

### Be careful what you wish for

Attorney General Paul Morrison, Republican turned Democrat, took another turn a week ago when he resigned after a scandal surfaced that, in part, had him romancing someone other than his wife. He's due to exit the office Jan. 31.

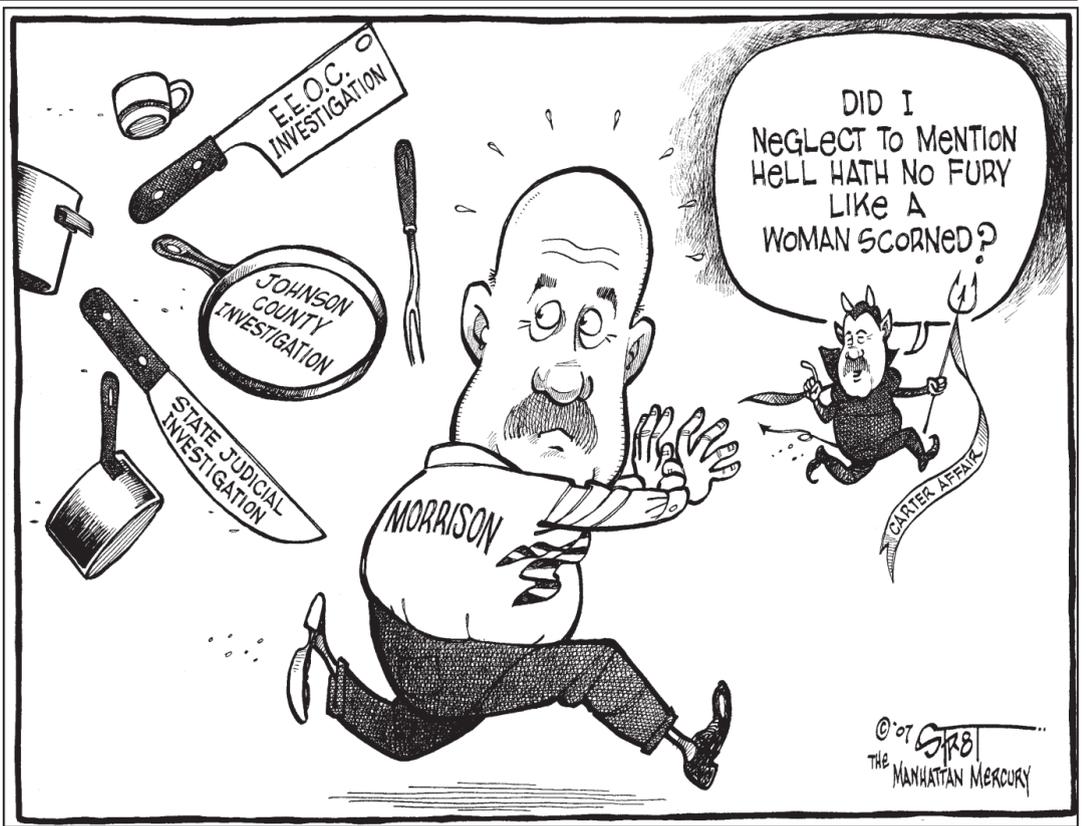
When news of the scandal surfaced and learning that it went on through the campaign that put him in office some months ago, the images swirling around our head were those of television campaign ads that showcased Morrison, his wife and their children in perfect harmony, or so we were fooled to believe.

Betrayal is the best way to describe this disastrous turnaround of a man some predicted would someday serve our state as governor. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is being faulted for luring Morrison from the Republican ranks to the Democratic fold. This finger-pointing might be stretching things a bit, unless, that is, she knew beforehand that he had a closet sheltering a secret that could derail his bid for the office. We would rather believe she didn't know.

Morrison unseated Republican Attorney General Phill Kline, who was under constant attack by the Democrats, but not for reasons that forced Morrison to step down. The "donkey noise" on election night when the tally showed Democrat Morrison unseated Republican Kline, was deafening. The silence on the part of the Democrats when the real Paul Morrison was unmasked, was also deafening.

There is not much more one can say about this development, this scandal. But as for the Democrats who were at the forefront of convincing Morrison to change parties, an old saying rears its head: "Be careful what you wish for."

—Tom Dreiling



### Here's something I'll never forget

Saying good-bye to 2007 is like saying good-bye to a family member or friend. So much has happened this year, to each of us, in different ways. Just reflect for a few minutes and see how surprised you will be at what eventually stands out in your mind as 2007 begins its final trip to join all the other years that were.

I did some reflecting the past couple of weeks and came up with a number of things that stood out in my mind. But as I recalled these events — community events — I tried to narrow it down to just one thing.

For me it was witnessing the presence of the Patriot Guard at the military funeral for Sgt. Scott Turner, a 30-year-old soldier who lost his life in a training accident at Fort Riley. A decorated soldier, he had served a tour of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Patriot Guard, an organization honoring fallen heroes, also provide a barrier between the survivors and any disruptive protesters. Word had spread that Rev. Fred Phelps of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka was bringing his hate protesters to demonstrate the ugliness of their purpose. Thank goodness they never showed up.

Nearly 100 motorcycles carried 150 riders from all over Kansas and other states to Norton for the soldier's funeral.

The sight of the Patriot Guard, my first such experience, will be forever embedded in my mind.

Good Evening Norton  
Tom Dreiling



he lets out his breath, somewhere there's a tornado.

All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys didn't go for it.

What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them.

-td-

He lets out his breath, somewhere there's a tornado.

You've heard this a million times and I will add one more time: **Do Not Drink and Drive** as you gather with family and friends to welcome in 2008! This is the most dangerous time of the year as people get happy beyond capacity and place themselves and others in situations that often erase life. Don't do it! Please!

-td-

A Sunday school teacher was talking with her 6 year olds about angels. After she was finished, she asked the youngsters to share what they learned from the lesson. Here are some of the responses:

Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from Holy Cows.

It's not easy to become an angel. First, you die. Then you go to Heaven, and then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes.

My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much good for science.

When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when

-td-

The Iowa caucuses are just about here. Jan. 3 that state will sow the seed that could eventually produce the next President of the United States. Then on Jan. 8, New Hampshire will hold the nation's first presidential primary election. It will be interesting to see if New Hampshire sees it the same way Iowa did just days earlier. Who will emerge the winners? Good question. I'm not good at picking this kind of stuff, but for what it's worth, in Iowa I see, on the Democratic side, a down to the wire win for either Edwards or Obama. And on the Republican side, a barnburner between Huckabee and Romney. In New Hampshire, I see Obama getting the nod and Romney a clear winner. Don't bet your hard earned money on these predictions. After all I was one of the voices that said the Henry J would be around forever. Henry J? If you don't know what that was, ask Grandma or Grandpa.

-td-

Have a good evening. And here's one sure bet you can count on: You'll be a winner in the church of your choice this weekend.

### Her name is simply 'Missy'

We didn't stay a one-cat family very long. And our Sammy the Siamese isn't too crazy about our decision. In my last installment, I shared that we had been offered another cat. We accepted the offer and brought her home. She is a beauty — long, sleek black hair with a white bib, paws and whiskers. Her previous name had been Gertie, but we didn't think that fit her personality. Jim initially suggested "Sylvia" because he said she looked like a female version of Sylvester the Cat.

We "tried on" Sylvia but one night when she leaped right in the middle of my chest and got nose-to-nose with me I blurted out, "Well, Missy!"

Jim said, "That's it! She's a Missy."

I think that will be the last name change and we'll make it official with her first visit to the vet. She's had so many name changes, I hope she doesn't suffer from an identity crisis.

Missy's first day in our house brought out the worst in Sammy's behavior. He hissed and puffed at her. Even chasing her into the laundry room.

Two days later, the tables were turned and Missy became the dominant one. She crouches and stalks poor Sammy; leaping upon him when he least expects it. She chases him from one end of the house to the other.

Everyone assures me they will eventually become buddies — but, I have my doubts.

-ob-

We had a very low-key Christmas Day. So low-key, in fact, that I served Jim leftover potato soup from the night before. We spent the day at home, alone, just the two of us.

The closest I got to cooking was to make a pot of coffee.

Jim is teaching the Book of Revelation

Out Back  
Carolyn Plotts



in our adult Sunday School class and spends hours each week in preparation. So he spent the day on the computer, researching and compiling worksheets for the class.

My goals were not so lofty. I "vegged out" in my recliner and watched HGTV until my eyes about popped out of my head. I helped house hunters choose homes; I advised house flippers on granite countertops; and I put in my two cents on decorating tips. It was a beautiful thing.

We had intended to pay a Christmas Day call on my brother, Dick, and his wife, Donna. We got all dressed up in some of our new Christmas clothes, were in the car and a mile away from home when we came to our senses.

It was freezing rain and starting to snow. We turned around; went home; put our sweats back on; and resumed our respective positions at the computer and in the recliner.

It was a good day. We had phone calls from all of our children and grandchildren. Probably the best presents we could hope for.

But, Christmas vacation is over and it's back to the routine. With the new year looming, we're both committing to simplifying our lives.

Downsizing and re-organizing — easier said than done.

We want to get started on the house again. Still, lots to do. Didn't I just say downsizing?

### Free Trade Agreement good for Kansas

For 14 years the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been a boon for the United States and its agricultural producers, especially those in Kansas. Kansas farmers and ranchers have experienced unprecedented gains in trade with Canada and Mexico as a result of this comprehensive trade agreement that came into play 14 years ago.

Overall trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico has grown from \$297 billion in 1993 to \$883 billion in 2006. This is an increase of 198 percent. U.S. goods exports to Canada and Mexico grew from \$142 billion in 1993 to \$364.6 billion in 2006, an increase of 157 percent.

"NAFTA has been great for U.S. agriculture, Kansas agriculture and our state," says Steve Baccus, an Ottawa County farmer, who serves as president of Kansas Farm Bureau. "Most of agriculture has been basking in its glow."

As evidence of this trade partnership, Kansas agricultural producers have seen their soybean exports to Mexico double. Beef volumes are five times what they were in 1993. Corn volume has increased 18 times since the beginning of NAFTA. Trade with Canada is also bustling. Kansas soybeans imported by Canada increased 15 percent, beef volumes are up 26 percent and corn has increased 125 percent.

The North American Free Trade Agreement is a comprehensive trade agreement that continues to improve virtually all aspects of doing business among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Since the NAFTA agreement began Jan. 1, 1994, Mexico immediately

Insight  
John Schlageck

eliminated tariffs on nearly 50 percent of all industrial goods imported from the United States. Many non-tariff barriers were also removed.

Virtually all tariffs on industrial goods were eliminated by 2003 and tariffs on U.S. exports of certain agricultural products to Mexico will be phased out on Jan. 1, 2008. With the exception of tariff rate quotas on certain supply-managed agricultural products, all Canada-U.S. trade has been duty free since 1998. Canada and Mexico are the first and second largest export markets for U.S. goods.

Today, the United States and much of the rest of the world are engaged in global trading. In this country nearly 96 percent of the mouths U.S. agriculture feeds are outside the borders. Nearly everything we buy has been assembled with parts from dozens of countries. It's a global world today's citizens live in. And in this world, trade remains the engine that drives our nation and many of its industries including agriculture.

"If we were to shut off trade, including our NAFTA agreement, trade with Peru and the Caribbean, Japan, China and the rest of the countries around the world, then at least half of us in agriculture are going to have to hang it up," Baccus says. "It is critical that we continue opening markets for our products, while reaching out to new trading partners."

There is no sign of this global trading slowing down. Chances are it will continue to grow and do so rapidly.

Crops grown in the United States, Canada, South America and other parts of the world will also continue to increase. With continued advancements in crops including GMOs, drought resistant varieties, water optimization technology, etc., yields in this country and around the world will continue to increase. So too will the opportunity to market such crops, not only in this country but globally.

The increasing opportunities for Kansas and U.S. producers are not without critics. Citing labor standards and living conditions for workers, Congresswoman Nancy Boyda (D-Kan.), announced on a Topeka radio program recently that she is introducing legislation to significantly alter, or remove the U.S. from the NAFTA trade agreement between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Kansas Farm Bureau met with Congresswoman Boyda last week to discuss the issue, bringing to light the positive results for agriculture of this and other trade agreements, such as the Peru trade agreement just overwhelmingly passed by the U.S. Congress.

"We were able to have a candid and frank discussion with our congresswoman on the importance of keeping this crucial trade agreement viable," Baccus says. "Unfortunately Rep. Boyda sees this differently than our farmer, rancher members. We will continue to talk with her on this issue and try to work out our differences."

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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