



The rich can be blind to conditions of the poor

"Let them eat cake," is the classical statement by Marie Antoinette, wife of French King Louis XVI when told the people were hungry.

In the French Revolution, she was the example of the rich and arrogant. Isolated in her palaces, she asked why the citizens were rioting. When told that it was because they had no bread, she famously replied that the masses should simply do what she would do if she ran out of bread: eat cake.

This phrase reflects how the rich can be blind to the conditions of the poor.

Today's "Marie Antoinettes" include some Kansas school administrators and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan. His proclamation last week that American schools should convert to 100 percent digital textbooks reveals again how he is isolated from the American public classroom and economically poor students.

One Presidential candidate apologized for his "47 percent" problem. This is Duncan's "40 percent" problem.

Four out of 10 American households are not connected to broadband Internet. Access is not spread evenly. Households and schools in the affluent suburbs of Johnson County may be close to 100 percent, but that means that many western rural school districts may have fewer than half of households connected. And 6 percent of the most remote households, rich-or-not, are beyond the reach of any broadband.

The cost of buying a computer to keep up with new software and Internet speed and memory demands requires an affluent income in a recession economy.

But forget the secretary, who lives a sheltered life in FantasyLand, D.C. I am talking about a number of Kansas school administrators who have this Marie Antoinette attitude. Since 2008, a flood of data has shown the growing number of school children who live in poverty. A substantial number do not have enough to eat. It should be evident to school administrators who work outside of the rich suburbs that large numbers of households lack computers and Internet connections.

At the end of August, I wrote the column "Only 60 Percent Have Internet Access." The response I received from Kansas teachers and parents was shocking. Across Kansas, they told me that some school administrators had already moved teaching materials online, in some cases to cover a shortage

of textbooks. When I ask how they are providing for the students who lack Internet at home, the response was that these students would have to work online during a study period or after school in the school computer lab.

How unfair would it be if a richer student got to take his or her books and study materials home after school but a poor student could not? Yet this switch to electronics does exactly that. The rich kid gets the advantage of homework and help from parents while the poor kid is restricted to gaps in school time.

What really bites is that Kansas parents pay a book rental fee but now their child is not getting what they paid for. Such educational malpractice begs for a lawsuit, yet poor people are the least likely to complain.

Secretary Duncan wants electronic textbooks because Korea and Finland have decided to move that direction. But neither country has the poverty found in the U.S., and both are committed to put the electronics into every student's hands and at home. Even they have zero proof that this will benefit students.

But some Kansas administrators adopted their electronic textbook policy well before Duncan's proclamation last week. They live in a world that substitutes the image of progress for the substance. Many have been spending big bucks for electronic "whiteboards" for every classroom whether the teacher asked for it or not.

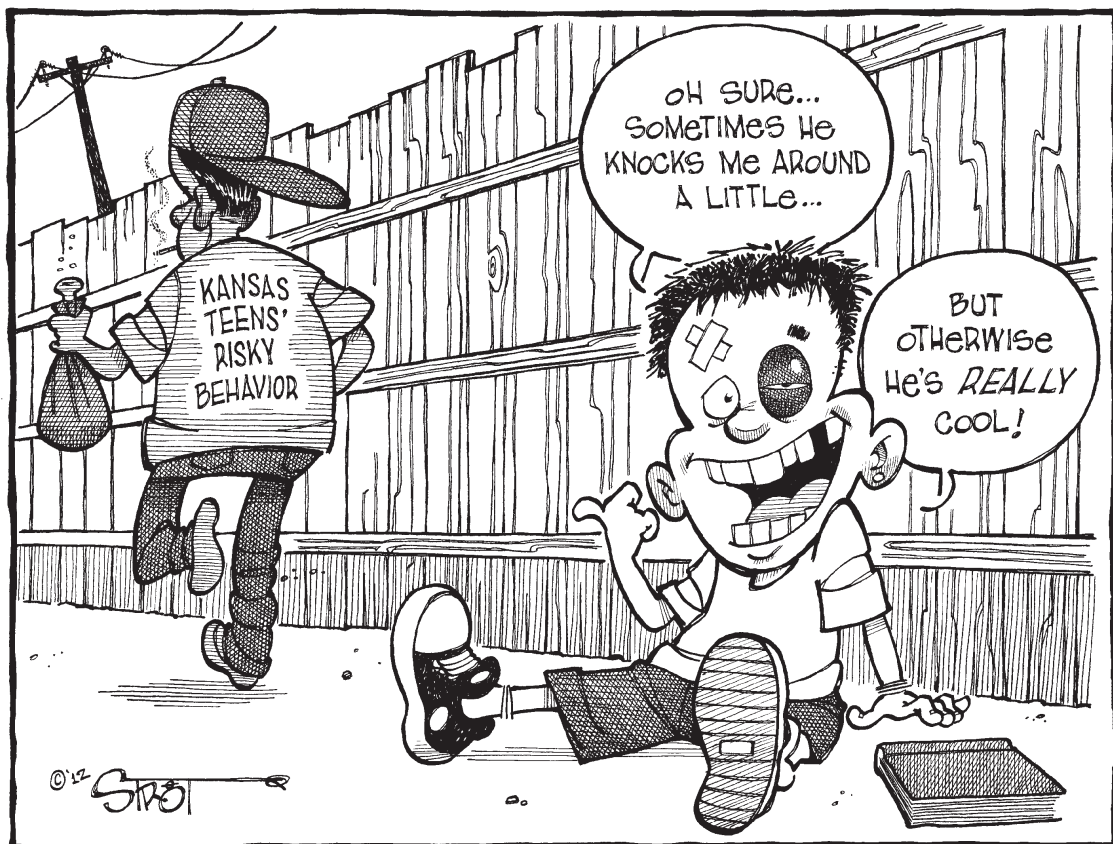
Unfortunately, Internet access is not equal to printed texts and does not improve test scores. In a June 18, 2010, study of 150,000 fifth-to-eighth-grade students by researchers at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy, home computer use was linked with lower student test scores and the problem was worse for low-income students.

In many Kansas communities, citizens have organized to provide "backpack food" to send home with poor students who do not get enough to eat.

They should not have to also raise money to send students home with a real textbook. That is the school's responsibility.

—John Richard Schrock

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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School kids aren't the only ones who can learn.

Last week I was invited to speak to a group of seniors at the local high school about life insurance. First I wondered how to hold the attention of these students and second, what could be entertaining about paying for a loved one's final wishes?

But then I remembered when I was getting my insurance licensing. An instructor told me a story that I thought could help me out. With a little research I came up with something about life insurance

that might entertain my academic audience.

Back in the days of the Roman Empire, her armies were being sent to the ends of the known world to expand and support its holdings. But there was a problem. All good Romans believed that a proper burial was needed. Otherwise their ghost would spend eternity wandering about in a very grumpy mood.

So the soldiers decided to chip into a fund that would provide for what was needed when the centurion met his end. These be-

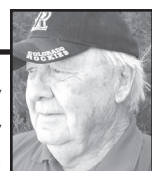
came known as "burial clubs" and spread in popularity to other members of Roman society who were not wealthy enough to afford elaborate funerals.

Interestingly, that is pretty much how life insurance works today. Leave it to those nutty Romans to come up with plumbing, concrete and life policies.

The lessons never end.

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



As gardeners, many of us spend quite a bit of time about now thinking about next year. If we don't, we should.

Planning for the next growing season is extremely important to your yard and garden as we all search for significant improvement in the things we do. But please allow me to visit with you about a different kind of project that we must face head-on right now. We should do some serious planning about how to clean up and generally prepare the machinery we have used all summer, for a comfortable winter's nap.

Mowers immediately come to mind. We will continue to use them for awhile longer on our bluegrass lawns, but will soon park them for the winter.

So, when you're through with them for the season, you may want to load them (it) in the trailer or pickup and head down to your favorite lawn serviceman or mechanic and have the blades sharpened.

As a general rule, mower blades

need sharpened after about every 10 hours of use. If you are not equipped to do it, check it in with someone who does that kind of work for a living. He may discover that the blade should be replaced.

While this efficient young fellow has your mower in his shop, ask him kindly to drain the gas tank, drain the oil, replace or clean the oil and air filter, and install a new spark plug. Also suggest to him that before you pick it up, you would like him to go over it, underneath and on top, with his power washer so as to remove all vestiges of gunk that detract from the general health of this expensive piece of equipment.

After it arrives back home, all clean and shiny, store it in a clean, dry, dark place (just like your onions) and allow it to rest comfortably for the winter. When spring arrives, your mower will practically jump out of storage in gratitude to you for providing for its winter comfort.

After you have given your gar-

den plot a deep plowing with your rototiller, allow that same friendly serviceman to whip it into shape for winter storage, just like he did with your mower(s).

If you feel comfortable doing all this work yourself in an efficient manner out there in your garage, then do it. But always keep in mind that your motorized garden equipment is the most expensive tools in your possession, and should be given top priority when it comes to proper upkeep.

There's more. Sharpen your hoes. Both of 'em. Put a good edge on them, and tighten up the handles if you can. There may be a shovel or two out there that could use the same treatment.

Finally, stretch out your entire footage of garden hose, as well as soaker hose, and turn on the water. Check for leaks and worn out connectors. Repair them now, and put them away for a long nap.

Sounds like a wonderful idea! See you next week.

Hangin' With Marge

Cantaloupe Bread

By Margaret Bucholtz



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How many of you have heard of Cantaloupe Bread? It is a lot like banana bread or any of the other ones out there, but it is good.

When we were at Lezlie's getting the tree cut down she had just made some bread. I thought it was really good. I couldn't wait until I could pick one of our cantaloupes out of the garden and try it.

I really should have known

what was going to happen. I guess I think that I was the one who taught her how to cook so of course my bread would be just as good. That's what I get for thinking!

I picked, peeled and crushed the cantaloupe up. Measured the ingredients and instead of just making one I made two.

Oh, the smell of bread baking in an oven. The aroma in the house filled the rooms and I felt like I really was June Cleaver on "Leave it to Beaver." As I basted in the imaginary world the timer on the stove brought me back to the real world.

I got the pans of bread out of the oven and waited 5 minutes to turn the bread onto the board to cool.

Well that was the point that June left the scene and I came back to a real life. The bread wouldn't come

out of the pan. I gently shook the pan still nothing. I cut around the sides again thinking I might have missed a spot. Still the bread didn't leave the pan. I put the pan upside down and shook it, banged on it with the meat tenderizer and finally the top part of the bread fell out leaving the bottom half stuck to the pan.

The next pan was a little better, I don't know if the pan didn't want to be beat on or someone somewhere knew that I was on the edge of no return. Only a small corner stuck in it.

Of course I did the only thing I could think and that was to eat all of the bad loaf, wash that pan and put it away and pretend that I only made one loaf.

GOD SAYS
Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7:12



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