

It's all relative ... A short grown-up to kid is still tall enough to help

Some people call it "vertically challenged."

Others say "short in stature."

Most of the time I find my inability to reach items from floor level frustrating.

Over the past five decades, I've found ways to stretch my 5 feet, 4 inches, either by standing on tiptoes or with the failsafe use of a chair or a step stool. Both of these techniques get a workout at home.

Overcoming my short stature is easy when I'm at home, but not when I go out into the "real" world.

There are countless times where store items are located on the very top shelf with none of the desired items at eye level.

I have asked those employees taller than me to reach the item I need. (If no one is available, I take it as a budget-saving sign that I don't need it.)

On a recent Tuesday evening, my stature was an advantage.

I entered Teal's Grocery just after the supper hour. The aisles were free of customers since I purposely came later to avoid the after-work rush.

I enjoyed filling the three-gallon water jug without interruption and decided to shop the store in a counter-clockwise circle.

I passed the deli and



RUMINATIONS

By Mavis Fodness, Reporter

turned down the first aisle (or last aisle, depending on how you view the store) and noticed a boy looking up at the two-liter pop bottles on the top shelf.

He looked at me then glanced down at the dollar bills he had grasped in his hand.

For a brief moment I saw indecision in his eyes until he spoke, "Could you reach a bottle of root beer for me?"

For a moment I didn't think I heard the young man correctly. Did he really want short-legged me to reach something for him?

Instantly I said I would be happy to reach a bottle for him.

Standing on tiptoes, I had to use both hands to grasp and pull the plastic bottle over the brackets that hold the items on the shelf.

Then I successfully handed the shorter-than-me boy his merchandise and was rewarded with a big smile and a "thank you," as he hurried off and I proceeded down the aisle quite pleased with myself.

I couldn't help feeling like I was 10 feet tall.

Aptly named 'Angel Fund' shows community compassion

Earlier this month, school officials in Rhode Island hired a collections agency to force parents to pony up for unpaid school lunch balances.

The action occurred after district officials tried for two years through written reminders to coax parents to pay what they owed to the school.

The gentle reminders were unsuccessful in reducing the \$95,000 worth of overdue lunch accounts. Already in the first three months of the newschool year, the Rhode Island school's balance is \$45,000 in the red.

Rhode Island has a state policy that prohibits districts from denying students their lunch or offering an alternative (less expensive) option until the lunch account is caught up.

Minnesota joined Rhode Island this year, so all its children are offered the same lunch items, regardless of overdue accounts.

The rationale behind the legislation is that it's not the students' fault the lunch balances are unpaid.

At the same time, overdue accounts can become a drag on a food service budget, so last week Luverne School food service staff took action

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to address the shortage.

Director Ann Rigney, organized a spaghetti supper fundraiser to cover overdue lunch accounts, and she found support from her fellow food service staff and district administration.

The outreach shows no one needs to go hungry in the Luverne district, and it shows there are generous supporters to help make up for the shortfall in the food service budget.

Jim Gilman with the public accounting firm of Conway, Deuth and Schmiesing in Willmar said Luverne is lucky its district can absorb the effects of negative school lunch accounts.

Some districts are not as blessed, and these negative lunch balances are affecting the overall fiscal health of their schools.

Gilman encourages families to fill out paperwork with the district office for the state to cover costs, regardless if they are eligible or not.

Another option (for those who simply forget to pay) is to use the online payment portal through the school website. Families receive email reminders when balances get low, and funds are easily transferred electronically into student accounts.

So far, Luverne has not had to hire a collections agency.

Let's keep it that way.

The spaghetti fundraiser was a great idea and was supported by many organizations donating food items and funds.

Financial gifts were placed in an account labeled "Angel Fund."

The fund will continue to accept meal account donations.



We'll miss the 'disadvantages' of a quiet Christmas holiday

I know the big day we all look forward to this month is Christmas and rightfully so. But for me coming in at a distant second is Saturday, Dec. 22, because that is the day after the first day of winter and —albeit hardly noticeable —daylight hours start to increase.

For me the first day of winter is like the Wednesday or hump day of winter. Shorter days are behind us (for 6 months anyway) and while it's true we have the worst of winter still ahead, spring is just 90 days or so away.

But it is the Christmas season, and the Peterson clan got together this past weekend for our family Christmas. Celebrating Christmas 10 days early was a bit strange, but it did have some advantages — as well as some disadvantages.

Advantage No. 1 was that the Christmas shopping was completed shortly after Thanksgiving this year. While many of you are scurrying around to finish your shopping this week, I'll already be in the return line.

Advantage No. 2 was the kids and grandkids were able to travel to Luverne before the peak Christmas



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

By Rick Peterson, General Manager
Tollefson Publishing

travel days, and they were all able to avoid the traditional bad Christmas travel weather.

Advantage No. 3 was if the wife doesn't like her gift you still have time to get her something to open on Christmas Day.

There are, however, some disadvantages to celebrating Christmas early.

Disadvantage No. 1 is the house will be really quiet on Christmas morning.

Disadvantage No. 2 is there are no grandkids at Grandma and Grandpa's house on Christmas morning.

Disadvantage No. 3 is no grand-

kids to play games with on Christmas Day.

Disadvantage No. 4 is no scuffles between the three grandsons to break up.

Disadvantage No. 5 is no toys to put together, no quick trip to the gas station because we bought the wrong size batteries.

Disadvantage No. 6 is no Nerf gun fights with the grandkids.

As I look at the list of disadvantages, you wouldn't think some of those would fall under the disadvantage list, but those are the ones that make Christmas special, and frankly I know Grandma and Grandpa are going to miss them all.

Permit to carry only applies to handguns ... with exceptions

Question: If a person has a permit to carry in Minnesota, can they transport a loaded rifle or shotgun in a vehicle?

Answer: The permit to carry law applies only to handguns, so the answer is no with some exceptions.

MS 97B.045 - A person may not transport a firearm in a motor vehicle unless the firearm is:

(1) unloaded and in a gun case expressly made to contain a firearm, and the case fully encloses the firearm by being zipped, snapped, buckled, tied or otherwise fastened, and without any portion of the firearm exposed;

(2) unloaded and in the closed trunk of a motor vehicle; or

(3) a **handgun** carried in compliance with sections 624.714 and 624.715

Subd. 3. **Exceptions; hunting and shooting ranges** - a person may transport an **unloaded, uncased firearm**, excluding a pistol, in a motor vehicle while at a shooting range, lawfully hunting on private or public land; or traveling to or from a site the person intends to hunt lawfully that day or has

ASK A TROOPER

hunted lawfully that day, unless:

- (1) within Anoka, Hennepin, or Ramsey County;
- (2) within the boundaries of a home rule charter or statutory city with a population of 2,500 or more;
- (3) on school grounds.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson - Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848. (Or reach him at, Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us)

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