



Lowering current reading could have dramatic effect

The National Transportation Safety Board wants to lower the legal limit for a drunk driving conviction from the current .08 blood alcohol reading down to .05.

The difference could be dramatic for casual and social drinkers – from as many as four drinks in an hour down to just two or three for the average man, and one for many women – but the expected gains drinking-related accidents would not be so great.

Nearly all states have cut their definition of drunk driving by nearly half over the last 33 years. In 1980, before the nation began a push to eliminate DUI – most states used a blood alcohol reading of .15 to define drunk driving. Today, the figure is down to .08 in nearly every state.

The changes we've made since then have cut deaths caused by drunk drivers in half over 30 years. The coming change, down to .05, is expected to reduce highways deaths by as many as 500 a year, but that's a drop of only 5 percent.

Many are asking, is that worth the price? Will an even-tighter standard really reduce fatalities, or is this movement being driven by the anti-alcohol crazies who seem to have taken over the drunk-driving crusade?

It's become difficult to speak out against any tightening of drunk-driving laws in the U.S., because anyone who does so is branded as being against safe roads and for drunk driving. It's a position most politicians can't afford to be in.

But do we want to prevent social drinkers who aren't really the problem from driving, or do we want to eliminate drunk-driving deaths?

Increasingly, the evidence shows that some things work and some don't. One of the biggest problems is dealing with repeat offenders, people who keep drinking and driving. Often, when caught, they're driving without a license already. It's common for police to stop people

“driving under suspension,” even though penalties can be stiff.

It's nearly impossible to live in America today, hold a job – and not drive. We set people up so they are punished for driving drunk, but they find they need to drive to hold a job. Or drive to the bar.

These are the people causing the problem. They are hard to deal with. They are problem drinkers because they are firmly in the grips of terrible disease, and they just don't care. They'd rather drink.

Yet the “drunk driving” establishment seems to be more interested in punishing people not for driving drunk, but just for drinking.

That's why the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Candy Lightner, quit the group. She said the people now in charge are “neo-prohibitionist” pursuing an anti-alcohol agenda.

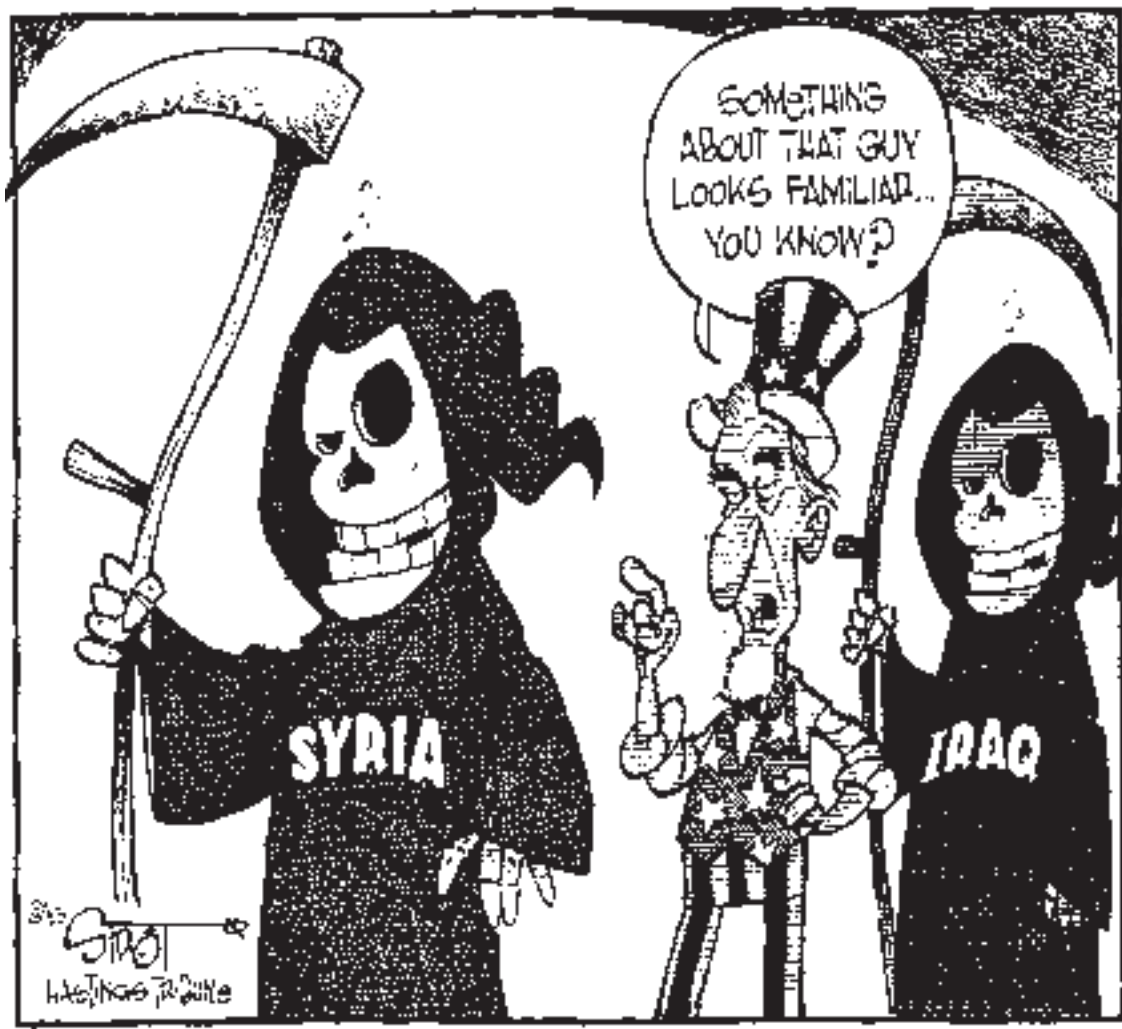
“I didn't start MADD to deal with alcohol,” she said recently. “I started MADD to deal with the issue of drunk driving.”

Since most drivers involved in drunk-driving deaths are repeat offenders with a blood reading of .20 or higher, it would make sense to go after them with tougher penalties, ignition interlocks and other tactics, not the social drinker.

But in a world where we've already attempted to reinstate prohibition for college-age kids – a foolish law that's problematical and widely ignored – that's not what the anti-drinkers want.

Will the new push for a .05 standard bring about stiffer drunk-driving laws? Quite possibly. But will it solve the problem? Not likely. It'll just make life more difficult for the rest of us.

But dealing with problem drinkers is no easy thing. We can expect Congress and the states to take the easy course instead of one that might help solve the problem. – Steve Haynes



The Gardener

By Kay Melia



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Advice given on growing tomatoes

My ears are burning as I listen to gardeners talk about this year's crop of tomatoes. Please understand that tomato talk comprises roughly half of all the garden talk I hear all year. It is so obvious that tomatoes are the garden crop of choice, just like last year, and the year before, and the.....

This year, the talk is a bit troubling to my aged ears. Most gardeners I talk to aren't very happy with this year's production. But then, tomatoes are so cherished that if the least little bit of trouble prevails, voices are raised! Many of you are raising your voices and there seems to be an unusual redness of the face right now. Some gardeners are not happy with their tomatoes.

I'm happy with my tomato crop this year. I don't apologize for it, nor am I being boastful about it. Very simply, my tomatoes are doing well, and I'll bet you a couple of onions that there are many of you out there enjoying a satisfactory crop.

I've never been asked so often about how I plant and care for my tomatoes. So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to describe as best I can in this limited space, the methods I use for a successful tomato crop. Applaud or disagree...your choice. At your request, I'm just passing along what works for me. Here we go.

I have learned over the past few decades that I must set out my plants as early as I possibly can, which for me, is May 1. My plants get good growth in the

cool days and nights of May, and I always have a way to protect them in case of a cold snap. I get good early growth on my plants before most gardeners have set their's out.

I remain adamant about the proper variety of tomato. I plant Northern Exposure, Super Tasty, Shady Lady, and a couple of Fourth of Julys. All of those have extremely good resistance to the many problems that hound tomatoes. I absolutely avoid Early Girl, Big Boy, Better Boy, and Beefmaster.

I always cage my plants when I plant them, with two feet of black plastic on the bottom to prevent wind damage. I constructed the cages from concrete reinforcing wire, and they last for years. As for watering, I plant my plants in long rows, and irrigate down the row. A drip system is good, but I don't even think about a lawn sprinkler. I irrigate when I think they need it, not on Tuesdays and Fridays, or Saturdays and Wednesdays.

I usually fertilize twice, with a liquid pour-on I mix myself. I do it when the first bloom appears, and again three weeks later.

I grow my own plants from seed. However, you can buy the started plants of all four varieties listed above, some locally, some from the mail-order people. I always pick tomatoes just as soon as they begin to turn color. Tests show I lose no flavor and no nutrients as they ripen on the kitchen counter, and I don't have

to worry about them out there on the vine.

That's about it. Many of you have asked. If you would like detailed information, write me a note. I promise to respond before planting time next spring. I genuinely love to discuss tomatoes!

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Casey's Comments

Understanding the wonders

By Casey McCormick



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God gives us gifts. I believe one of the greatest blessings is our ability to take in His creation. Through our five senses we are allowed to understand the wonders around us.

For instance, do you know what geraniums smell like? It is not so much the fragrance of the flower but the pungent earthiness of the plant itself. Unique to this one plant from the multitudes

of others. The experience of that smell helps us to know that plant.

The sight of a new born babe. Distressed from the journey from mother to outside world, yet creation in the most pure form.

Picking up a stone on a beach. Feeling the polish that came from sand, water and time. The hard surface of an object who's origin so vastly predates the

holder's existence.

My example of sound may stretch the boundaries of likes. Scottish bagpipes seem to be a take it or leave it deal. But if the dear Lord has also touched your heart with an appreciation of the pipes, no purer sound can be heard than the melody of the highlands played outdoors and “rrrrrolling o'er the hills of heatherrrr.”

You can choose your own favorite taste. Picture looking at the menu of your favorite restaurant. Each dish easily brings the memory of good experiences or the imaginings of something new to sample.

So it's hard to imagine living on this planet and not having the gifts to understand all its wonders.

Quotes

• The humblest citizen of all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all teh hosts of Error. - William Jennings Bryan

• There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil. - Alfred North Whitehead

Senator enjoys visit to St. Francis

Letter to the Editor:

Traveling across Northwest Kansas I enjoyed catching up with Kansans who live in the northwest portion of our state last week. My first stop was in Saint Francis, where I was a guest of the Cheyenne County Development Corporation and city council. We walked Main Street and met

with local business owners who shared with me the great rewards and challenges of operating a business in a small town. Saint Francis is a good example of a rural community that continues to stick together to make certain it survives and flourishes.

Senator Jerry Moran



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St. Francis
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