

You want change? Do something about it!

We often wonder what good it does for members of the U.S. Senate and House to travel to Iraq to "get a first-hand look." When they do, it generally results in nothing more than more hot air, with contradictions flying all over the place.

And we also wonder if their presence isn't more of a bother than benefit to the men and women fighting the war.

We are sure if the people wearing the military uniform of this great nation were able to speak without fear of punishment, the senators and congressmen/women would get an ear full. Among things they most certainly would hear would be, "What are you doing over here, looking over our shoulders? Go back to Washington and at least try to do something other than criticize our presence or try making things sound better than they are!"

It's supposed to sound comforting when a member of Congress goes before the cameras and tells us, as he or she puts it, "the truth of the matter." Catch words, don't be fooled by them. The truth of the matter is the lack of truth.

The troops on the ground take their orders from the brass, who take their orders from the commander-in-chief. The role of the senators and congressmen/women is to make sure they sensibly debate the issue in their quest to either shell out more money for the cause or withhold the greenbacks as a means of forcing a withdrawal.

There is so much to do on Capitol Hill, but so little being done. The focus, sadly, is on something that's going to happen in November 2008 — a year plus away. Truth be known (there's that word again), this Congress will go down as one of most unproductive in the history of this country.

They'll fight and bully one another these next 13 months while we sit on the sidelines with blinders and earplugs in place. We aren't helping the cause one bit.

Polls tells us what the country is thinking. We dispute many of the results. When was the last time a pollster called you for your take on the war in Iraq. Or on health care for everything that breathes. Or immigration reform (whatever happened to that issue?). Or, or, or...

Maybe we each need to send the following message (e-mail, regular mail, fax, telephone, whatever): "Dear Member of Congress, Go back to work, now! No more days off! No more vacations! Use us, your taxpayers, as examples of an honest day's work! Keep in mind that you work for us, we don't work for you! And we can pull the plug just like that!"

Then remind them if they don't heed the message there won't be any more messages for them to heed. And the plug we'll pull will be available in November '08.

—Tom Dreiling

We're not the stupid ones

If you watch many weekend news programs, I'm sure you have heard the phrase, "this is a hard story for the public to understand." The media seems to forget it is their responsibility to interpret (accurately), the happenings and transmit the information. Their job basically is to make the issues understandable, well, actually, it is the politician's responsibility, but when that fails, then it is the media's job.

We are the very people who have made these national newscasters well known and considered experts in their field. So if we, the public, are so intellectually challenged, and cannot understand the topic, what does it mean when we have chosen to watch these particular newscasters?

The phrase is not only used by the news media, but politicians use it as well. Why do these groups delight in using the phrase? Because it is a method of intimidation and control and possibly because it indicates a certain distinction of them and us.

It seems to me that what these individuals regard as "difficult to understand" may simply be our way of saying, "so what, big

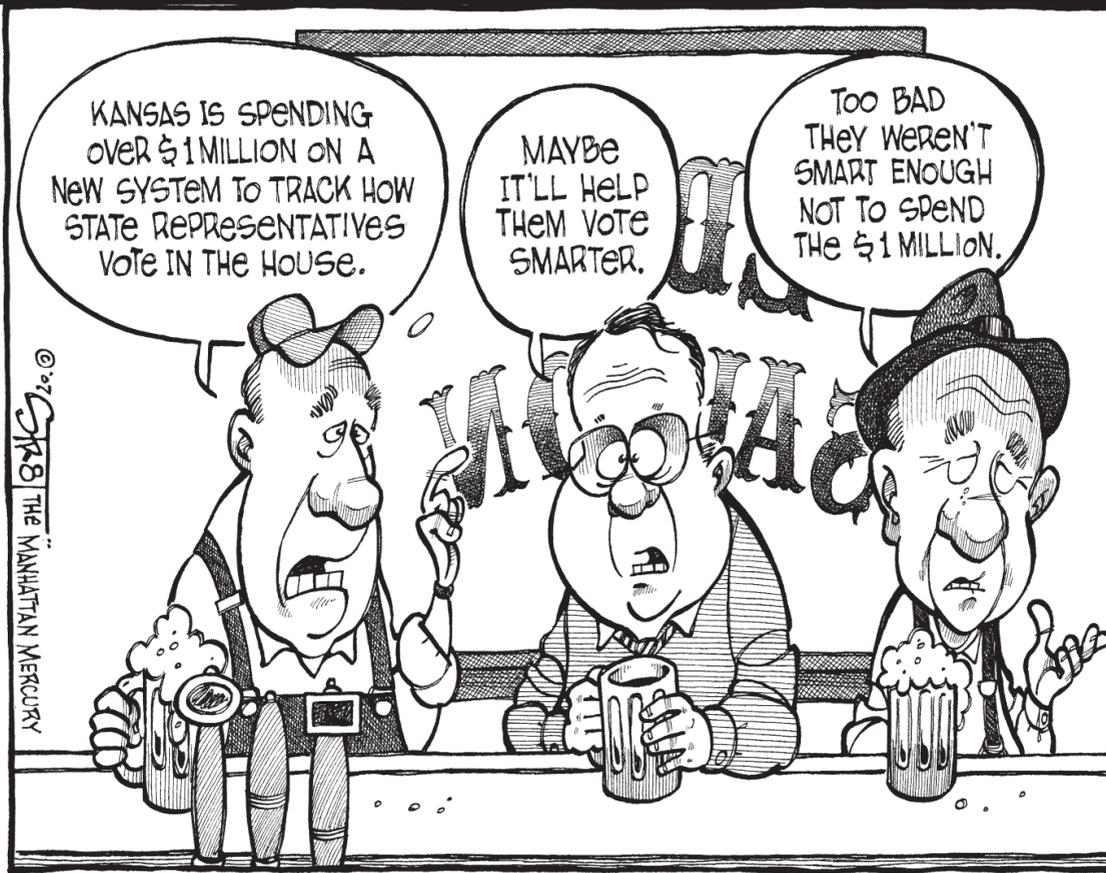
Phase II

Mary Kay
Woodyard



deal," or "give me a break." Maybe we really don't care about some of these things, or perhaps it isn't that we don't care, but on the list of concerning issues, the so mentioned ones rank very near the bottom. We only have enough time and energy for certain things and some things regardless of our ire will be impossible to change and we must use our energies on those issues where we can make a difference.

Whether the phrase is used as an apology for the newscaster who cannot interpret the message or whether it is meant to divide and conquer, neither is acceptable. Present the news, let us be the ones to critique its effect on us and above all don't resort to tactics unprofessional in any circles.



Truck traffic bodes well for local economy

I wonder if Wednesday is truck day on the highway. I've never seen so many trucks on 383, 83 and 24 as I did en route to a meeting in Colby. Almost like a parade. And the delay, due to construction on 383, allowed the trucks to form long, impressive lines.

When you see something like that you know our economic gauges are working. And that's good news!

Some people like to watch trains, I like to watch those big 18 wheelers. I am always in awe at how the drivers pilot those things.

It's nothing short of an art in itself.

-td-

Have you ever wondered when you're in heaven if you get stuck wearing the clothes you were buried in for eternity?

-td-

I have never seen anybody bowl a 300. Until this past Sunday, that is. I was a nervous wreck by the time he attained that elusive number for most bowlers. I was watching a bowling showdown on television and this guy kept striking and striking and striking. I was up and down in my recliner yelling and yelling at each strike! I even asked the bowling God to guide his release down the alley. Wow! As he prepared to deliver what could turnout to be something I've never seen, I was on my knees, fingers crossed. He let go, down it sailed and down went the pins for a 300! And this wasn't a rerun, people, this was live.

My Air Force son Lance, a dedicated and effective bowler, came close to that magical number several times. On one

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



occasion he needed just one more strike. He said you just can't describe the feeling, the anxiety, the pressure because you want that so badly. He said the bowling alley went silent (he bowls in Spokane, Wash.), as he stepped up, looked down the alley, and put 'er down. But it just wasn't to be. He left a couple standing.

Maybe one of these days he'll seal the deal. I know he won't ever give up that quest. If he can't get it done, maybe a few years down the road his son Caleb (age 5) will. This little guy is a regular Saturday morning league bowler and has come up with some 80s and 90s. He does it like he sees his dad do it. Amazing. At 5 I didn't even know what a bowling ball was.

-td-

Well, folks, the truth is starting to emerge. If you watched the televised debate among the Democratic candidates for the presidency Wednesday night on MSNBC-TV, you know what I am talking about. If not I will clue you in.

None of the frontrunners are going to bring the troops home anytime soon. Supposedly, when the voters handed over control of the United States Senate and the

House of Representative to the Democrats in the 2006 election, the reason was their bold talk of bringing the troops home from Iraq! They made it sound like they were going to do that now. Many of us believed them.

We got fooled.

The crafty moderator of Wednesday night's debate, Tim Russert, asked each one how long U.S. troops would be in that country under their presidency. Would you believe they said 2013? That's another six years!

Where is the promised hurry to bring them back now? Quite frankly, the only person on the debate stage I felt like I could trust Wednesday night was Sen. Joe Biden. He levels with the folks, he tells them how it is, not how they want to hear how it is. I think when it comes to honesty, he's the frontrunner.

Sen. Barack Obama was weak, he sounded like he was Sen. Clinton's brother and beating the drum for her candidacy, and former Sen. John Edwards was a disappointment. Sen. Clinton stood her ground, for whatever that's worth.

So, when will we be bringing our troops home? Not anytime soon. Regardless of who is in the White House.

-td-

Have you ever wondered what disease cured ham actually had?

td

Have a good evening. And this weekend a trip to the church of your choice just might cure a lot of things. Then, when you get home and if ham is your thing, have at it.

Here's how old timers predict weather

Insight

John Schlageck

For the first time last week a touch of fall filled the early morning air.

With the coming of fall and approach of winter, it's fun to recall some of the time-tested weather sayings. Many of the following weather signs were collected while talking to farmers and ranchers across the state. It seems there is very little people would rather talk about than the weather.

So let's talk weather.

• During the winter season, strong northerly winds indicate snow and sometimes a blizzard within 24 hours. Southerly winds are a sign of dry, warmer weather.

• When cattle stand in a line with their backs toward the northwest, you can figure on a heavy, driving snow.

• Dense fog at dawn is a sign of clearing skies by mid morning.

• The absence of birds around water denotes an approaching storm.

• White, fluffy, small clouds are a sign of fair weather ahead.

• Odors become easier to detect just before rain. High pressure usually traps odors like a lid due to air density, while

lowering pressure releases odors.

• When you see lightning in the north, rain is likely within 24 hours.

• When distant sounds appear louder, rain is usually on the way.

• Rising smoke is a fair-weather sign. When you see smoke going downward or showing very little rise, rain is likely.

• Birds perch more before a storm because the low barometric pressure makes it more difficult for them to fly. When you see hawks circling high in the sky, this is a fair weather sign.

• When frogs begin to croak, look out for rain.

• Hens and other barnyard fowl pick at themselves — oiling their feathers — just before a rain.

• Lots of dead skunks on the road mean plenty of moisture is on the way.

• Another good sign of approaching wet weather is the aggravation of corns, bun-

ions or arthritis pains.

These signs are surprisingly accurate because they are based on generations of farmers, ranchers and other people who have observed cyclical changes in the weather.

Today, meteorologists watch weather patterns via satellites. Much of what these satellites detect while orbiting the earth hundreds of miles overhead, we can see by watching our television sets.

There is plenty to be said for the folk wisdom of our ancestors.

They watched and charted weather patterns for generations rather than just a few hours or days.

It's fun to hear their conclusions handed down from one generation to the next, and anyway, what would we have to talk about if not for the weather?

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwest Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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