

To my friends and neighbors in Norton County:

Lately, I've heard a lot of people saying things about how awful Norton is about gossip and drama, things like "F this Town", "this town sucks", "I hate this town", etc. Drama and gossip are not unique to Norton... it is a small town thing. I've lived in two other small towns and have spent significant time in three others throughout Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska. Fold, all small towns are the same; I'm sorry to say that Norton is not special or unique in this. (My family and I have been talked about, gossiped about and had hurtful rumors made up about us too). Yes, small towns are strife with drama, gossip and everyone knowing your business; however, what many people don't realize is the wonderful tradeoffs you get for putting up with these small distasteful things that go away once the next piece of exciting "news" comes along.

Here are some tradeoffs that I've experienced and why I choose to live in Norton and LOVE it! Life in the big city...

You may not be able to purchase a home for less than \$100K, if you are lucky enough to find one, it will likely be in a questionable neighborhood.

You can count yourself lucky if the neighbors on your street know your name.

You will not feel comfortable allowing your children to play in your front yard, for fear of them being kidnapped, molested or shot. More than likely, your back yard will be surrounded by a six foot privacy fence.

You will likely not allow your pre-teen to go to the local pool without a responsible parent. It is unlikely that a parent you've never met will call you at work your first few weeks in town just to let you know your two daughters are hanging around with the boys that are smoking.

Your neighbors will not invite you and your children into their homes while trick-or-treating after you first move there. If they do, you will likely want to grab your children away. They will also not make homemade popcorn balls that you will trust offering to your children.

The clerk at the grocery store will likely never ask you how your child, mother, grandchild, husband, etc. is doing; they will certainly not know which college they attend or that they made the state sports team or moved two hours away recently.

The employees at the local sandwich shop will not ask you if you want your 'regular' or recall which bread you prefer despite only frequenting the establishment about once a month.

It will cost for your child to participate in sports with no guarantee they will play at all.

When your three year old stands up in a booth at the restaurant singing a Britney Spears song at the tops of his lungs, the entire restaurant will not applaud; you will be given dirty looks and asked to quiet your child by management.

Children in the big city are all taught to be kind to kids that are different or have special needs; these kids are picked on, bullied and ostracized. You will not be touched in your heart when special needs kids are warmly recognized by their team-mates or by their entire graduating class. Half the town will not turn out for a Friday night game or congratulate your child on the streets after catching the winning pass. There is no Mr. Boyd to write up fabulous stories about your child's sporting events.

If you should forget and leave your purse in the front seat and window down while running into the store, you may be sorry. You may learn the hard way to keep your home and vehicle locked up tight.

It is unlikely your child will know all of the kids in their graduating class or that your child will receive any personal attention from a teacher with 35+ kids in a room.

Your neighbor will likely not tell you when your child is seen sneaking out of his window at 2 a.m.

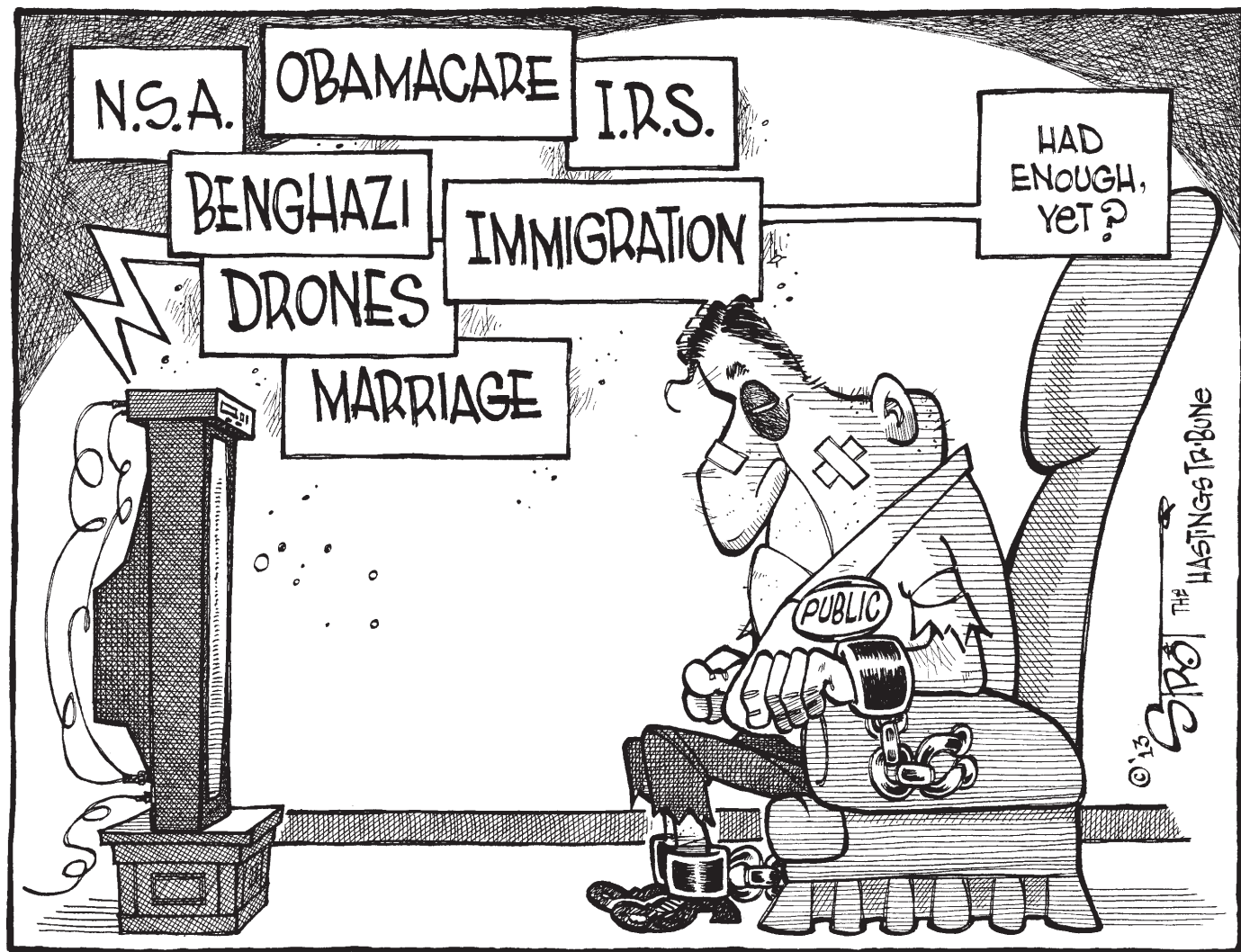
Your coworkers will not be like your second family. They will not attend your child's graduation party, wedding, family funeral, etc.

It is very unlikely that you will return from a three hour drive with your loved one after surgery to a blanket of 8+ inches of snow and find that your neighbor cleaned it from your drive and sidewalks.

When tragedy strikes your family, friends and neighbors come to offer help, labor, food, clothing, shelter and a shoulder to cry on.

Hopefully, many people that live here already understand and agree with why I continue to choose to live in this wonderful and quirky small town. Don't get me wrong, I didn't dislike living in the big city...I just didn't know things could be any different. Since moving here, I've seen levels of kindness and compassion that I believe are only possible in a small community. Please consider this the next time you might be tempted to say how bad this town is and ask yourself how often you participate in small town drama and gossip.

Sincerely, Laurie Cliff



Where we come from and who we count on

I learned the hard way, it's not what you say, but how you say it.

Don't tell him I said this, but my nephew, Kirk, is a very intelligent man. He is the first in the family to receive a doctorate degree and we all admire him a great deal. He and I were talking at a family get-together and the subject of genealogy research came up. I told him about Jim and I having our DNA tested through a genealogy website and learning the results.

That topic led us to discussing our own families and then, more specifically, to our particular blood types. I shared with him that my children's father and I had what was called the Rh factor. Kirk was very knowledgeable of this condition where antibodies in the mother's blood can have a harmful effect on the baby's blood. He was drawing graphs and charts on the back of the paper placemat and came to the point where he asked the blood types of my girls, Halley and Kara.

I was embarrassed to admit I did not know, however, I knew a quick text message would bring an answer. My first text was to Halley. It read, "With

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



Kirk. What is your blood type?"

Her answer came immediately. "Type A+. Is Kirk OK? Does he need a transfusion?"

Kirk and I had to laugh. I hadn't thought how my message must have appeared to Halley. I wrote back, "No emergency. Just talking about family genealogy and blood types."

The good thing that came of our inadvertent alarm was for Kirk to learn he has a cousin who is ready and willing to donate blood should he ever need it.

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One of my writing assignments at the newspaper office was to do a story on the history of an old bank building in town. The museum's file on the building was very slim and "Googling"

it produced no results either.

I expressed my concern for lack of information to one of my workmates who nonchalantly said, "My sister graduated from high school the year the bank was built, so it was in 1948." Thank you, Mary Lou. Wish I had just asked her in the first place. I would have saved myself a lot of time.

I pulled out the hardcover book containing the newspapers from 1948 and began flipping pages looking for information on the bank. Eventually I found what I was looking for, but not before I came across some of my mother's columns. This was before "Out With the Hillbillies" appeared on the editorial page. It was randomly placed along with the country correspondence.

One column was particularly amusing. It read, "We're training the baby in more ways than one. If the boys tell her to dance, she does a little jig." It was amusing because "the baby" was me. In 1948 I was a year old.

The other "training" must have worked, and as for dancing, I still love to do a jig.

Sweltering in the 'dog days' of summer...bring on the rain

In case you hadn't noticed, much of the state may already be mired in the "dog days" of summer. You might be thinking, it's too early for such hot temperatures, but think again.

Although it may be nothing to brag about, Kansas and the ancient Romans have a common appreciation (maybe aversion is a better word) to hot summer days.

So where did the term "dog days" actually come from?

Ancient Romans noted that the brightest star in the night sky - Sirius - appeared each year during hot, sultry weather. Sirius, which originates from the Greek word for "scorcher," became known as the Dog Star. Consequently, the hot, steamy weather it brought was called, "dog days."

Believing the star caused the miserable weather, ancient Romans sacrificed brown dogs to appease the rage of Sirius.

Instead of mythology, astrology or old wives' tales, we have meteorology to help us define what's going on with our weather. Based on the predictability of today's weather - and it has improved dramatically - some people might argue we should revert to the techniques used by the early Romans.

Somehow, I seem to have started this column on the wrong foot. Maybe it's the heat or lack of moisture. Anyway, let me begin again.

What does the rest of the summer and fall weather in Kansas look like?

In order to answer this question I turned to George Phillips with the

Insight

John Schlageck



National Weather Service in Topeka. Phillips has studied the weather in Kansas for many years.

Because of a large ridge of high pressure setting up above the Sunflower State, July and August temperatures will probably experience higher than normal temperatures. This could mean somewhere in the high 80s or mid 90s and even triple digit temperatures, Phillips says. This doesn't bode well for western Kansas.

Moisture amounts could be above or below "normal," whatever that is in today's climate. It's difficult to predict moisture amounts during the summer months in Kansas. There just aren't enough signals to rely on.

Thunderstorms will continue to be spotty with the potential for some heavy rains with these isolated storms, Phillips says.

"An isolated, small spot on the Kansas map may receive an inch or two while just a mile or less away may only pick up a trace of moisture," says the National Weather Service science operations officer.

The chance of any wide-spread rains during the rest of the summer is unlikely although not impossible, Phillips says. Instead, Kansas will

experience scattered showers and if you're lucky enough to get one over your field, consider yourself fortunate - it's going to be hit and miss for the rest of the summer.

As far as the extended drought on the High Plains of Kansas, Phillips reports the western 40 percent of Kansas is in the "D-3" category of extreme drought or higher. Some parts of western Kansas, especially the southwest are in a category "D-4," considered the worst drought possible.

With three, going on four years of drought in some parts of Kansas, farmers are already speculating on the possibility of having enough moisture to put their next wheat crop in the ground. They'll need some rain between now and mid-September to ensure the crop germinates.

The first estimates, and at this time they are little more than a guess, indicate above normal temperatures this fall, Phillips says. Predicting moisture amounts is impossible.

With the hottest days of summer bearing down on Kansas generally in mid-July hold on to your hat because 2013 may be a real scorcher - maybe even one for the record books.

Looking forward to the remainder of the summer, what happens with temperatures and rainfall amounts is anybody's guess. Farmers and producers will keep a watchful eye toward the western sky, keep their fingers crossed and pray for rain.

As for brown dogs in farm country - beware.



Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:
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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

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

Kansas Press Association

