

North to Alaska :part two

In my last column, I shared a little about our trip to Alaska, taken to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. I'd like to reflect on another aspect of that trip "introducing" you to some of the people we met while we traveled.

Life is Good
Rita Speer



Came years ago we came home from a trip and a friend reflected that we talked more about the people we met than the things we saw and did. When I wrote the previous column, I deliberately focused on things we saw and did.

One morning at breakfast we shared a table with a boy, perhaps eight or nine, and his mom. They were traveling with dad and his brother, and I had been aware of them in the large waiting room as we waited to board the ship. The mom said she and Ben were eating in the dining room to give the boys a "break." Ben was obviously very bright (I saw him the next day in the coffee shop playing chess) and displayed excellent manners. His mom said she and her husband had a goal of taking the boys to all 50 states.

Our cabin steward and head waiter were Indonesian. Both were kind, gentle and communicated concern about our comfort and well-being. Our waiter met us one noon in a different setting and seemed pleased to remember our names. One morning Bob greeted our cabin steward by simply saying, "Peace." Hendrik replied by saying, "Peace and Harmony."

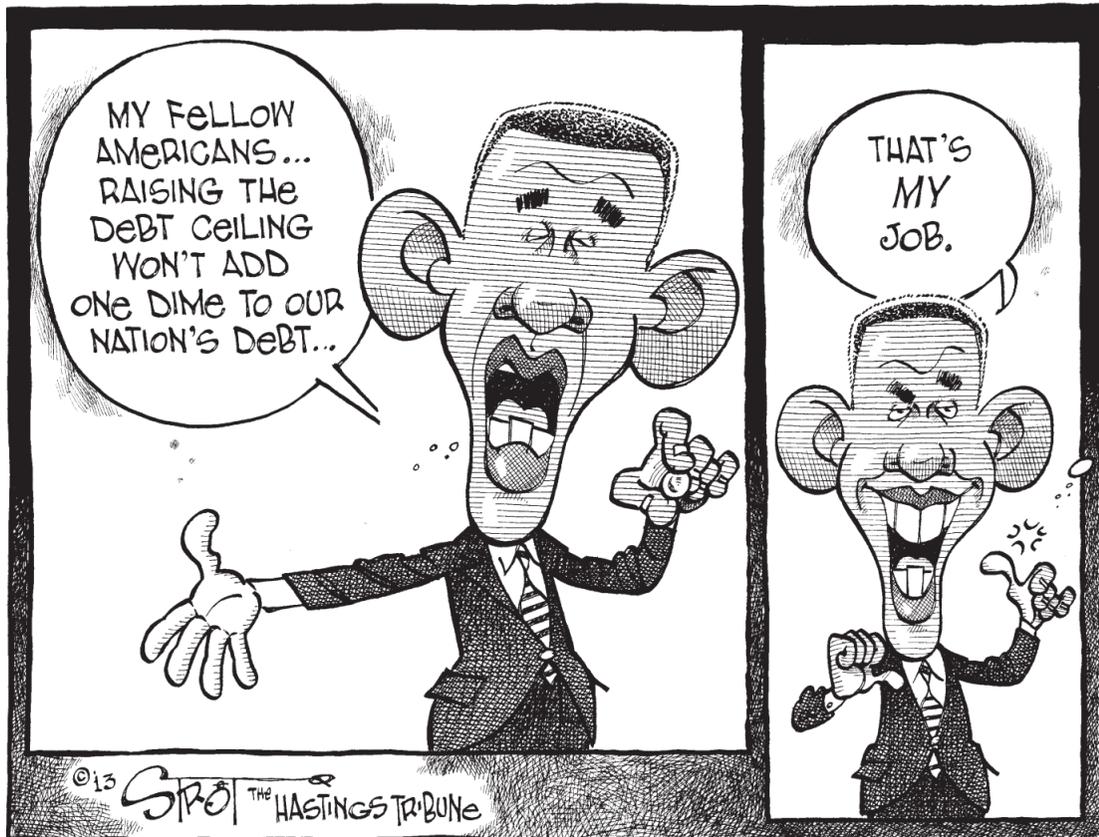
On the train from Seattle, we shared a meal with a man from Sydney, Australia, who was traveling alone in the U.S. because his wife preferred to stay home with the grandchildren. He had been in America several times previously. Our tablemate was a young Canadian woman who managed a tea shop and who had blue hair and lots of tattoos.

While I was pawing through my purse, looking for the cruise ship ID card so we could return to the ship from Victoria, B. C., the customs official engaged Bob in conversation. She asked him if we had ever considered becoming Canadian citizens, telling us how wonderful Canada is.

Coming from Sacramento, we ate breakfast with another Australian. This woman had been to Arizona, had taken an Alaskan cruise (the week of the record setting heat), and was now headed to Chicago and then New York. She planned to fly to Great Britain to visit family. I asked how long she would be gone, and she replied 2 1/2 months. I was amazed that one could be content to be away from home so long (By then I was anxious to be back in Norton).

One evening we had dinner with a man who lived in Denver and his son. He volunteered at Northwestern University in Chicago and at Scripps Institute in La Jolla. The son would soon be leaving for his freshman year at Northwestern. His father and I talked about the Human Genome project and related topics.

These are just a few of the people we encountered during the time we were gone. Obviously not all were as impressive as the ones I have written about. A few made negative impressions. But generally the people we encountered were charming, kind and caring, just what I expected.



Good news all the way around

Sunday was our church's fellowship dinner. When I arrived with my covered dish contribution, the first thing someone asked me was, "That's not lemon pie, is it?"

Guess it serves me right for divulging too much information last week about my recent kitchen catastrophe and the pitiful pie that resulted. Jim ate a slice (a small one) and said it wasn't too bad. Later, though, he begged off on a second piece and said as kindly as he could, "Dear, you have made better pies."

The only ones who enjoyed that pie were the chickens. And we know chickens will eat anything.

-ob-

Drum roll please. Our nephew, Brian, is home. At least to his parents home.

How amazing is that? To be out of the hospital in less than two months and doing all that he is doing after being hurt so badly is amazing.

I don't use the word "miracle" be-

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



cause that implies something supernatural. His rescue, recovery and recuperation were all pieces of the medical puzzle that came together for the best results possible.

Every person involved from the friends and neighbors who were first on the scene to the first responders and ambulance crew, the fire and rescue crew, flight crew, surgeons, nurses they all played an integral part. Everyone worked hard to help.

Then, of course, there's Brian. Talk about working hard. Every time we visited we could see huge progress. He worked so hard to "come back."

They would say they didn't do anything, but Brian's parents, Bill and Betty, perhaps worked harder than anyone. They were there for him. Every day. Urging him to do his best. Whispering comforting words. Whispering encouraging words.

I remember seeing the first flicker of a smile on Brian's face about 24 hours after the accident when Betty leaned over and said, "Brian, it's Mom."

Brian's recovery will be on-going, but he is out taking long walks by himself slowly regaining his strength.

The first thing he asked his mother to make for him was spaghetti. It says a lot if a man's appetite is good.

-ob-

Ran across this quote from Abigail VanBuren, Remember "Dear Abby?" A lot of truth in it.

"If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money."

Fix obstructions to world trade

U.S. agriculture depends on world trade for its continued viability. More than \$141 billion in agricultural goods were exported last year.

Still U.S. port facilities and waterway infrastructures are decades behind international competitors due to lack of funding.

"Three things continue to obstruct U.S. agricultural exports that could be delivered to all regions of the world, especially the rapidly growing Asian markets," says Steve Baccus, an Ottawa County grain farmer who serves as Kansas Farm Bureau president. "This includes too many rules, regulations and a lack of investment in export facilities by Washington; the lack of cooperation between countries pertaining to international trade and regulations and trade requirements imposed by individual countries on one another."

During the last two years Baccus has served as chair of the American Farm Bureau Federation's trade advisory committee. Throughout this time, this committee has, traveled to countries, port facilities and waterways around the world to identify the many impediments to U.S. exports. During these travels they've also visited with food producers and seen crops first hand.

Illustrating his point about the need to upgrade and improve U.S. port infrastructures, Baccus used the example of Singapore, the largest port in the world. This facility was built by its government and one private businessman.

"In Singapore the cranes load and unload ships with one individual sitting in a computer booth two miles away," Baccus said. "No union labor, no union guy crawling up and operating each (individual) crane each shift, each day."

Insight
John Schlageck



Yet, in this port facility half way around the world, a loaded ship leaves the port of Singapore every 12 minutes, Baccus said. A loaded ship leaves a U.S. port every one and one-half hours.

The same businessman who helped build the Singapore port is looking at building a similar port in Tijuana, Mexico.

If this investor has the resources to build the port in Singapore, he probably has the resources to build in Tijuana, Baccus said. If he has the resources to build these ports, he has the resources to build the infrastructure to move the goods from Tijuana to the U.S. border.

"What happens to West Coast ports if he builds a port like Singapore in Tijuana?" Baccus asks. "He'll cause major problems all along the West Coast."

And if this potential nightmare with Mexico isn't enough, Baccus witnessed another real challenge facing the United States and its agricultural exports.

During a recent trip to the Pacific Northwest, the Ottawa County grain farmer visited with several California fruit and vegetables growers. These food producers don't have enough labor to harvest their valuable crops.

"We talked to a producer who grows string beans and garlic," Baccus said. "He didn't have enough labor to harvest both fields so he had to choose between the crops. This grower decided to mow down his string beans so he would have the labor to harvest his

garlic. These beans cost him between \$2,000-3,000 an acre to plant."

Another California grower was forced to leave 20 acres of vegetables in the field to rot, Baccus said. This crop could have yielded him nearly \$8 million.

In California and other parts of this country agricultural producers are shifting to different crops that can be harvested by machines because they cannot find available labor.

"Farmers can't find the labor from south of our border to pick crops that must be harvested by hand," Baccus said. "Americans won't do this work. Farmers in California have tried. They work for an hour or two and quit."

There are legal immigrants who are accustomed to working for \$2.50 a day in Mexico who want to come to the United States, he continued. They'll work for \$10, \$12 or \$15 an hour and send their money back to Mexico to support their families.

They're not interested in staying here, Baccus said. Most don't want to be U.S. citizens. They're willing to pay taxes. They want to be legal immigrants. They're willing to do whatever it takes to work here.

"It's a real shame we cannot design an immigration program to fix this situation," Baccus said. "If we don't get this job done and our U.S. Congress fails, we're going to see all the fruit and vegetables grown south of the border."

If that happens what could happen to food safety and the safeguards ensured by our highly regulated food industry?

How much control will this country have with the food produced in Mexico?
Zero?



Thumbs up to the Norton High School volleyball girls for beating Hoxie to win the Oberlin Invitational tournament. Called in.

Thumbs up to Charlotte Kindall for hosting the Family Fall Festival and to the Mordecai family for sharing their musical notes with us at the Church of God on Sunday evening. Called in.

It's amazing how so few with so little can do so much for so many. Norton County is really privileged to have Norton CARES here if and when you need them. Keep on keeping Norton CARES and keep those annual potato bars hot. Emailed in.

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