

Just how safe are these things?

When the bridge collapsed in Minneapolis claiming 13 lives, every bridge in America, so it seemed, came under suspicion. Prior to that tragedy we, as the traveling public, probably never gave bridge safety a second thought.

Now, bridges all over the country have undergone inspections, or are in the process of being inspected. Thousands of bridges are involved.

There is another possible tragedy waiting in the wings. And it has nothing to do with traveling, other than getting to the site, or sites.

While watching the Oregon-Michigan football game on television Saturday afternoon at Ann Arbor, Mich., and hearing the announcer give the attendance at 109,000, we got to thinking.

The stadium in which the Michigan Wolverines play is old, how many years would be a guess, but it's old. And it's one of the largest, perhaps the largest, stadiums in the country. As we watched the partisan crowd come occasionally to its feet when it looked like Michigan might do something, the thought crossed our mind: How safe are those older stadiums? How often are they inspected? Can they continue to endure the jumping up and down and the foot stomping of thousands of fans on numerous Saturday afternoons each season?

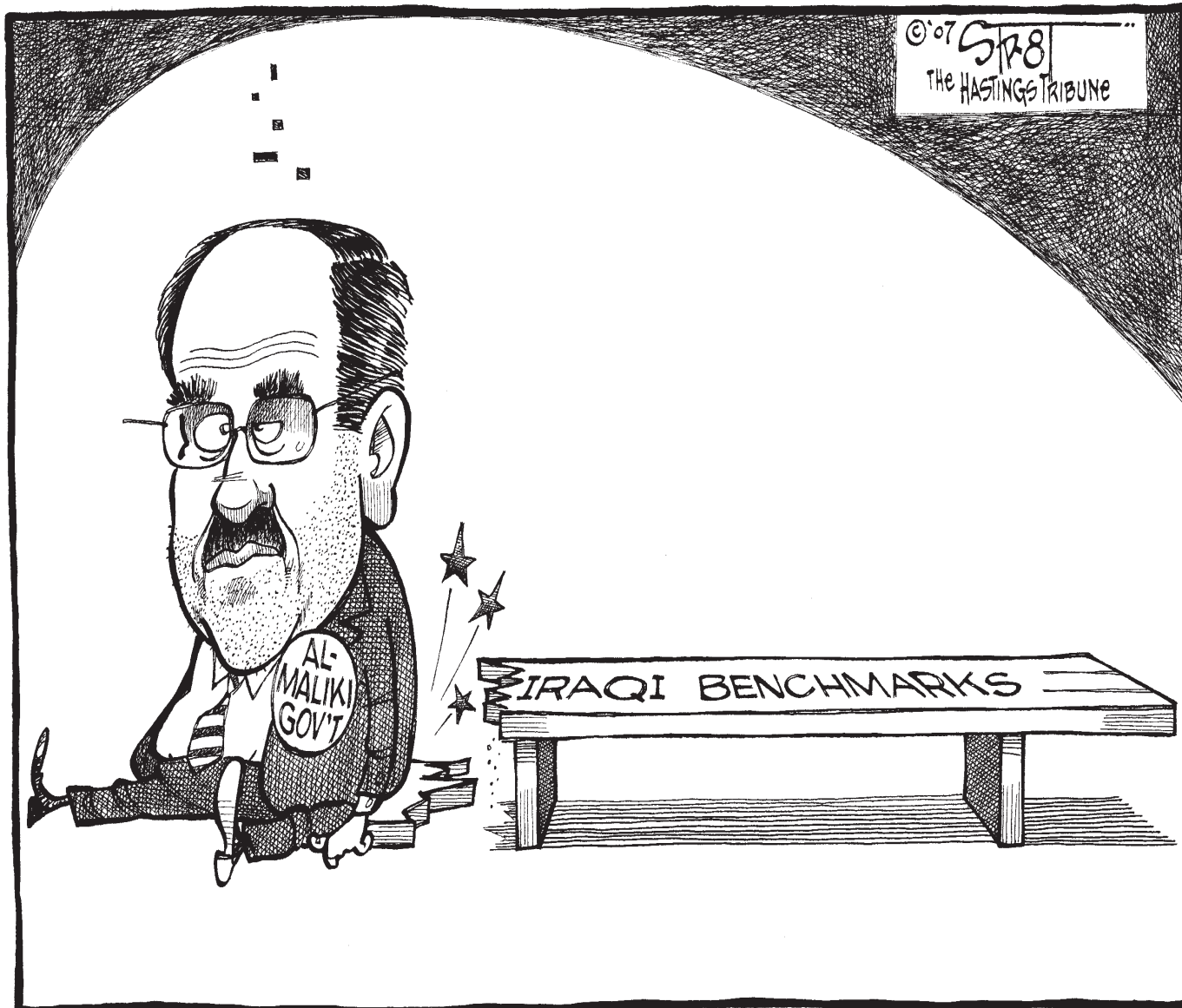
The Notre Dame stadium, increased in size a few years ago, is huge and it is also old. On a smaller scale, Memorial Stadium at the University of Kansas has been around for many years, too. And there are many more.

Like bridges, they are made of concrete and steel, materials that can last many years, but can turn deadly with little or no notice.

We would guess football stadiums are inspected on a regular basis, or should be. They are places that bring people together in large numbers and in an atmosphere of joy and excitement. They're safe.

But trusting motorists in Minneapolis thought the same thing.

— Tom Dreiling



A kiss is just a kiss...unless it's Jim's

Men just don't get it, do they? Jim was heading out the back door to do chores this morning and I said, "Wait a minute. I need some inspiration for the column." He started in. "Well, you could write about the weather. Or, you could write about the kids. Maybe you could say something about the...."

"No," I said. "Shut up you fool and kiss me. I need inspired — not ideas." So, now you know my secret. Jim is a good kisser. We got home late in the afternoon, yesterday, and we both needed a nap. While Jim brought stuff in from the van, I popped a roast into the crockpot and cranked it up on "high." You can't hardly go wrong with a crock pot unless you leave it on for days. It's nothing like the way Gracie Allen (George's wife) prepared a roast.

Gracie Allen's Pot Roast Recipe
Place one large roast in a pan
Place one small roast in the same pan
Cover and put in oven
When the small roast is burned, the large one is done

-ob-

I was hired to take pictures at a local school's all-class reunion this weekend. What fun. I was able to sit back and watch everyone else reminisce with former

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



classmates and relive their "good 'ole days." I wasn't in charge of anything except snapping candid shots of everyone. I didn't have to worry about seating or the menu. I actually enjoyed myself. And, it wasn't even my alma mater.

The only complaint I heard the entire evening was the same complaint every alumni association experiences. No graduates from later years come to the reunion.

The class of 60 years ago turned out with over fifty percent of its surviving members making the effort to return from whence they came. But, only one representative from the 70s and one from the 80s were present. Not a single person from the 90s or 2000s were there. And, I know, for a fact, there are members from those classes living and working in their hometown.

I don't have the solution to cure the lack of school spirit. Wish I did. No, the only thing that will cure that ill is time. In about twenty years their personal history will start to become important to those graduates.

They will want to reconnect with friends from their past. The hometown they couldn't wait to get away from will start to look pretty good.

They might even consider moving back. Until then, it will be up to the few faithful to keep the alumni associations active — to remain the keeper of the flame.

-ob-

There's another flame we need to keep burning. Today marks the sixth anniversary of the terrorist attack on America. I urge every citizen to join me in flying Old Glory today. Whether you have a flag pole and a big flag or just one you can hang in your window, do it.

Six years ago, we were galvanized together as a country. American flags flew all across this land. Patriotism was the watchword of the day. But, I fear it's faded. It should not be so.

Today, Sept. 11, fly the flag, and be proud to be an American.

LETTER

Norton is an exceptional city

To the Editor,

I was fortunate to be able to attend and participate in the Sprint Car and Vintage Race Car event at Elmwood Park Speedway over the Labor Day weekend, under the auspices of MBM Motorsports and the United Rebel Sprint Car Series.

I have made it a point to be in Norton for this event each of the past six years, and with good reason. The facility, with its towering shade trees along the river and wood grandstands, is a beautiful reminder of the fairgrounds tracks of the past, while providing an excellent, well maintained contemporary racing surface for competitors.

What makes the event a "can't miss" spot on my schedule, however, is more than the race track itself. The town of Norton once again was a gracious and welcoming host. The attitude and services offered in the local businesses has always been exemplary, and this year was no exception. In short, one is made to feel welcome by friends and knowledgeable folks who seem to value our presence and enjoy our vintage race vehicles.

I am writing as both an individual participant and a representative of a vintage race club, and simply want to express our thanks and assure the town of Norton that we will continue to highlight the Vintage Race weekend at Elmwood Park Speedway prominently on our schedule every year it is held.

For the vintage race enthusiast, few places hold the appeal of Norton, Kansas over the Labor Day weekend!

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You can never be too safe out on the farm

Insight
John Schlageck

The dream of many young farm children is to ride with their fathers on a tractor. For a youngster, the mammoth tractor epitomizes raw power, responsibility and coming of age. Nothing is more exciting to youngsters than the belch of diesel smoke, the roar of engines and rubber wheels rolling on powerful tractors, combines or silage cutters.

They draw children like a moth to a flame and, like fire, can be dangerous. Such equipment can cut, crush or trap children. It holds potential harm for the ones we want to protect the most — our children.

Safety experts label agriculture one of the most hazardous occupations, and farm children are routinely exposed to the same hazards as their parents who work the farm. Each year, hundreds of children are killed and thousands more are injured in farm-related incidents, according to National Safety Council statistics.

This year's theme for Farm Safety and Health Week, *It's easier to bury a tradition than a child*, emphasizes the importance of keeping our youngest farmers safe. Sept. 16-22 is dedicated to heightening the awareness of farm and ranch safety and keeping our next generation of farmers safe and healthy.

Education and awareness are the key ingredients to help make the farm a safer place for children to play, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety and ag education director. Brushing up on some of the potential hazards can also

make it safer for parents.

Never invite your children to ride in the tractor with you. Stress your youngsters stay away from machinery. Never let them play or hide under or around machinery like tractors.

While you're visiting with your youngsters about the farm, don't forget to stress the importance of farming to the U.S. economy and the food supply for Americans and our export customers. Make sure you include the positive aspects of farming with the possible hazards.

Describe to children how horses can be fun to ride. Talk about how lambs and baby calves can be pleasurable to pet or feed. Remind them that while animals are fun to be around they can also bite, trample and stomp.

Discuss with your youngsters the signs that show an animal may be dangerous. Some of them include pawing the ground, snorting, raised hair and ears laid back.

Animals — even friendly ones — can be unpredictable. Have your children stay away from large ones. Emphasize they stay away from animals with newborn or young. Tell them to remain calm, speak quietly and move slowly when around animals.

While barns, grain handling facilities and big buildings can be fun to play in, falls can occur or children may be exposed to harmful substances like chemicals and electricity. Wide-open spaces also provide children with ideal playgrounds. This isolation may also lead to difficulty finding help in the event of an emergency.

Explain the dangers associated with stored grain. Stress the principles that grain can entrap a person almost immediately. Children should never play around or in grain that is stored in bins, trucks or wagons. Emphasize that it is difficult or can be impossible to pull even a child out of grain if he/she becomes trapped.

As a child, I can remember tossing a lasso around the grain auger and climbing into the grain bin of our combine. At the age of five, this giant silver machine symbolized the far away Rocky Mountains and I was scaling their peaks like my legendary hero, Jim Bridger.

Remember, it is important that youngsters have a safe place to play. Ask them to identify safe play areas. Talk about areas away from farm machinery, animals, manure pits, silos, etc. Carefully define safe boundaries. Let them know where they can and cannot play.

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwest Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion. kfbcommunications@kfb.org)

Don't forget to issue your 'Thumbs Up' for Friday!