

VIEWPOINTS

Aging rapidly, if not gracefully

By Parker Knox

When, recently at church, the flowers on the altar were announced as being in honor of my newborn twin grandsons, one of my fellow choir members turned around, shook my hand and said, "You don't look old enough to be a grandfather!"

What I thought – but did not say aloud – at that moment was something on the order of "My dear, you have no idea!"

I think perhaps she was simply being gracious rather than truthful, but it reminded me of a very sad TV commercial that has been airing this winter. It shows elderly people looking into mirrors and seeing, not the much younger versions of themselves that they so badly want to see, but rather the wrinkled, graying, sagging, aging people that they have become.

I had one of those milestone birthdays last month. Now that I have turned 75, everyone in the Class of 1956 – those of us who remain, that is – have passed 75. How can it be! Where have the years gone!

On the day of my birthday, one of the thoughts that raced through my mind – besides how poorly the Broncos had played the previous night – was that I had finally reached the age at which my father passed away. In another five years I will be at the age where people get their pictures in the Sunday newspaper in advance of their milestone birthdays – 80th, 85th, and beyond. Now there's a goal!

In six years I will be at the age where we lost my mother, and my oldest grandchild will graduate from high school. I so badly want to stick around for such an event, and other graduations, weddings, ballgames, plays, Christmases, trips.

Reaching 75 is nothing to be regretted, however. It is a privilege that is denied to so many people. Seven of my high school classmates are included in those that didn't reach this age. Three other classmates lost their spouses, just in the past year alone. My rhetorical question thus becomes not "How did I get this old!" but rather "Why am I lucky enough to have reached this age!"

I can remember sitting in the east-side row of desks in the Onida High study hall, thinking how old those seniors like Punt Youngberg and Jim Sutton and Doug Hyde and Maynard Klingbeil were! And suddenly I was over there.

I well recall moving into a Huron College dorm for the first time and thinking how grown up the senior guys in campus leadership roles like Jim Williams and Chuck Kaufman and Gary Wren and Dick Tschetter seemed to be. And before I realized it, I was walking out of the gym with mortarboard on my head and degree in hand.

When I first went to Wessington Springs as a teacher, I remember, the high school kids seemed not much younger than I was – and they weren't! And it didn't take all that long for the years to pass and allow me to attend one of their 50-year class reunions two summers ago.

I can't ever forget the day our first child was born – after I first put my elementary music kids through their Christmas concert rehearsal – and now at his last birthday he became a

40-year-old. What????!!!

From the day my twin daughters celebrated their birthday with cupcakes at the close of the first day of school in Kay Huxford's kindergarten room at Lincoln Elementary until the day one of those little girls presented us with twins of her own within the past month 31 years passed. It seems more like five or six.

I have been old enough to get a senior-citizen discount at certain establishments for 20 years. Social Security for 10. And just last week I took a step that, it appears, classifies me visibly for all the world to see as one of "those old people." I joined a chorus of senior citizens as one of their singers and accompanists, and once weekly we visit a nursing home to perform music for people our own age. Who? Me?

It has been said that one doesn't necessarily stop having fun when he gets old, but rather he gets old when he stops having fun. There's a lot of truth to that, so I plunge ahead into the great unknown, still doing some of the fun things I like to do, soaking in

each chance I get to spend with the grandkids, all of whom are close by, and hoping there are a lot of years left but realizing in my quiet moments that nothing is guaranteed, including the amount of time one is allowed.

As I rocked Lincoln and Nolan, still not even a week old, the other day at the hospital, it occurred to me that, in order to see them graduate from high school, I will have to survive to at least 93. Therefore, Enid Hyde and Jeannette Beemer and Jack Noble and others, I will welcome your secrets to longevity.

And from this senior citizen to the rest of you out there, live it up. The number of grains of sand remaining to flow down through the hourglass are getting fewer in number each day.

Editor's note: Parker Knox, former Vermillion resident, became a mainstay in the community by sharing his musical talents with his church, USD and the community theatre, and his writing talents with the Plain Talk. Congratulations, Parker, on the birth of your twin grandsons.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

When it comes to regulations regarding texting and driving, which do you prefer?

Vermillion's current ordinance.	38
The proposed statewide ban.	20
No regulations regarding texting/driving.	7
Undecided.	1
Total Votes	66

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the

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Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.



Not all candidates misuse Legislature for their campaigns

By Bob Mercer
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Four members of the Legislature are seeking statewide office this year. With three weeks left in the 2014 legislative session, a good question has come up: Are any of them using it as a soapbox?

We can look at the statistics first. Two of the five candidates for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate serve in the Legislature. They are Rep. Stace Nelson of Fulton and Sen. Larry Nelson of Union Center.

Nelson introduced 13 commemorations, which honor people for accomplishments and are routinely entered into the official journal. He introduced seven concurrent resolutions,

which are debated, often longer than most bills.

Essentially, concurrent resolutions are statements of belief. They don't carry any power of law. Five of Nelson's passed in both the House and the Senate.

He sponsored five pieces of legislation. Four died in committees. The fifth failed on the House floor.

Nelson also sponsored one joint resolution, attempting to put a constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot. That was killed after its committee hearing.

Rhoden introduced two commemorations and two pieces of legislation. One bill died in committee. The Senate killed the other on Friday but it will be reconsidered Monday.

There is one candidate in the Legislature for governor. Rep. Susan Wismer of Britton seeks the Democratic nomination to challenge Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Wismer introduced two pieces of legislation. One died after its committee hearing. The other was killed in the House.

There is one announced candidate for secretary of state. She is Sen. Shantel Krebs, R-Renner.

Krebs introduced four pieces of legislation. Two of her bills are for the State Code Commission that oversees the work of aligning and publishing South Dakota's laws.

Both passed in the Senate. Krebs' two other bills also passed in the Senate. The House now holds their fates.

We can also look at these candidates' behavior during committee meetings and floor debates.

Krebs chairs the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. During the Senate debates, she seldom speaks unless she has a true point to make.

The same is true for Rhoden, who chairs the Senate State Affairs Committee. Generally he too keeps his comments to a minimum during floor debates.

The former House Republican leader is likewise known for calling a spade a spade when the circumstances necessitate.

Wismer gradually has become bolder in her comments during debates. With Democrats out-gunned in the Legislature, she has

become a good spokesperson on her party's spending priorities.

She also uses twitter – the instant messaging system – to make points to those people who follow her on Twitter. She sends her tweets during speeches, committee hearings and debates.

Their expressions and comments show Nelson has worn out many of the other 69 members in the House with his daily speech making and the time spent on his resolutions.

Last week he went to the bathroom and refused to come out to vote on a gun bill.

On Thursday Nelson was told "Sit down" by the House speaker as he persisted in a rule challenge. He had an outdated version of the rule.

You asked. That's the way it is.

Paula Damon: A conversation with myself

"Guess what I heard on the news."

"They called your lotto numbers? No, seriously. Don't keep me in suspense. You know how that bugs the heck out of me."

"Okay, okay. The South Dakota Legislature on Thursday, Feb. 20, discussed House Bill 1241, introduced by three state senators and 14 representatives."

"What's House Bill 1241?"

"The bill would make it illegal to dismember or decapitate living unborn children and to provide penalties for those breaking the law, if the measure goes into effect."

"Huh? What are you telling me?"

"Yeah, it's for real. I confirmed it on the South Dakota Legislature Web site. The bill goes on to state that no licensed physician may knowingly dismember a living unborn child with the intent of

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felony."

"You're not making this stuff up, are you?"

"No, and there's more. House Bill 1241 does not apply to any medical treatment for a life-threatening condition provided to the mother by a physician licensed

endangering the life or health of the child. A violation of this section is a Class 2 felony. And, if a violation of this section involves the separation of the skull from the spine, then the penalty is a Class B

felony."

"So, you're saying this is something that's been going on?"

"I think so. Ever since Roe vs. Wade was passed in 1973, this type of abortion has been legal. And since then, well over 56 million babies have been aborted in the U.S. alone."

to practice medicine in South Dakota, which results in the accidental or unintentional injury or death of the unborn child."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that if dismemberment occurs when the doctor is trying to save the mother's life, it isn't a felony. The measure defines 'dismemberment' as the use of an instrument or procedure for the purpose of disconnecting any bones at their joints, completely severing any bones or removing any organs or limbs, including the spinal cord, arms, legs and internal organs."

"So, you're saying this is something that's been going on?"

"I think so. Ever since Roe vs. Wade was passed in 1973, this type of abortion has been legal. And since then, well over 56 million babies have been aborted in the U.S. alone."

"I had no idea."

"Well, it's true. Look it up yourself. That's not all. On Feb. 19, a South Dakota legislative panel approved a measure that would ban any abortion being sought because of the gender of the fetus."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"It's called gender selection – it means you can abort the baby if he's a boy and you wanted a girl."

"Isn't that what they do in China?"

"Well, sort of. This measure would make it a felony for a doctor to perform an abortion being sought by a woman because the fetus is not the gender she wants. A doctor also would have to ask a woman seeking an abortion whether she was doing so because of the gender of the fetus."

"Did it pass?"

"Not yet. The House Judiciary Committee voted 9-3 to send the

measure to the full House for further debate."

"What's there to debate?"

"Well, opponents to the measure say it violates a woman's constitutional right to an abortion."

"Hmm."

"A South Dakota legislative panel is also looking at a measure that would prohibit abortions sought because a fetus has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. The bill would make it a misdemeanor for a doctor to perform or attempt an abortion if a woman is seeking to end a pregnancy because the fetus has or may have Down syndrome, a genetic disorder."

"I had no idea."

Sources: www.legis.sd.gov, www.KSFY.com.