the Senate, please visit my Web site at <http://roberts.senate.gov>. For regular updates, be sure to sign up on my home page for a monthly e-newsletter, The Roberts Report.

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