

Moran, Obama, Clinton and Norton Post Office

A couple of thoughts as we continue the countdown to Christmas Day.

• Jerry Moran. We see where our First District representative has begun his 11th annual Listening Tour. Fine. But...

Congressman Moran ought to curtail his tour and be with his family this Christmas season. We doubt anyone in the huge Big First would deny him that. After all that's what Christmas is all about.

We know he tries very hard to get around the district to feel the pulse of those he represents in Washington. There is plenty of time to continue the tour, but now wouldn't be one of those times.

When someone seeks and wins election to the halls of Congress, they know the importance of personal contact with the folks back home. And Jerry does it probably as well, or better, than anyone else on Capitol Hill.

Merry Christmas to the Moran family. Tie the congressman to his favorite recliner and don't release him until the holidays are over. He's not just ours, but most importantly he is yours.

• Obama, Clinton, Bush. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois is looking and sounding like a presidential candidate for 2008. He's the buzz word all over the country.

Young, handsome, smart, quick on his feet, Sen. Obama is probably giving Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton a few more gray hairs to deal with. After all, she's supposed to be the Democrats' shoe-in for the presidential nomination in 2008, but people are talking about Obama, not Clinton.

Despite the war chest containing millions upon millions of dollars, Sen. Clinton has nothing locked up. She was expected to throw herself into the race a few months into 2007, but with Sen. Obama stealing the spotlight literally, she is moving up dramatically her presidential announcement to early January.

Mrs. Clinton is in an awkward situation. Hubby Bill was president for two terms and many voters see him standing right behind her in the oval office making the decisions. And there are other things in his terms that didn't set well with a very not-forgiving Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public.

Have you ever given thought to this: President Bush (the elder) handed the keys to the White House to President Bill Clinton, who turned the keys to the White House over to President Bush (the younger) who, if everything works out, will turn the White House keys over to President Clinton (the lady).

Now, how strange is that?

• We noticed in the Norton City Council meeting story in Tuesday's *Telegram*, where Mayor David Corns told the council that Rep. Jerry Moran would like to rename the Norton Post Office, and wondered if there would be any opposition. Until we know what name Rep. Moran has in mind would there be any reason to expect opposition. Then again there might not be anyone opposed even when the name is known.

Ever since there's been a Norton and a post office it's carried the name Norton Post Office. It'll be strange calling it something else. But then we don't know, as Paul Harvey would say, "the rest of the story."

— Tom Dreiling

Thumbs Up to . . .

√Norton First United Methodist Church, for again providing the community with the 'Living Nativity.'

√Cedar Ridge 4-H Club, for the tray of goodies! (from the staff at *The Norton Telegram*)

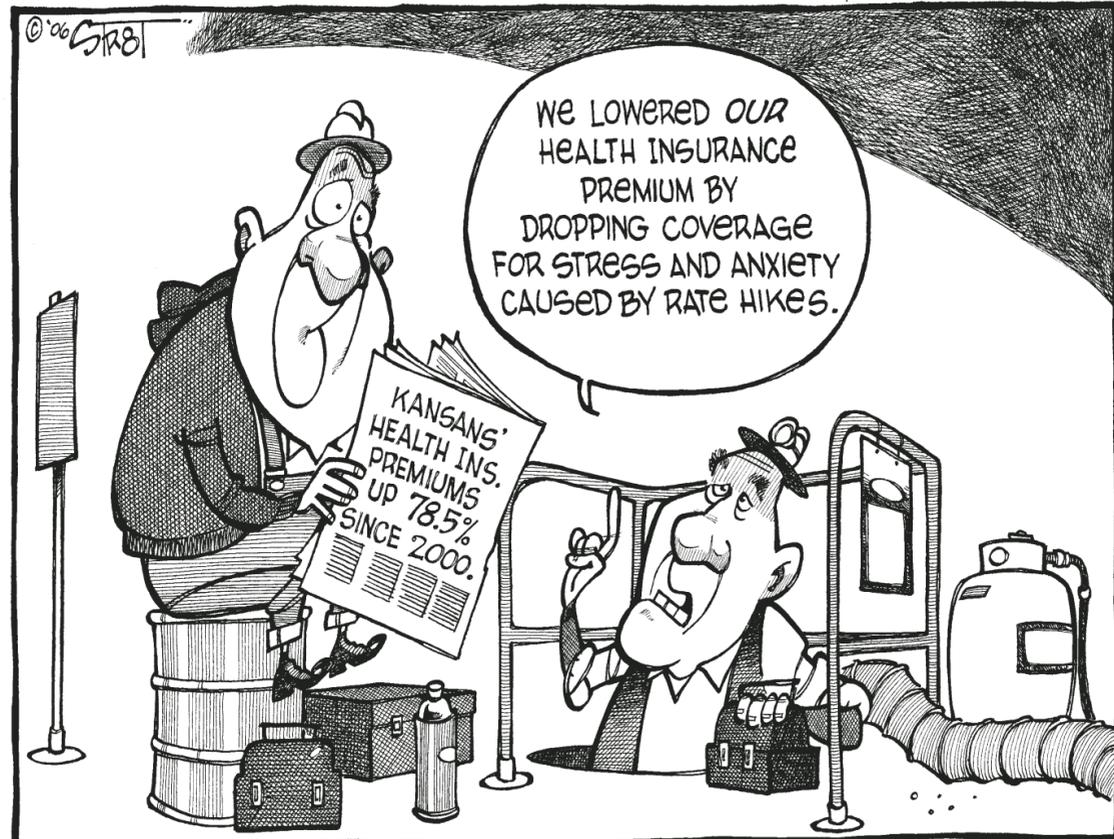
√Blue Jay wrestlers, nice job at the Clay Center Invitational. (e-mail)

√Don Kaus and his employees, for decorating and painting Santa's sleigh and making sure young and old can take rides on Thursdays. (hand delivered)

√Lacey Ninemire, on your selection as a Washington, D.C. intern. (e-mail)

√Lady basketball Blue Jays, on your 3rd place showing at the Topside Tipoff Tournament at Goodland. (e-mail)

√Ruth Brown, for thinking of the children and wanting them to have a Merry Christmas! (hand delivered)



31 years ago today, my life changed

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



December 15, 1975. St. Joseph Hospital, Denver, Colo. 2:40 a.m. The month, the day, the year, the time and the place my wife, Jean, lost her 9-month long battle with leukemia. When doctors in Denver diagnosed her condition on April 15, 1975, they told me she would probably not see the end of the year. They were right.

My first call after her death was made at 7:30 that morning to her parents, who then informed her two sisters. The challenge awaiting me was telling the children at home in Goodland. I arrived at home around noon, and was met at the door by Grandma Sally, Jean's mother. She said she hadn't said anything to the kids.

Bear in mind the youngest of the children was only 3 and the next youngest was only 5. Their sister, however, was in high school and it would be her who would feel the greatest impact. Grandma managed to keep Denise at home from school that day without tipping her hand as to why. Denise took the news as expected. The two little guys — Todd, 3 and Lance, 5 — started crying, too. Knowing they were far too young to understand what I was telling them about their mother, I asked why they were crying. They simply and honestly replied, "Because Denise is."

Today those 3 kids are married and have their own children. Todd is 34, Lance is 36 and Denise is 47. How proud their mother, who was just 37 at her passing, would have been to have lived to see them now.

Several evenings after her death, I was standing on the front porch just scanning the neighborhood. A fresh deposit of snow earlier in the day twinkled under

headlights of passing cars. And as I looked up to a clearing sky, I noticed an unusually bright star. I opened the front door and told the two boys I wanted them to see something. Out they came, not knowing what I wanted to share. I pointed skyward at the brightest star in the sky. I told them that was their mother's star and when they see it they would know she was looking down on them. Many evenings to follow would find the two youngsters on the porch looking for "mama's star."

The early morning of Jean's passing was a mixed experience. She had slipped into a coma earlier in the evening, and I knew time was not on her side. Later in the evening, she began singing — music was her course of study in college. I thought it might be disturbing other patients on the 5th floor of St. Joseph Hospital, but the nurses said "that's OK, Tom. Just let her sing." Around 10:30 p.m., the room became silent. Her breathing became very pronounced. Deep. Nothing I or the nurses would say caused any reaction. She was slipping away.

I don't know how long I stood at the window of her room overlooking Denver, decked out in its finest for the Christmas season. Somewhere around midnight, I pulled the recliner over to her bed. I sat there holding her hand, much as I did on our wedding day. I talked to her, I

squeezed her hand, but there was nothing to indicate she heard or felt. I fell asleep around 1:30 a.m. An hour later, I suddenly woke up. The breathing she labored so hard to do wasn't forthcoming. I summoned a nurse. She and another nurse checked Jean over. One of them looked at me and said, simply and sincerely, "Tom, I'm so sorry. I am really sorry."

By 8 a.m. I was on the road, heading home to do one of the toughest things for a parent to do: tell the children that their mother was no longer with them. As I drove, the radio was playing the familiar songs of Christmas. I reflected on our life together, the family we were raising, and what we saw as our future. An illness, leukemia in this case, took control. An illness for which there is no cure. An illness that knows no age, no season, no gender. A thief in the night. And as I continued my journey that morning on I-70, I switched on my windshield wipers to clear off a mist. But I was only fooling myself, it wasn't the wipers that were needed, it was a handkerchief. What now lies ahead? 3 kids. How do I handle that? One not in school, barely out of diapers. One in kindergarten. The oldest will help provide stability. If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't change a thing. They are all doing very well with their own families. The challenge for me was tough, but achievable.

Tonight, late, I will venture outside, look toward the sky to see if "mama's star" is still there. I'm sure it will be, on this, the 31st anniversary of her death.

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Have a good evening and a good weekend. And remember to answer the call of your church bell.

Doctor legislation awaits signature

Capitol Hill Report Rep. Jerry Moran

The House and Senate completed their work early Saturday morning to wrap up the 109th Congress. I have returned home to start my eleventh annual Big First Listening Tour.

I am pleased that the House and Senate passed legislation I introduced to reauthorize the J-1 visa waiver program for two years. The J-1 visa waiver program allows foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to work in areas that have a shortage of physicians. This legislation is now before the president and awaits his signature.

The J-1 visa waiver program, which expired on June 1, 2006, is important to making sure Kansans have access to health care.

Several provisions of a rural health care bill I introduced were included in legislation approved by Congress. Medicare's payments to doctors help ensure health care is available to many Kansans. This legislation stopped cuts to physician's Medicare pay rates to keep reimbursements at current levels. Without this action, doctors would have faced a 5.1 percent reduction, which would affect their ability for Medicare beneficiaries to access physicians.

In addition, this legislation stabilized reimbursement rates for labs and pathology services in rural areas, making sure

that Medicare patients living in rural areas have access to routine lab tests and analysis.

Congress also acted to extend several tax relief provisions set to expire. Importantly, these include deductions for college tuition and for teacher classroom expenses.

I sent a letter to United States Trade Representative Susan Schwab stating that approval of a free trade agreement between the United States and the Republic of Korea depends on the meaningful resumption of beef trade. My letter was sent as USTR commenced its fifth round of negotiations with the Koreans in an attempt to reach an agreement between our two countries.

Prior to the recent round of trade talks, Korea rejected two shipments of U.S. beef even though the beef met international health standards. One of the shipments, which originated from a Kansas packing plant, was rejected because the nine-ton shipment of beef contained a single bone

fragment measuring ten millimeters by six millimeters.

This treatment of U.S. beef products is unacceptable and is nothing more than non-tariff based protectionism. Korea must cease its protectionist policies against U.S. beef products and allow beef trade to resume in a transparent manner before any trade agreement can move forward.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office last week including Randall and Diane Hrabec of Plainville and Earl and Loyce Schamberger of Morland.

LETTER

Writer apparently does not understand the facts

To the Editor,
With reference to a recent letter in *The Telegram*, anyone that believes we are in Iraq for the benefit of big corporations and commercial interests, and not to protect our country from a vicious enemy, is either misguided or ignorant of the facts. Probably, both.

R.W. Yeager
Norton

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