

Here's a simple test for suspect

Well, here we go again! Faced with nonstop coverage of a rather flaky individual who says he was with JonBenet Ramsey on the night she was murdered in her Boulder, Colo. home nearly 10 years ago.

The 41-year-old former school teacher, John Mark Karr, was brought back to the U.S. from Thailand Sunday night where charges are expected to be filed. He arrived in Los Angeles, attired in slacks, shirt, tie, no handcuffs, no ankle bracelets — just another fashionable traveler in the business section of the Thai jetliner. He was taken from the air terminal to a jail cell in Los Angeles, awaiting return to Boulder, the murder scene.

We know not how, or even IF, he was involved in JonBenet's death. All we have to go on is what he said to media when he was picked up in Thailand, where he looked like a lost pup. The blank look in his eyes, the lack of any emotion, his dress — this was the picture of a lost man.

What we witnessed nonstop over the weekend were television reports that contained nothing. Just worthless babbling by talking heads that couldn't agree on anything. Of course there was nothing on which to agree. But they jumped on this thing like a greyhound in pursuit of the finish line.

There could have been much less fanfare over this weekend arrest, especially by a media that 10 years ago pretty much had us all believing that JonBenet's death was not by an intruder but by someone within the Ramsey household. They may, again, be barking up the wrong tree, but only time will sort all of that out.

An aunt of JonBenet Ramsey cautioned on television Sunday that we should not be rushing to judgment. And she is right. We have little, very little — in fact, nothing — to go on at this point in time. John Mark Karr's ex-wife said he couldn't have been in Boulder the night JonBenet Ramsey was murdered, as he claims, because he was with her and their family in Alabama. The Ramsey child's body was discovered on Dec. 26, 1996.

Here's our simple test for Mr. Karr:

When they take him from Los Angeles to Boulder, put him behind the wheel of the vehicle he will be transported in after arriving at the airport, and have him drive to the Ramsey home. If he can't find it then he probably was never in it.

Sometimes it's the simple things that draw the truth.

—Tom Dreiling

FROM THE MAILBAG:

Good words about the county fair

To the Editor,
Many, many thanks to the members of the Norton County Fair committee and everyone else who worked hard to make this year's fair so much fun.

We have been coming back during Fair Week for many years and it is truly one of the highlights of our summer. My children and I look forward to it every year and have never been disappointed.

There must be many dedicated and generous people who work to acquire and operate the rides, set up games and schedule workers, order prizes, organize the concessions, and do countless other tasks.

We thank you for every bit of that incredible amount of work and we're already looking forward to next year. I also want to compliment Norton on its nice, sparkling swimming pool, which is another place we enjoy when home during the summer.

On a final note, as long as I'm on the subject of greatness — Joyce, thanks for all your work on the Class of '76 Reunion. It is much appreciated!

Sue (Yeager) Gunther
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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

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

Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor

Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

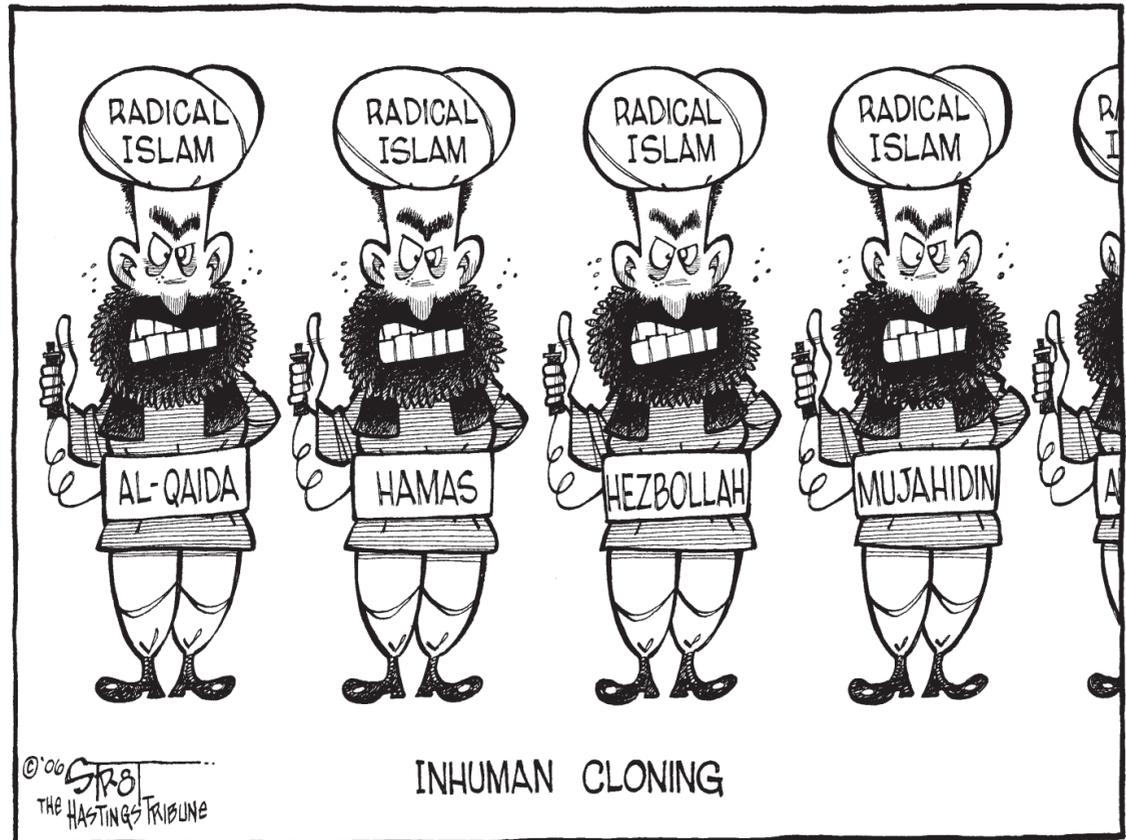
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Snakes just don't rank on my list of likes

One movie I won't be seeing any time soon is, "Snakes On A Plane". I have to cover my eyes and ears or leave the room when the previews come on television. It creeps me out. It's not like people need another reason not to fly. There's enough paranoia about terrorists without adding a creature that represents a phobia most people have.

Admittedly, I don't like snakes. But, except for rattlesnakes, I have an attitude of "you leave me alone; I'll leave you alone". Snakes eat a lot of rodents and other snakes, so they have a place in nature. But, I do not want snakes, on the loose, in a place I can't get out of. Like a plane.

Of course, it doesn't help when, during those televised promos, and I have my eyes and ears shut, that Jim has to make appropriate hissing sounds and pinch me with his fingers. That's just not right.

I have friends who recently moved from the city to the country. They embrace the rural life — to a certain degree. However, they draw the line at snakes in the house. And, in the past week they have found three of the slithering reptiles inside. One was a pencil-size baby; the next of modest proportions; but the last one was perhaps the mother of them all.

Granted, they were all bull snakes. But a four-foot, angry bull snake can be in-

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



timidating to anyone. A bull snake's defense mechanism is to try to act like a rattlesnake. And, to a couple who aren't yet sure how to tell the difference, it's been pretty scary. I tried to tell my friend that a rattlesnake's head has a triangular shape and a bull snake's head and body are about the same.

"Well, who's going to get close enough to look?" was her reply. Good point. If you have a snake in the house. All you can think of is to get out of the house. I tried to point out the positive side. "At least, you won't have any mice." Not too convincing. But, they are taking a pro-active approach. They got a big dog and are giving the house's foundation a close inspection and closing every crack they find.

The baby is doing fine. Little Annie is going to be three weeks old this week. And, I have to admit, I call Jennifer, or instant message her, every day. If you're a grandparent, you know how hard it is not

to be able to see them. They grow so fast and change so quickly. We won't see her again until Thanksgiving. She will be four months old and we'll have to get reacquainted all over again. I'm going to ask Jennifer to show her our pictures every day, so she'll recognize us. Hey, it could work.

-ob-

Schools, all over the country, are in full swing by now. Most kids were ready to go back. Mostly because they missed seeing their friends every day. Parents were ready, too. Perhaps, for the same reason. They missed seeing their friends every day.

-ob-

I've been writing this while switching back and forth between watching President's Bush's press conference. Evidently, the journalists don't understand plain English. No matter how many different ways they tried to ask the question, the president's answer remained the same. "America is not going to cut and run. If we (U.S.) leave Iraq before the job is done, terrorism will follow us home."

I don't know about you, but I don't want to worry about roadside bombs on my way to work. We have to support our troops, our government and our president.

Terrorists are like playground bullies. You have to stand up to them.

Election day wasn't a busy day at polls

Hey Norton County: Did you vote? Gleaning information from the *Salina Journal* I would say the answer is NO!

An Aug. 4 feature giving statistics from 31 counties in Northwest Kansas puts voter turnout at 18.2 percent in Norton County That is fourth from the bottom for the area.

Don't feel too bad, your neighbors to the south in Graham came in at 13.1, the worst in the area and in the top 10 for the state.

And the average for the state was 18 percent so Norton County is slightly above average.

These statistics do not show advance voting so the county may have done a little better. Saline County, for example, says with advance voting their 14.4 percent would improve to a whopping 16.7.

Smith County had a voter rate of 39 percent. That is in the top ten for Kansas and second in Northwest Kansas. A hotly contested sheriff's race contributed to the turnout. Gove County had a turnout of 54.7 percent. I wonder if they are conscientious or if they had "issues". Decatur County also did well at 36.8.

McPherson County had a little over a quarter of their registered voters turn out. The county clerk, Susan Meng, said about 25 percent of the voters in the county are not affiliated with a political party. "I wonder if, at primary time, some of them just don't want to mess with affiliating with a party."

Those who are registered as Democrats tend not to vote in primaries because there

Back Home Nancy Hagman



is only one candidate.

Understandable. Another point made in the *Journal* article is that voter rolls are often inflated. County clerks used to have more discretion in removing voters from rolls.

Many people just don't think primaries are important. Ask Connie Morris how important primaries are!

Sadly for Morris (but in my opinion, happily for the rest of us) we do not really know if the majority of people agree with her or her opponent because a majority of people do not vote. Even in years when we have general elections and are voting for president, a majority of voters do not vote.

Saline County claims about 55 percent of registered voters will turn out for the November Election. But when you consider that not everyone who could vote registers, it is evident we are taking our democracy and responsibilities as citizens for granted.

The Norton County Clerk's Office furnished me with the following statistics: There are 3,717 registered voters in the county: 17 percent are Democrats, 62 per-

cent Republicans, and 21 percent unaffiliated. I would venture to guess that a very large percent of persons over 18 are registered in Norton County. Good for you!

But turnout in Norton County was dismal for the elections last spring and for this primary.

As mentioned above, there are perhaps justifiable reasons for this. Another big reason might be that citizens in Norton County are content with how things are going. Again, good for you!

But there is a danger here. In Smith County, where I live, a group (with roots in the Hindu religion) has come in and purchased land to build a retreat. It has caused quite the uproar.

There are people here, wrapping themselves in the flag and a blanket of Christianity, who would like to run them out on a rail. This offends my sense of what America and Christianity are. Not to mention being outside the realm of simple human decency.

However, the larger issue (that once this "retreat" is in place and filled with people who will register to vote and VOTE) is worrisome.

Because even in Smith County with a big sheriff controversy, only 39 percent of voters bothered to vote. When you have a small population like Smith County or Norton County, how easy it would be for a group that is organized and determined to do so, to just take over.

So here's the deal, Citizens! Voting is not just a right, it is a responsibility. It doesn't matter what the issue or the candidates are. Get registered! VOTE!

Don't forget Friday is 'Thumbs Up' day