

Snow Donuts

Here are some musings about winter in no particular order of importance while sitting in front of a faux fireplace north of the Highway 20 Tundra Line.



Over the Next Hill
Chuck Humeston

Chuck Humeston, of Iowa Falls, is a former columnist for Iowa Outdoors magazine.

I hoped the last snow wouldn't deposit enough of a white cover requiring me to blow snow. I vowed, "I will not move snow before Dec. 1!" I took that vow suddenly because the carburetor primer bulb which had split in half and fallen off last March, and which I could have repaired while it was 81 degrees in July, was still sitting unrepaired, and, for some reason, I must have thought it made more sense to wait and repair it now while it felt like 81 degrees below freezing.

I've found in the past few years possibly God is now mad at God's Country where I grew up due the cold and snow they've been getting. Karma or climate change? You decide.

There are certain clues you can read to determine if a person is a native Iowan. It's not closing roads. That's only done in Nebraska or Minnesota. How else can they get anyone to stay overnight?

For one thing, Iowans totally ignore Ed Wilson and other weather prognosticators when they tell us what to put in our, "Winter Survival Kits," in our cars. Most of us know the essential is a shovel. And I really need these guys to tell me it's cold outside, so wear a coat? My mother did a great job of that, and she was never on the evening news.

It reminds me of a guy I knew who moved here from California and spent one winter here. Friends came here from there to help him move back in January. Anyway, it was a gazillion below zero, and one of them went outside to make a Facebook video. He was shivering, saying, "It's twenty below zero and I'm out here in a T-shirt." Do you see anything wrong with

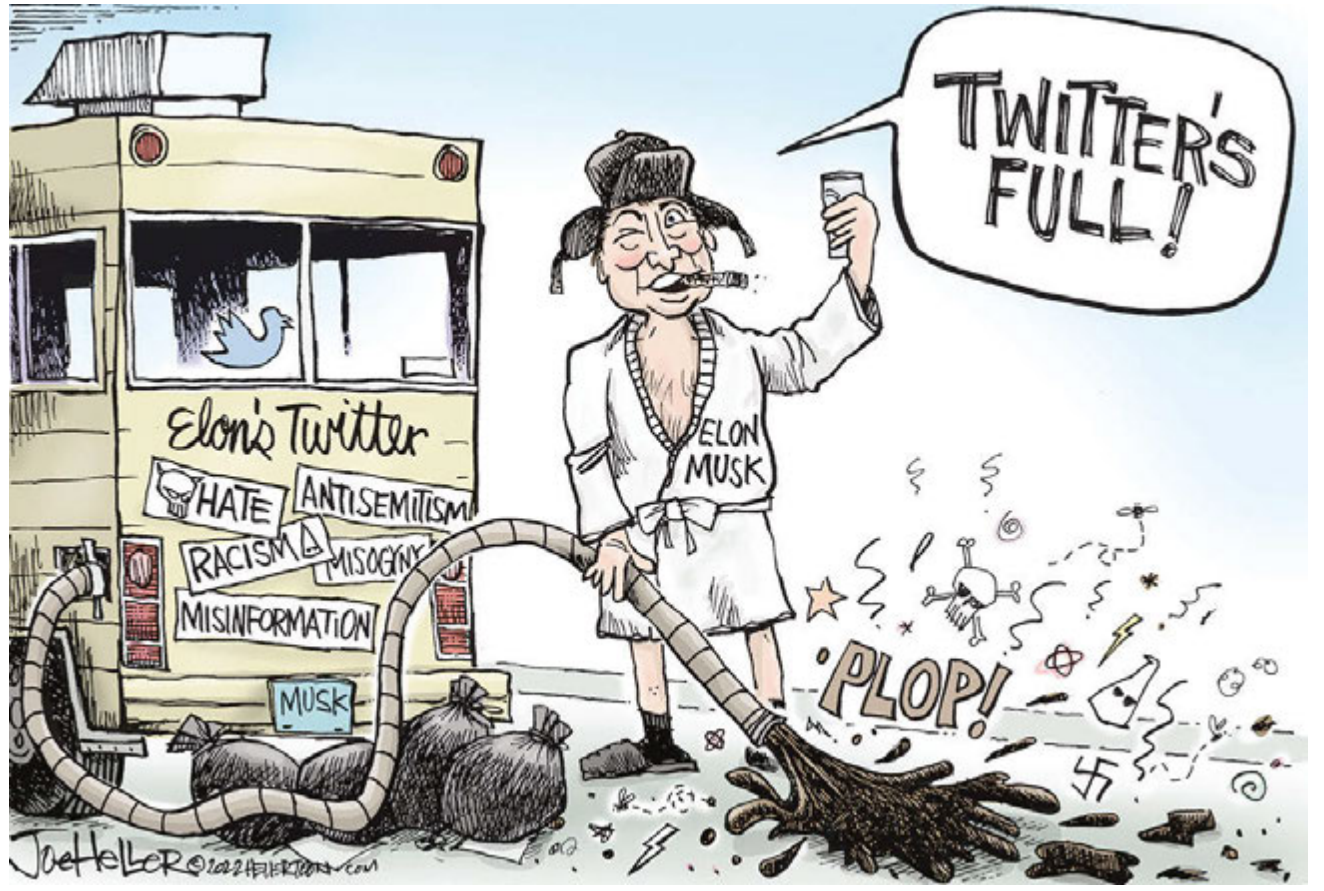
that picture? I guess he needed Ed Wilson.

One thing unexpectedly popped into my head. When I grew up there was always space in the garage for a second set of bias ply tires, called the "snow tires." They could make a good-looking car really ugly for about three months, but they did the job.

Most of them had tread so deep you could never wear them out in a lifetime. If you were really serious, you had "studded snow tires," which had small metal rivets.

Every November you made an appointment at the "Filling Station," to have your snow tires mounted. Woe unto you if you waited too long. For those of you too young, Casey's, Kum and Go, and Kwik Star not only didn't mount and dismount snow tires, nor chamois your windshield for you after pumping your gas for you, they didn't even exist. I think they came into existence after the plastic Casey's coffee cup.

As kids we resisted snow tires as long as possible in order to compete in the post snow-fall donut events. On a wide stretch of Main Street, we would get up a bit of speed, then spin the steering wheel to put the car into a skid, thus leaving a "donut," shape in the snow. My '69 Beetle didn't win many, but it went anywhere when I finally got the studded snow tires mounted under the rear configured engine. Do not attempt this at home or on the street. In fact, don't even attempt it. Besides, the event disappeared with the advent of steel belted "ASR's or All-Season Radials, or what I call "Another Slick Ride," and front wheel drive. Then again, snow tires did not look good on a front wheel drive car. ■



Rural Iowa should brace for school 'vouchers'

It won't be long before empty parking spaces near the Iowa Capitol will be as hard to find as a compromise between Democrats and Republicans.

The Legislature returns to Des Moines on Jan. 9, more firmly in Republican control than it was on May 24, when this year's session ended.

With their strong showing in the election this month, Republicans can be expected to pick up where they left off six months ago. For people living in rural Iowa, one issue of deep concern on Gov. Kim Reynolds' to-do list is creation of taxpayer-financed vouchers to help parents pay for tuition to private K-12 schools.

During the Legislature's sessions in 2021 and 2022, Reynolds pushed without success for the voucher program, which she prefers to call a scholarship program or a way to provide parents with school choice.

The issue is close to the hearts of many rural Iowans, both Ds and Rs, because of their concerns about the health of their local public school. Rural Iowa is losing population, and the quality of the local schools is a key factor in the ability of communities to attract young families and keep their children close to home after graduation.

People in rural Iowa should fasten their seat belts, because the Legislature's 2023 session could make a swift decision on private school vouchers.

Reynolds has been stymied in the past by her own House Republicans who dug in their heels on the issue. But in the days leading up to the primary election in June, she took the unusual step of announcing her support for Republican challengers running against a handful of incumbent House Republi-



Stray Thoughts
Randy Evans

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cans who oppose vouchers.

The voucher proposal would have real-world consequences for public schools.

Under the plan debated this year, \$55 million in state tax money would be diverted from public K-12 schools and would be channeled into private schools. It is hard to spin this as a plus for public schools.

Parents would receive scholarships of about \$5,500 for each child who enrolls in a private school, instead of a public school. The proposal would cap the number of scholarships at 10,000. But do not be fooled into thinking that is the maximum number of vouchers that would be handed out.

There are about 40,000 students in Iowa's private K-12 schools. No one believes the parents of those kids would not pressure lawmakers to expand a voucher program to make the \$5,500 scholarships available to their children, too.

You can look at what occurred in Ohio to see how a voucher program would expand. In Ohio, that state's voucher program began in 2005 with 3,000 students. It now provides 69,000 students with private-school vouchers that cost taxpayers \$628 million annually.

The governor likes to

The way we were

An excerpt from the Des Moines Register, 2005

The Iowa Civil Rights Act was enacted in 1965, and celebrations this week (2005) marked its 40th anniversary. Several other anniversaries could have been held, too, because 1965 was a very big year as Legislatures go.

Besides passing the Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Legislature established Iowa's system of area community colleges, abolished the death penalty, significantly boosted state support for schools and universities, gave first passage to several constitutional amendments that led to home rule for cities, switched the Legislature from biennial to annual sessions and gave elected state officials four-year terms instead of two. Lawmakers banned billboards on interstate highways and for the first time provided for state income tax to be automatically withheld from paychecks.

That Legislature passed a record 481 bills and met for 145 days, the longest session ever at that time.

The stage for the remarkable session was set by Lyndon Johnson's landslide presidential election in November 1964, which swept Democrats into control of the Legislature for the first time in 30 years. The newly elected lawmakers eagerly followed the lead of Democrat Gov. Harold Hughes, who was then in his second two-year term.

Hughes praised lawmakers for their courage and called it "the most productive session in this century."

So far, it's more productive than any session in this century, too.

talk about giving parents "school choice" for their children. That is a commendable goal.

But not every parent can afford private school tuition, even with a voucher from Iowa taxpayers. In 42 of Iowa's 99 counties, there are no private schools, and the vouchers could not be used for transportation costs.

There is another important factor that affects the true availability of "school choice." Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to accept every student who wants to enroll. Private schools are not required to operate with the same openness and transparency public schools must have.

Private schools can pick and choose which students they admit. That can be based on the prospective student's religion, the child's sexual orientation, their ability to speak English, the presence of intellectual disabilities, or because of behavior problems.

Siphoning \$55 million away from Iowa's public schools to pay for the vouchers will have unavoidable consequences for the students who are left in those classrooms.

Iowans living in rural areas, whether they are red, blue or purple, need to reconcile themselves with what the future holds — unless they can find rural Republican lawmakers willing to take a principled stand. ■

Writing a letter to the editor?

The Times Citizen welcomes signed letters to the editor from our readers. All letters should be typed or legibly written and be 400 words or fewer. The Times Citizen reserves the right to edit all letters for content, punctuation and grammar. Letters should be signed, and include the name, address and phone number of the author. Letter writers may be contacted by the editor for verification of facts and authenticity.

Letters are printed in the Wednesday Times Citizen on this Opinions page, and should arrive at the Times Citizen offices by 12 p.m. on Mondays to ensure they are included in the Wednesday newspaper.

Letters can be delivered in several ways: by email to eloring@iafalls.com; by mail to P.O. Box 640, Iowa Falls, IA, 50126; or in person at 406 Stevens St., Iowa Falls (there is a drop box located to the left of the front door).

The struggle with putting up holiday lights

Putting up a string — or several strings — of holiday lights makes everything look very Christmassy. Driving around Iowa Falls and out in the country, several people have beautiful displays. Some are serene, some are jazzy, and some have every inch of the yard covered in some sort of holiday element. They are all beautiful, and the weather has cooperated for the most part, in getting decorations put out this year.

We hung our color-



Little Pieces
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ful Christmas lights, oh I don't know, about four or five years ago. On Sunday, the Cow Man plugged them in to make sure they all worked. One strand on the back of the house did not, but no one sees that

anyway, he said.

So, I took a stroll around the house to see what they looked like and noticed that the colorful lights on the south side are now clear. The sun must have bleached them.

The ones on the east and west are still fairly colorful, but the south-siders are just plain clear, except for one strand which was replaced maybe two years ago.

And no one measured when it was replaced, so the strand was way too

long to fit. Instead of adjusting the rest of the lights for this replacement, the Cow Man made this huge loop on the front of the chimney that looks like a giant tongue.

And those lights aren't totally bleached yet, but they are starting to fade. So, we have a mixture of regular lights, semi-faded, and clear... some on the same strand depending if they go around a corner or are out of direct sunlight.

Oh, and he didn't get the tall ladder either when

he did his light check, so some of the lights are not fastened properly and droop several inches below the edge of the house. They will be swinging in the wind all winter.

Luckily, we get very few people who drive by at night, otherwise, we'd need to replace them all. I think we talked about doing that during early Covid, but I remember there was a Christmas light shortage when we had the discussion. Either that, or the store we looked in didn't

have any.

Putting lights on the house was the Cow Man's idea in the first place. But I think most people take them down every year.

Not us... we turn them on just for the month of December, then leave them up for the rest of the year to fend for themselves. I guess if we wait another few years, we'll just have all clear lights up and it will look intentional.

Actually, I don't think we're the only ones who do this... or are we? ■