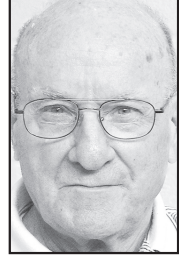


Non-candidate's dirty mouth needs cleaned

For a while the other evening, I thought I was sitting on a bar stool here in Aurora (Colo.) enjoying a cold one, but unfortunately listening to some loud mouth talking about everything that's wrong with our country. He peppered his shallow vocabulary with a word or two or three or four or five or six that wouldn't be appreciated in any setting.

Man of the Plains
Tom Dreiling



What I was actually doing the other evening was watching a replay on television of Donald Trump, the non-candidate candidate for President of the United States of America, address a crowd in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Carried by C-SPAN, they felt a need to tack a caution on the screen that some of the language you hear might offend. They hit the nail on the head! How Mr. Trump figures he can get away with this kind of language as he tries to convince us he is presidential material, escapes all sense of reason.

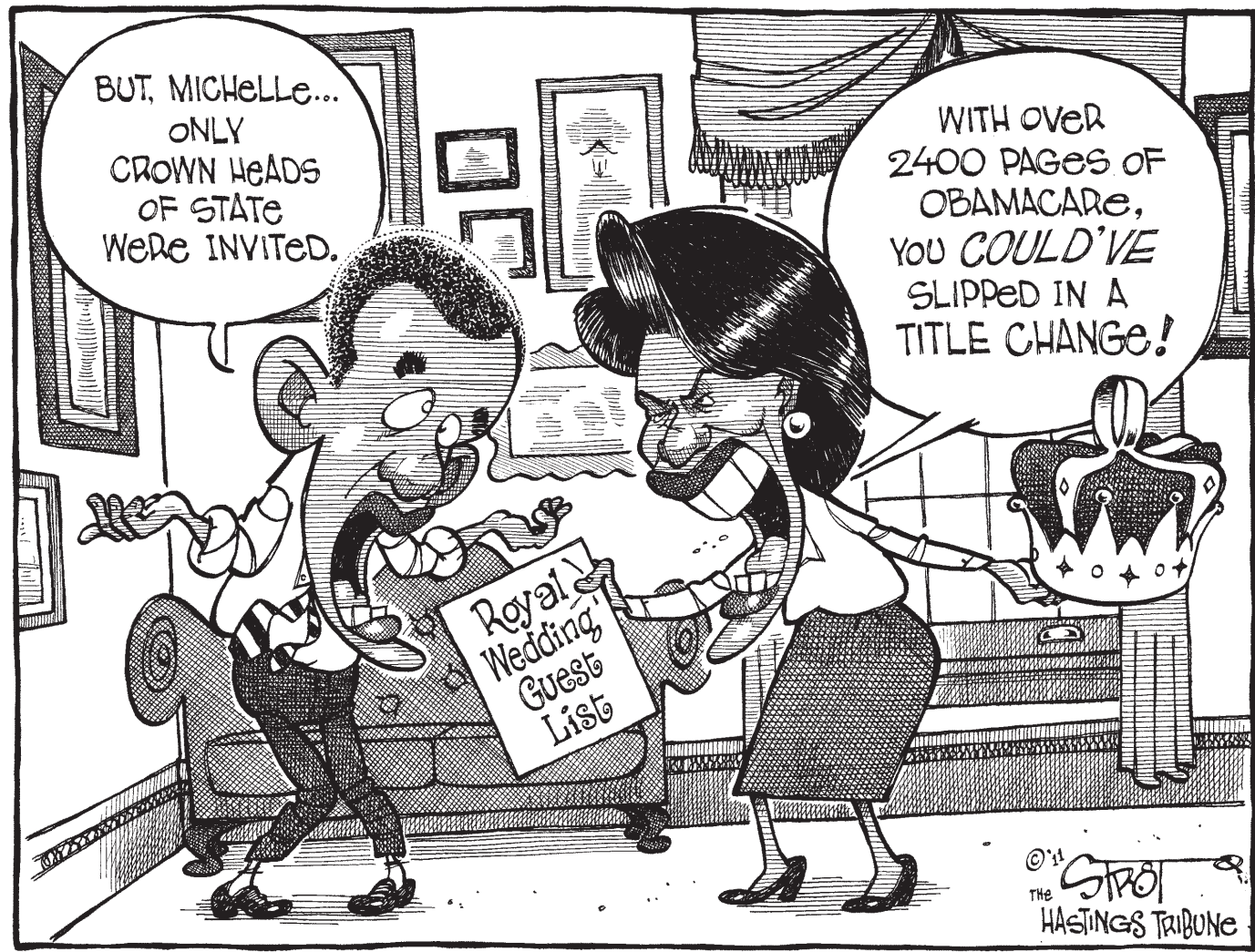
I just shook my head in disbelief. This guy wants to be our president? He needs a complete make-over from head to toe and then take advice from those who know what to say and what not to say. That's a tall order for a man who apparently feels his wealth allows him to use as much foul language as he wishes. You know, the First Amendment on which we hang stuff that it wasn't intended to hold.

This Man of the Plains would probably flunk Mr. Trump in delivery, in content, in thought and in behavior before two audiences - those who came out to hear him, and those watching on television. He's got a long way to go to convince me and I'm sure countless other Americans, including many Republicans, that he's the guy to put in the White House.

And despite your degrading assessment, Mr. Trump, this is still a GREAT country.

Mr. Trump, "You're fired!"

Your comments on anything that appears in your favorite newspaper coming from my computer, are always appreciated, regardless of the tone. Simply email me at <mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com>milehitom@hotmail.com



Just how happy are the American people

Once again the "happiness" report is out. Who are the happiest people? I've written about it before. In general happy people live in small countries with homogenous populations, in other words not the USA.

Happy countries have social equity. They are democracies but isolationists. They take care of their own rather than intervening in the conflicts elsewhere in the world.

Another study ranks countries by how hard they work. The USA tops that list with the average worker putting in over 42 hours a week with only 2 weeks of vacation. The report I heard concluded that we need to relax more. Really? To a farm wife 42 hours seems relaxed.

It brings to mind a comment my Dad once made about a family member with a town job. "He doesn't work very hard!" I wanted to clarify his comment, so I queried, "You mean he doesn't work very long hours?" To which Daddy replied, "Yeah, that either!"

Then there is the continual research about how Americans fall short in education. We spend more but rank poorly. My educator daughters get all rankled about that. It's like comparing apples and oranges, they claim and they have studies to back up their position!

Another study finds that teachers, despite all the challenges, have one of the highest rates of job satisfaction! Our students are #1 when it comes to self-esteem. No matter evidence to the contrary, we think we are the smartest people in the world.

Our infant mortality rate is high. We are fat. Life expectancy is less than other developed nations. Maybe we'd be happier if we quit comparing ourselves to others.

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



But we are competitive. We want to be number one. At least that is what I surmise from studying the studies! If we took a survey we'd doubtless discover Americans are the most competitive people in the world.

This story is attributed to the Cold War period. An Italian, a Frenchman, an Englishman and a Russian were asked to describe their most cherished dreams. The Italian said, "I want my country to produce the greatest artists." The Frenchman said, "I want my country to produce the greatest philosophers." The Englishman said, "I want my country to produce the greatest parliamentarians." The Russian said, "I want my neighbor's cow to die."

The point being, the Russians were so beaten down by centuries of tyranny and political unrest that they had no unity or pride in their country. They are individuals who happen to live in the same place.

In some respects the USA is more similar to Russia than the other countries mentioned. We compete fiercely not only with other countries but among ourselves. We aspire to keep up with the Joneses; but dragging them down to our level works equally well.

We are diverse in race, religion and what we value. Breaking the country into more manageable chunks (states) reinforces what is found with countries. States with smaller populations and

shared values are the happiest.

Among the happiest are Utah (lots of Mormons) and Hawaii because who wouldn't be happy in Hawaii? Except my niece's husband who turned to her during their Hawaiian vacation and said, "Why is everyone so ___ happy?" My niece was shocked as #1 he never swears and #2 because well, it is Hawaii!

Now comes the news Osama bin Laden was killed. It was gratifying to see America united on this. But typical American I am, I'm not happy.

To my mind it would have been much better if the celebrations had been reflective celebrations of the lives of those lost on 9-11. Some of the reactions seemed eerily similar to scenes from the Mid East with mobs tearing the American flag amid shouts of death to the "Great Satan". We fell to their level.

But here's the thing (at least here is what I hope): by the time this column is published we will be suffering remorse. We will be fighting with each other again. The initial euphoria of the news of bin Laden will be replaced with introspection. Mountain top experiences are great but we live and work (42 hours a week, with 2 weeks of vacation) in the valley.

Americans find many reasons to be unhappy; but only in free and open societies do people have the opportunity to express their discontent. We fight, we compete, without fear.

It is interesting to observe how people respond to sadness and sorrow. Do they focus on what has been done to them, expecting others to make them happy? Or do they analyze the situation and take steps to make themselves happy?

Only in America is it a right, written into The Constitution! Pursue it: HAPPINESS!

Quilting is therapy for the soul

I have come to see the activity of quilting for me as a spiritual exercise. I have attended two quilting retreats at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia, and I have learned a lot about myself as a result of those.

When I am around other people, I like to visit with them and see what they are doing. I work on the project at hand, but sometimes I have difficulty focusing on my own task. This is because I listen to conversations around me and take in the instructor's information.

When I am quilting at home, I put a CD on and pick up my project. I listen to the CD, usually religious music, while I work. I do the tasks at hand cutting out a pattern, fitting pieces together, sewing on the machine, sometimes ripping out mistakes being aware of what I am doing and usually aware of the music.

Sometimes when I am doing a repetitive task that does not need focus and concentration, I spend time in prayer. But usually I simply try to be attentive to the words of the songs playing and what they mean for me in my spiritual journey.

When I attend the quilting retreats, my mind is drawn in several directions. I am focused on learning a new skill and/or trying a new pattern from the instructor. I also want to get to know the other quilters to whatever degree they choose to let me into their lives. Therefore the practices with which I am comfortable at home do not happen at the retreat center.

At home, I sew when I choose and quit when I am finished with a project, tired or just ready to call it a day. It's a little more regimented during a retreat, as meals are served at specific times and church services are also at precise times. We do have freedom to come and go during the sewing times; some quilters sew late into the night and then sleep in the following morning. Some quilters take time to visit the local quilt shop.

When I quilt at home, I sometimes pray. I may simply focus on the words of a particular song that is playing and think about its meaning in my life. I meditate about the many blessings God has given me as well as the gifts he has bestowed on me. I become aware of gratitude for all that I have and know it is all a gift of God. The spirituality of quilting leads into meditation and an awareness of God's presence. This brings me peace and joy.

Life is Good
Rita Speer



Every life is valuable to someone, no matter who it is

A common theme of anti-abortionists is "every life is valuable", and to this I would agree. But how do we reconcile this with the loud cheering when we received news of the death of Osama bin Laden? Some would argue he lost his right to life when he masterminded the 9-11 attack on the World Trade Center and if life and death is determined by merit, indeed he did. But as Christians we are reminded we do not "earn" our way into heaven, but rather we are granted it by God's grace.

And so it was with great sadness I watched as people partied and cheered at this man's death. Regardless of the despicable acts he committed, he was someone's child, grandchild, nephew, husband, father or even friend. As John Donne said, "Each man's death diminishes me". If his death diminishes me, surely the near party atmosphere surrounding his death diminishes mankind.

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



President Obama announced, "Justice has been done." Shouldn't it be a cause of somber reflection rather than dancing in the streets?

It has been nearly ten years since we watched in horror as the unthinkable occurred...an attack on our own soil. Not only was there large loss of life, but the loss of our way of life. In many ways, bin Laden achieved exactly what he wanted. Two wars have left us with diminishing financial resources; wars financed solely by borrowed money. It was the first time

in history we cut taxes and went to war. Since September of 2001, our debt has gone from 5.8 trillion dollars to 13.5 trillion dollars. Personal lives have seen increased oil prices, a housing disaster, as well as skyrocketing medical costs and record unemployment. No, bin Laden's death did not come cheap.

A friend posted this quote of Martin Luther King Jr., "I mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives, but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that"

Martin Luther King Jr. <mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net>mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

OFFICE HOURS:
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

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STAFF
Dana Paxton.....general manager
advertising director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd.....Blue Jay sports
Harriett Gill.....society editor
email: hgill@nwkansas.com
Vicki Henderson.....computer production
Marcia Shelton.....office manager

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Thumbs up to the NCHS band and vocal students that competed at State Band in Salina. The performances were definitely worth the trip to Salina. Called in.

Thumbs up to the community of Norton for donations to Goodwill last month. In Northwest Kansas, Norton collected the most donations for the store in Hays. E Mailed in by the Norton Girl Scouts.

Thumbs up to all of the band and vocal students and instructors for a year of great music. Called in.