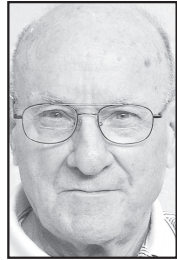


## Our educational system, as a whole, is just fine

This Man of the Plains must have missed something somewhere.

I keep hearing and reading about public schools and how they are failing all across America. I don't know who the people are that grade the schools, but maybe it's the "graders" themselves who are failing. Maybe they don't quite understand the programs being taught because they have changed dramatically over the years. A tougher challenge but a challenge being met.

**Man of the Plains**  
**Tom Dreiling**



I am of the opinion that our kids, for the most part, are today getting a top-notch education. It's easy to find fault in anything put under a magnifying glass. But I think parents by a large majority would agree their kids are learning exceptionally well from very competent teachers. And I also think the "judges" put way too much stock in the kids who are falling behind, not due to the teacher(s), but because they don't want to learn, they come from homes where parents fail to put education at the top of the list, or they are nothing more than distractions in the classroom and couldn't care less about today or tomorrow. There is little that can be done to correct kids in these categories, despite the best efforts of their teachers. Yes, "Some children are left behind."

Let's focus on the positives. After all, any student who climbs the grades from kindergarten to high school senior, and graduates, has done so with a record of achievement. And as we track the progress of kids after they leave high school and enter college we so often hear these words, "I just knew he (or she) had it in him!" And who paved the way? You know the answer.

My three kids did very well in public schools, in fact one graduated valedictorian. Two of the three went on to earn college degrees, the other chose to enter the United States Air Force after taking some classes at a community college and a four-year university. Those college courses certainly had an impact on his ability to gain the rank of Air Force master sergeant and he is now serving as a first sergeant at Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora, Colo. He is in his 22nd year in the military. The other two are involved in somewhat of a family business in Aurora and they are doing quite well, now in their 8th year.

Maybe my kids' successes were due to my attentive nature. But most importantly I credit the men and women who manned their classrooms and I cannot thank them enough even today for the gift of education they gave them.

My grandchildren are, likewise, getting the education necessary to function in today's challenges. One just graduated in May from high school, the others range from pre-school to fourth grade. Reports are all positive and they must be because their parents are demanding.

I have always been of the opinion that our greatest needs are educating our children and protecting our homeland. And Congress would best serve our interests if they kept that in mind.

Observation: I keep seeing this commercial on television directed specifically at people with breathing problems. Before you ask your doctor for a prescription of the medication being pitched in that commercial, there's something you can do to greatly improve your breathing right away: get rid of that elephant sitting on you!

I love poetry. There is just something about it that fascinates me. In fact, I spend a little time writing some, nothing complex, mind you, but simple and to the point, to wit:

- (1) Cars fly by, trucks do too; overlooked red light, too late to undo.
- (2) Son has birthday, has eye on car; dad nods nope, too young for bar!
- (3) Aroma enticing, what must it be? A summer favorite, like, "hey... iced tea?"
- (4) Exercise a must, so doctors say; but dog has best answer, ....lay! Boogie is allowed!

Snippets were primarily about Texas Gov. Rick Perry getting into the Republican race. I opted, instead, to toss in a few of my poems and to hold the snippets until the next column. Thanks for your understanding!

Peace!  
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 milehitom@hotmail.com.



## The hard knocks of life, be it holidays, fun or kids

Where has the time gone? Here we are, about to turn the page on another month and I realized Christmas season is only three months away. There are only 114 shopping days left. Not that shopping days are that important to me. I have my peach jam made so my holiday preparations are half done.

It is true: the older you get, the faster time flies.

-ob-

Our son, James, and his wife, Charlotte, came to our house for dessert and got more than they bargained for. I didn't intend to become the "floor show" but, that's what happened.

Jim delights in telling everyone I walk on his back like a Geisha Girl. Now, if you know us at all, you know that's not quite true. What I do is use my feet to massage his back while he sits on a rolling stool in front of my recliner.

He wanted to demonstrate our routine to James and Charlotte and even though I thought it a little "tacky", I agreed because, after all, they are family. I was not seated in my recliner but, in a smaller, occasional chair. He rolled his seat in front of me; I placed my feet upon his back and began my Geisha Girl "walk". Unfortunately, as I pushed on his back with my feet, he

**Out Back**  
**Carolyn Plotts**



pushed back against me and, without warning, my center of gravity was displaced and over I went. All James and Charlotte saw were my feet pedalling in the air. Nothing was hurt, except my dignity. We all had a good laugh but, I had to decline when everyone wanted an encore.

-ob-

I am blessed to have friends of all ages. One of my new best friends is a young mother of two little kids; a boy, seven, and a girl, 10 months. She and I took a little road trip with the kids to do some shopping at a discount store.

I had checked out and was waiting for her and the children. As they approached the cash registers the mom decided against a purchase she had in her cart and sent her son to return the item to the department it came from located a short distance from the check-out lanes.

It wasn't long before it became obvious the boy had detoured from the

path his mother had set him on. While I watched the baby, the mom went to look for her son. When she didn't find him exasperation turned to displeasure which turned to concern and then "morphed" into full-blown panic.

I'm sure she was about to call the police when here came her son; casually walking back to the check-out. He still had the original item in one hand plus a plastic toy in the other.

Let's just say his casual stroll ended right there. His mother snatched him up so fast and ushered him out the front door. I could barely keep up pushing the baby in the shopping cart. His feet never touched the ground.

I remember that feeling from when my children were little. You think they're lost and your mind goes to the dark places of parents' nightmares. Then, the child nonchalantly appears and your concern turns to anger and you don't know whether to hug them or spank them. Sometimes you do both. One because they scared you so much; the other because they scared you so much.

I know this: the next time my friend goes shopping, her son won't leave her side. As upset as she was, he might not be allowed to leave her side until he goes to college.

## Fighting childhood obesity by serving healthy meals

**Insight**

**John Schlageck**

With school starting across Kansas this unfortunately can mean the return of unhealthy lunches which can certainly be labeled as fast food, most of which come to schools shipped in already prepared packaging. If you have or have had children in school, you know what I mean.

Beanie weenies, chicken nuggets, high-carb mac and cheese, fried snacks and sugary soft drinks are popular fare served at school cafeterias across the Wheat State. Still, school lunch programs can play a key role in teaching and reinforcing healthy eating behaviors by integrating activities like on-site gardens, nutrition education, locally sourced foods and endeavors that affirm the value of mealtimes.

You don't have to have eagle eyes to see this nation has a problem with obesity and that challenge has spread to this country's youngsters. Did you know that 17 percent of U.S. children and adolescents aged 2-19 are obese, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control?

That's nearly triple the amount in 1980. It's time we turn this train around. Initiatives that connect our youth to fresh, healthy foods, a healthy lifestyle with plenty of exercise and healthy eating habits will go a long way toward changing this obesity endemic.

What's happening here may seem more difficult than it really is. Looking back in our not too distant past, many

Americans ate a balanced diet consisting of plenty of fruits, vegetables, grains and protein. Eating healthy isn't rocket science. It does take discipline, restraint and the willingness to make life-altering changes in what have become bad-choice, unhealthy eating habits.

What better place to begin than with the future of our youngsters?

Talk about an idealistic endeavor. Let's begin with one of the most important steps - connecting local farmers to schools. In communities across Kansas, local food producers provide beef, lamb, pork, poultry, fruits, grains and vegetables at local markets or directly from their farms. Why can't they provide farm-fresh foods for our school children?

I recently read where Vermont has conducted a successful farm to school movement throughout the last 10 years with the aid of state's government. Figures from the Green Mountain state report nearly 60 percent of the schools have participated. Children of Vermont have benefited with farm-fresh foods and local farmers have expanded their business into a market worth more than \$40 million.

School gardens can provide hands-on

opportunities for children to cultivate and grow their own food. In high poverty areas of north Texas, school gardens not only nurture healthy lifestyles and respect for the environment, they can also provide academic achievement through the primary experiences of gardening.

Nutritional education should be a part of every public school in this country. So funding is tight. That's a given. What if we engaged professional volunteers to run a broad range of topics that address nutrition? You know farmers and ranchers, agri-business types and maybe even people with nutritional backgrounds.

Our goal should be to feed our children while they are in school, but feed them with nutritious meals that will help them grow up to be healthy, well-adjusted adults. It's time to cut back on a diet that focuses on processed foods delivered in boxes.

Children spend seven to eight hours nine to 10 months out of every year in schools across our nation. These same schools have our children under their wing more time than we as parents and grandparents do during each day school is in session. Let's reverse this trend of snacking and eating of less than nutritious foods in our school systems.

Your children, grandchildren and mine deserve the best and healthiest foods available - fresh, locally produced and made from scratch served up in their schools.



Thumbs up to all of those that participated in the Smokin In The Barn Contest, the sponsors and mostly to those who organize and pull it off every year. It was a great time once again. Emailed in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

**Nor'West Newspapers**  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

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