

A weekend trip turned into a life adventure

Enlisting in the Air Force was not on my agenda. Period. I was studying at Fort Hays Kansas State College (now university) after high school. As luck would have it, a classmate moved to Aurora, Colo., with his family about a year after our graduation from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian High School in 1953. He invited me to come to Denver for a visit. So I did.

While we were fooling around in downtown Denver, classmate Herb (Schmidt, who now lives in the Overland Park area) spotted a sign on a store front that read, "Air Force Recruiter." We went in, and to make a long story very short, the next morning we were taking physicals, other testing, and then readying for a train ride to San Antonio, Texas, and basic training at Lackland Air Force Base.

The night before all of this, I called my mother and told her what happened. She was stunned, to say the least. After all, when I left for Denver via the City of St. Louis passenger train, I told her I'd see her in a week or two or so. Now I had to tell her that time would be greatly extended. But she got over it.

This trip took me from Hays in Kansas, to Aurora and Denver in Colorado, to San Antonio in Texas, to Keesler, in Mississippi, to Travis in California and then to Misawa, in Japan.

I sure got around.

And how did I end up in Misawa, Japan?

If I hear the word "military," you got your answer.

I was stationed at the Misawa Air Base, north of Tokyo along the Pacific Coast in a mountainous region.

When I was there for a two-year assignment in the late 1950s. Misawa itself was a town of probably 20,000. However, if you chased out all the girls from other parts of the country who flocked to Misawa to make sure none of the military guys there would get homesick, the town would probably have had a handful of people.

Today, Misawa, a modern city with its share of casinos, hotels and the like, has a population of nearly 43,000. I wonder if some of those gals of my time are still on the same mission now, only catering to senior militarists who stayed behind for reasons I would never reveal.

I ended up in Misawa after finishing my studies at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss., where, as a member of the Air Force Security Service, I was taught the art of putting words tos and ----s. Yep, dots and dashes, Morse Code. It was a challenging study, for me anyway. I think the course was probably seven or eight months.

After successfully completing the course, I was sent to Travis Air Force Base in San Francisco to await orders to Misawa, Japan. I was one of the lucky guys who got to fly over with stops in Hawaii and Midway Island (I believe), from there to Tokyo, and then north to Misawa. The unlucky guys had to travel by ship. It took days and days and the stories they tell were precious — to us who flew, not those who were being tossed around by the waves (waves you notice in lower case).

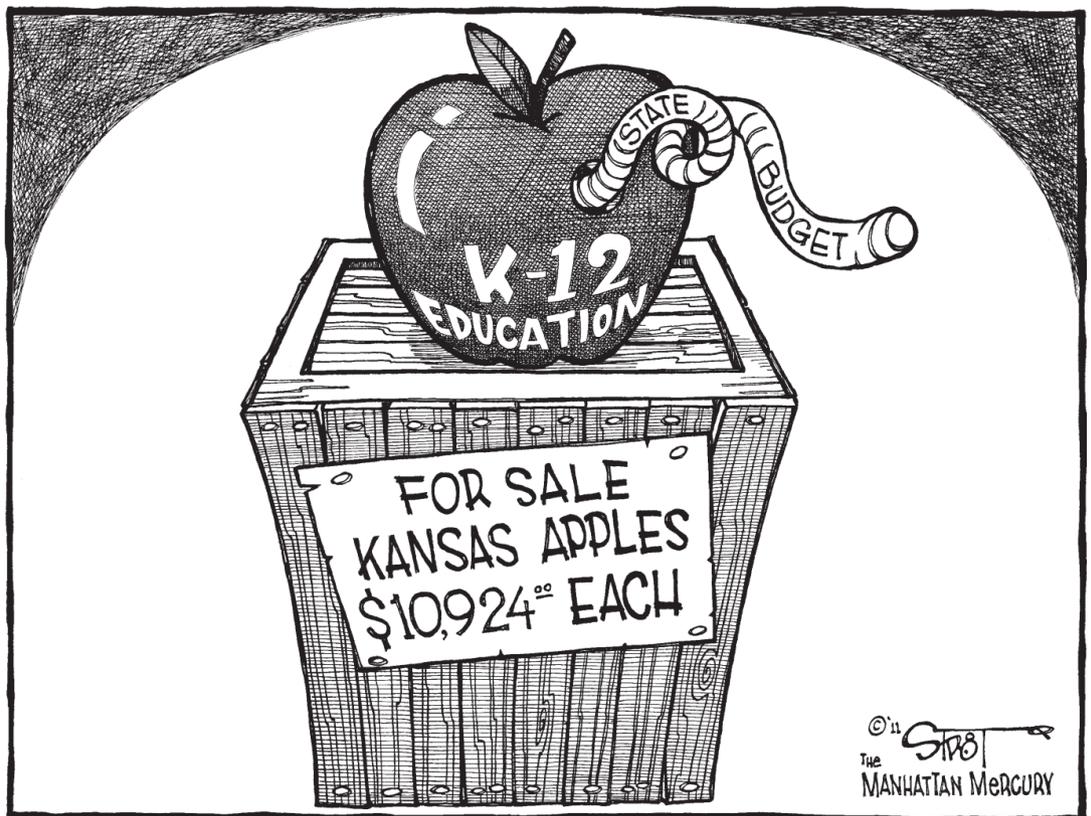
The trip from Tokyo to Misawa was on a coal-fired train that honestly was the dirtiest thing I'd ever traveled in. The soot was absolutely so thick you had trouble seeing the person sitting next to you. And the trip took more hours than I could count. Eventually, we arrived in Misawa looking forward to seeing the beauty of the land in which we were to live for two years.

What a disappointment that was! I suppose you could call it "beauty" if the eye of the beholder was damaged. There wasn't a fancy bus waiting to take us from the depot to the base. The transportation consisted of military trucks with some kind of covering over the bed to shield passengers from the weather. They had wooden benches to sit on.

I can't go into detail as to what specifically I and the other 70 or 80 airmen were assigned to do behind the gates of that guarded compound on base. While our course of study at Keesler was an indicator of what our mission would be, what we actually did was enough to blow your socks off. The responsibilities placed on our shoulders were nothing short of mind boggling. (Shhh, I know a secret....)

More next time....

Stop
Look
Listen
Tom Dreiling



Common sense is not so common

Our friend Mark quotes his mother-in-law, "Of all the senses; common sense is the least common!"

Nothing illustrates this like the reaction to the shootings January 8 in Arizona. First there was the blame game. It seems paranoid schizophrenics aren't the only ones who hear voices. Pundits on all sides immediately channeled thoughts that are in retrospect a little nutty!

Then some members of Congress began coming up with ideas to prevent future such tragedies. One of the first floated was to make it illegal to have a firearm within 1000 feet of elected officials. Would that include high profile appointed ones also? National office holders only or state and local? The mayor? The School Board?

One pundit was upset about the proposal because the Constitution affords all people equal protection under the law. Is it fair for some to get special protection?

Myself, I applied the common sense test. 1000 feet is not far if you are in an open space, but what if you are in town? You might not even realize the protected party was having an event in the building across the alley. What if a motorcade passed by your house and you were cleaning your legal deer rifle in your garage with the door open and someone saw?

We can hope such a law would not be enforced so nonsensically but there are cases where kids have been sent home from school for having aspirin in a "drug free environment." Common sense is the least common.

We all know some elected officials hunt. Will they have to surrender their guns when taking the oath of office? Dick Cheney hunted. I imagine both the Bushes have owned guns. Sarah Palin hunts though the last time I checked she isn't holding any office so maybe we ought to lay off her. In fact, I'm begging you: LEAVE the woman alone. Then maybe we can forget she ever existed and never have to hear about her again. Have you ever noticed if we don't talk about someone they become irrelevant?

This Too
Shall Pass
Nancy
Hagman



Common sense.

I'm definitely not a card-carrying member of the NRA no matter what it says on our garage door (left over from the previous owner). I really don't like guns. Ask my son-in-law. He fusses that his wife (my daughter) has an absolute phobia of guns. I'm sorry that is the case. I truly don't think I ever verbally expressed anti-gun rhetoric to the girls.

We did have a bonding moment over Michael Moore's "Bowling for Columbine". Though I'm sure we also discussed his grandstanding and that most of his points were in no way backed up by any scientific research. Cute as it started out, it went on way too long. By the time he got to Charlton Heston everyone was ready to leave the theater. Michael Moore is tedious at best but he does prove the point if you don't talk about someone they go away. Seriously when was the last time you heard anyone talk about Michael Moore? It makes me sorry I brought him up!

Personally I know two families who lost children because of handgun accidents and more than five people who were harmed by accidental discharge of shotguns. I probably expressed sorrow to my kids about these accidents and they doubtless took it as disapproval.

I do not understand those who believe they need guns for personal protection. I know it's only my experience but I've never known anyone who saved his or her life or the life of a loved one by having a loaded gun in the house. I really can't recall of ever hearing of such a case anywhere but accidents with guns are routine events. Common sense, people!!!

All that being said: there are guns in our house! The hubby might want to go pheasant hunting. Not that he has for the

20 or 30 years but he might!

He has a rifle. Not for deer we use our cars for that. But sadly on occasion he has to put down a cow. Sometimes we need to dispatch a skunk or a packrat or coyotes during calving season.

Here's the problem with efficiently eradicating pesky varmints, be they two or four legged. If you store the ammo separately from the guns, which we are advised to do. A lot of things have to happen before you can defend yourself. So say in the middle of the night you realize the dog is being attacked by a coyote right outside the patio door. By the time you find the ammo, load the gun, step outside in your pajamas, realize said coyote is coming right at you because the dog has his other exit route blocked and he is more afraid of the dog (rightfully so) than your gun (which you are about to fire wildly into who knows where)---

Well you get the idea!!! Too many things can go wrong. Though that particular case ended with the desired result: the coyote fled!

The NRAslogan says "I'll give you my gun when you pry it from my cold dead hands." I'm with the NRA on this. If you don't want a gun don't have one. But let's not pass any more gun laws.

Except for automatic weapons or clips that hold 15 bullets or whatever the guy in Tucson had. Think of it as applying the Law of Natural Selection. If you have not hit your target in the first six shots it may be time to let nature take its course.

On CNN Sunday, a week after the Tucson shootings, a discussion was held on Mental Health Services in this country; a topic as fraught with controversy as gun legislation. I was going to say fraught with landmines but I wouldn't want to be accused of evoking violent images, advocating war or engaging in hate speech. People without common sense can't handle it!

Advocates on all sides are doing the best they can to make sense of a nonsensical situation. As they go forward here's hoping they find that most elusive of all senses: COMMON SENSE.

Holding an office promotes democracy

Representation is a cornerstone of democracy. In fact, by its very definition, democracy is the "rule of the majority". Each of us is needed for electing our officials through our vote, but we must have people willing to step forward to become candidates. The deadline for filing for offices in the City of Norton is rapidly approaching, Tuesday, January 25th. The offices open are Mayor and council positions from each of the three wards. Hopefully the current officials will file again as will many others.

We have many qualified individuals, but many small business owners are reluctant to become involved. "Why?" one asks. In a community the size of ours all patrons are needed to survive. There isn't room for pettiness. Small business owners fear losing customers

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



because of threatened boycotts. Even if it is not a large number the very loss of a few can signal demise in a struggling economy. The idea of democracy is not to put anyone out of business but to work in harmony to build businesses and likewise communities.

If, as a supposedly Christian community, a group desires to put a neighbor out of business only because they don't do what we want them to we have forgotten

the whole purpose of democracy.

Years ago when a small business owner told me why they wouldn't run, I was shocked. The very notion someone could not differentiate between running a government and sustaining a business was unthinkable. But in many ways we have seen some of this warped thinking in national politics as well. There are those who would have the country fail based solely on who is in office. If a measure was appropriate in one politically dominated Congress it is appropriate in the next...politics aside.

Let's get behind our political process. Let's effectively vote, not boycott and work to make Norton the strong community it should and can be.

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