

Amazing — at least there was an apology

Chalk one up for freedom. A small victory, perhaps, but important nonetheless. Justice Antonin Scalia has apologized to an Associated Press reporter whose voice recorder was seized and erased by a U.S. marshal on Mr. Scalia's protection detail during a public appearance.

The justice says he's sorry, and it won't happen again. He said he will permit print reporters to record his remarks in the future, understanding that many of them depend on their recordings for accuracy.

Wow. Decency and common sense prevail.

The spectacle of a marshal grabbing reporters' recorders in front of God and the entire audience even as the justice spoke to a high school crowd in Mississippi was unreal.

This is America, after all. Land of the free. Home of free speech. A place where everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty. A country, in fact, where federal law forbids agents from seizing reporters' notes, film and gear on a whim.

What happened, apparently, was that the justice had announced at an earlier speech that it was his policy not to allow recordings of his talks. He also bans television cameras and video recorders.

None of that is unusual. Any speaker has the right to set conditions before he opens his mouth. People don't have to stay. Reporters don't have to cover the speech.

But at the high school, no one mentioned the rule. The two reporters recording the speech had no idea they might offend the justice. They were, in fact, sitting right in front of him, in plain view of the speaker and the entire audience.

That's when the deputy marshal moved in and started grabbing their gear. A newspaper reporter gave up her tape and got it back only after erasing it. The AP reporters refused to give her digital recorder up, so the marshal grabbed it.

The deputy apparently didn't understand that digital recorders don't have tape, but the wire service reporter eventually showed her how to erase the memory.

The justice, ironically, was talking about the Constitution and the rights we enjoy under it.

One of those is supposed to be due process under law. Police and federal agents are not supposed to take the law into their own hands.

Usually, a high official caught in this kind of trap just bulls his or her way through. It's unheard of for one to apologize for this kind of mistake.

Maybe the justice realized that bad publicity might harm his chances of being promoted to chief. Maybe he realized that he had made a mistake.

Maybe he just thought an apology — and a change of heart — was the right thing to do.

That would be sort of novel in Washington, but it could happen.

Whatever the case, Mr. Scalia did the right thing and we're all better off for it.

It shows that if you believe in justice and the Constitution, things might just work out.

Hooray for common sense!

— Steve Haynes

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Everything's going to the birds

Ever notice how our lives evolve in stages? We seem to be in an "avian" stage. Jim brought chickens into our lives when we were first married.

I came home from work one day to find 100 baby chicks happily ensconced in an old refrigerator carton in our bedroom. For two weeks, I went to sleep listening to the "cheep, cheep, cheep" of the little layers. That is what I wanted to say to my husband for not buying an incubator, "Cheap. Cheap. Cheap!"

We still have chickens and probably will as long as we have little grandchildren who like to "pick the eggs." And I have become accustomed to nice, fresh eggs that actually look and taste like eggs. I might use store-bought eggs for baking, but for deviled eggs and fried eggs, you can't beat one from your own chickens.

Last year, we added two ducks to the mix. When cold weather moved in, we moved Mr. and Mrs. Duck to the chicken coop, which is pretty weather-tight. He made it through the winter just fine, but she did not survive.

Without a rooster in the pen, Mr. Duck thinks he needs to fill that position. So much so, that Jim said he's going to change his name to a combination of the two species, a chicken and a duck. Ladies and gentlemen, meet "Chuck".

My weekly check on Mrs. Robin revealed she is down to one egg. I don't have

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



a clue as to what happened to the other one. No sign of a shell or anything in the nest.

One thing I do know, is that we will NEVER have birds in the house. No canaries, no parrots, no macaws. They are OK for other people, and friends who have birds love them. But birds and their mess are not for me.

Besides, Jim says that after I've driven the car while eating sunflower seeds, it looks like a parrot has been there anyway.

—ob—
This beautiful spring has given everyone the gardening bug. I've already planted petunias in our barrels on Main Street. They should look pretty good by Memorial Day, which is when the little town we live in really spruces up.

Every year, former residents return for family gatherings, alumni reunions and services at the cemeteries. In preparation, our little town pulls out all the stops and has a clean-up day, encouraging every homeowner to "spiff things up." It's as good a reason as any, and most folks try

to comply.
I have to admit that this little town has some dandy houses. Some day I hope to count mine among them. For now, though, we just try to keep the grass mowed, a few flowers blooming and plant new trees every year.

—ob—
I took a little side trip this morning and read some from my mother's book, "Out With the Kansas Hillbillies." The excerpt was dated May 5, 1949. Here's what she wrote almost 55 years ago:

"As we see another of the boys getting out of high school (my brother Don, I think) this year, we notice again how fast the years are slipping away. If they would all stay at home until they are about 25 years old, we might get some fence fixed, but that's not to be expected — or even wished. I guess it's lucky we had the baby (me) when we did; at least we know we can't be left alone for several years yet. What if we had stopped our family with just one or two?"

It's always interesting to go back and note my mother's perspective on things. Like most mothers of high school seniors, she wanted her children to stay home "just a little longer" but knew, deep down, that wasn't the scheme of things.

Some things don't change. But, if we as parents have done our jobs right, our children will want to leave. It's the nature of things.

Life is busy with babies and bus trips

We have had some busy days as of late, after I wrote about being a trip sponsor for the state FCCLA meeting, music teacher David Will called and asked if I would go to state large group contest. This is held in Colby, he let me ride on the charter bus again.

The band got a I, of course.
One little sideline — I also got to babysit. They have those computer babies for the life skills class. When the band went to practice, Kayla Peterson, asked me to watch the little guy.

I don't know if having those little babies cuts down on the number of teen pregnancies but it gave this old woman pause.

"Just stick this key in if it cries to feed it, if that doesn't work try diapering, burping, etc."

I didn't even wait for the thing to cry, I went right into action, I began to pray.

One amazing thing about babies, they break the ice. All kinds of people stopped

Back Home
Nancy Hagman



to talk to me, and it wasn't even a real baby!

I wanted to hear the kids perform but was really worried that the baby would cry.

I decided to try my luck by listening to another school first (Lakin).

That went well so I stuck it out through Norton. That is one good baby — even the cymbals didn't disturb it!

Later in the parking lot I noticed that Lakin has two charter buses.

Somehow I have gotten to know several boys from Lakin (why I never meet any girls is beyond me).

Anyway I kind of pay attention when there are kids from Lakin around. Their band looked really cool in formal evening attire but they did not play as well as Norton (that is not just my opinion, the judges agreed with me).

They probably are a pretty cool school though, but having two charters doesn't make them twice as cool. It is just not possible.

Earlier in the day I had gotten a letter from the school district office. Superintendent Greg Mann explained the whole bus thing to me.

Part of the reason we have a charter bus is that we have to travel such distances and it is nice to do so in some degree of comfort. It helps when the events attended are competitive if the students have had a relaxing trip. I guess that would apply to Lakin also.

Anyway I'm putting this on my resumé, school trip sponsor and baby-sitter.
Call me anytime!

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