

## Tuesday's snippets

Quite a few of your own snippets rolled in since last Tuesday's column and the column in Friday's paper. It's an interesting study of what people are thinking after they read something in the paper. With that in mind, here are YOUR snippets:

"You didn't end (Friday's column) with your signature reminder to attend church."  
"Tom, your forgot the church reminder."  
"I missed church Sunday; your fault!"

"Hmm, you didn't end your column this week with your usual invitation to go to church. Are you suggesting we can skip church this week to catch up on the hour of sleep we missed?"

"I'm tired of the 'media' acting like Chicken Little and running around screaming the sky is falling the sky is falling!"

"Your income taxes are normally due on April 15th unless that date falls on a Saturday or Sunday in which case they are due on Monday the 16th or 17th. The good news is that I have learned of a recent change, and for the next 4 years, they will not be due until you are nominated to a cabinet position."

"Thought your comment about the snow (back East) was funny. You would not believe it unless you were here, but most of the counties around (Washington) DC cancelled school (last) Monday on Sunday night, before we had any real snow; and then on Monday after we had received a total of 6-10 inches, they cancelled school for Tuesday. The DC school district never cancelled on either day. They just delayed the start for 2 hours. There were some very angry parents and kids in the city."

### Now, today's snippets...

The one above dealing with snow in Washington, D.C., and its suburbs, came from a longtime family friend, Lt. Col. Doug Smith, Goodland native, who works at the Pentagon. He reads the columns via e-mail.

I didn't include the usual church attendance in Friday's column for a reason: I was trying to gauge the readership of the paper. Responses lead me to believe the paper is well read. Thanks, and keep it up.

Reports seem to indicate there is some kind of arrangement being made reference Chris Brown's assault on his girlfriend Rihanna. Sounds like he really beat her up bad. Two felonies were logged. He's been in court, but she and he have since made up and some legal minds are of the opinion this just might put an end to the whole thing. It shouldn't. He needs to pay for what he has done, and if that means jail time, so be it.

Reports late last week told about a school that has no toilet paper and is borrowing from other schools and having students bring their own toilet paper from home. What's that all about? No pun intended, but boy that's scraping the bottom!

President Obama's proposed budget contains quite a few earmarks — inserted by Democrats and Republican senators and representatives alike. The president said when he was on the campaign trail that he wouldn't sign anything that contained earmarks. I think instead of blaming the president, we need to pull the ears of the markers. Then again, some of the earmarks are for good purposes, but the media seem to play up only the ones that seem insignificant.

Whenever Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson takes over as governor, some Republicans seem to think the ship of state might cruise on smoother waters, given the fact the lieutenant governor was a longtime respected and influential Republican before jumping ship to become Gov. Sebelius' running mate. Keep an eye open for how this thing eventually shakes out.

*(Your comments are solicited. But they should be no longer than the average snippet in the column. Names are not used, unless so indicated. E-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654, fax to 877-3732. Thanks for joining in the conversation.)*



No **Thumbs Up** for today's paper. To salute someone, or some group, please e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call 877-6908 or 877-3361, fax to 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks. - td

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### Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

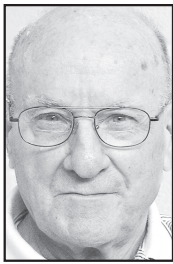
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Tom Dreiling..... editor and publisher  
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Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay sports  
Brandy Leroux..... reporter  
Sherry Hickman..... bookkeeping/circulation  
Vicki Henderson..... computer production

Office hours:  
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732  
E-mail:  
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

### STAFF



Stop  
Look  
Listen  
Tom Dreiling



## Nothing does it quite like a newspaper

Throughout our nearly 44 years of married life we have lived in nine cities. With each upcoming move, the first thing I would do is subscribe to the local newspaper. Nothing profiles a community better than a city's paper. I learned when house ads carried the phrase, 'located in such and such school district' it was a good area. The better the school the more references made in the sale ads. Secondly, I would find the types of medical facilities available.

Schools and medical facilities and, of course, employment opportunities are key factors when people contemplate a move. Strangely enough few people refuse a job because of the lack of homes. It has been my experience you usually find a house. It may not be your dream home, but you find a place to live because first and foremost is the health and well being of your children. If you have good schools and medical facilities you have found your home. Finding

### Phase II

Mary Kay  
Woodyard



the perfect house comes later.

As the country and our area face an economic slump unparalleled in recent history, maybe there are possibilities in this downturn for our community. Regardless of the hardships, there are still people wanting and willing to start a business, families desiring a safe environment or retirees wanting a slower paced life. Norton may well be Kansas' best kept secret. Maybe it is time to let the proverbial cat out of the bag.

Recently, our paper reported the exemplary performance of many of our youth on state assessment tests. The hospital reported they are currently

financially sound, but are preparing for any struggles which might arise. Norton's economic development office is providing opportunities for those facing layoffs to regroup and develop new skills; a community with concern and foresight.

Keeping a strong education system and a healthy medical facility not only makes it a better place for those of us who live here now, but also opens the doors for others to join this lifestyle. Years ago a woman told me, "We don't want anyone moving here. We want to keep things just as they are." I hated to tell her, but life is change, nothing stays the same. In our small rural communities people die and not enough babies are born to replace them. If we are going to stay the same, we have to grow. I guess what it boils down to is we have sunshine, sometimes rain and even the occasional fertilizer.

(mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net. Or blog marykaywoodyard.com)

## Number of female farm operators rising

### Insight

John Schlageck

One of the most significant changes seen in the 2007 Census of Agriculture is the increase in female farm operators, both in terms of the absolute number and the percentage of all principal operators.

In the latest survey released last month the number of female principal operators totaled 306,209 in '07. That's up from 237,819 in 2002 — an increase of almost 30 percent.

Agricultural land ownership has remained stable over the past five years. The 2007 census shows that 62 percent of farmland in the U.S. is owned by the operator. Areas with more cropland, such as the Midwest, tend to have a greater percentage of rented land including Kansas.

There are more farms in the United States than there were five years ago. These farms are also smaller but have pushed the number of farms in the United States to just above 2.2 million. This reverses a 60-year trends according to the latest Census of Agriculture.

As many of us might have suspected, the typical farmer is growing older, but has more sales. The average age rose from 55.3 to 57.1, with farmers retiring later or continuing to work on a part-time basis.

On the other hand, commodity farms that produce corn, soybeans, cattle and hogs have declined in number to make way for increasing farms that produce vegetables, fruits, aquaculture and specialty animals.

The largest number of farms in the United States are small, with 60 percent of all farms reporting less than \$10,000

in sales of agricultural products. 1.2 million farms depend on non-farm income to cover farm expenses.

This group also reports something other than farming as their primary occupation. Almost 900,000 principal operators report working off the farm more than 200 days a year. The share of farmers working off-farm grew from 55 percent in 2002 to 65 percent in 2007.

The demographic characteristics of operators on larger farms, with sales more than \$250,000 differs from those of small farms. Operators of larger farms tend to be younger, are more likely to report farming as their primary occupation, and are less likely to work off the farm.

There is a relationship between the type of farm operated and the demographics of the farm operator. For example, white farmers are more likely than non-white farmers to produce grains and oilseeds. Asians and native Hawaiians have a higher percentage of fruit and tree nut farms than other races.

Women operators are fairly equally split among three industries: cattle, calves and feedlots; aquaculture and other livestock operations; and other crops. Cattle and calves was the most common farm type for American Indian, Black and Hispanic farmers.

The percentage of farm operations with Internet access has increased over

the past five years, from 50 percent in 2002 to 57 percent in 2007. For the first time in 2007, the census looked at high-speed Internet access, an important measure of farmers' ability to use the Internet effectively.

Of the U.S. farms with Internet access, 58 percent reported having a high-speed connection. The 2007 census shows both Internet access and high-speed Internet access at the county level for the first time.

Kansas once again held its own and ranked among the best in market value of ag products sold. With 65,531 farms, Kansas recorded total sales of more than \$14.4 billion.

Leading the way were cattle and calves where 27,565 farms sold more than \$8.5 billion. This ranked first and amounted to 59.3 percent of all sales. Hogs and pigs accounted for another \$506 million. Milk and other dairy products from cows totaled more than \$376 million. Sales in poultry and eggs amounted to nearly \$70 million.

Kansas grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas accounted for more than \$4.5 billion and 31.3 percent of total sales. Other crops and hay totaled nearly \$254 million. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod accounted for \$77 million. Vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes contributed with sales of \$25 million.

(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.)

Wanted: Your Input. tom.d@nwkansas.com