

## Opinion

*Lighting  
the way*



# THE UNION

Official newspaper of  
Geary County, USD 475

Official city newspa-  
per of Junction City,  
Milford, Grandview  
Plaza

USPS 286-520

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- Casey's, 624 S. Washington St.
- BJ's Convenience Store at the US-77/K-57 intersection
- Walmart, east Chestnut Street
- Dollar General, east Chestnut Street
- CVS Pharmacy, east Chestnut Street

#### At these outdoor racks:

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- In front of the All Bout Grinding Convenience Store, 1036 W. 6th St.
- At Sapp Bros. Travel Center off US-77 at 1913 Lacey Drive
- In front of 222 W. 6th St.
- In front of Stacy's Restaurant, 118 W. Flint Hills Blvd., Grandview Plaza

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# Mr. Mayor

A comic strip loosely based a certain mayor in a particular small town in Kansas.



## FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

# The ever-difficult task of finding time to read

**By Lydia Kautz**  
*Associate Editor*

As a working adult, it's hard to find time to read.

This has been a hard truth I have known for my entire adult life. As a student — even in college — I always found time to read, even if only before bed.

As a child, my parents presented pre-bedtime reading as a special treat. I could pick up a book and read at any time during the day — and I often did — but bedtime reading was special.

We had an ancient, ticking egg timer that only went up to an hour which my parents would set for bedtime reading. If I was very lucky, they would wind it all the way up and I would have a full hour to read before sleep.

I continued treasuring my reading time into adulthood.

After graduating from college and starting a life of full-time work, my reading time shrunk exponentially but I continued the ritual instilled in me as a child of reading before bed until August 2019.

I can't recall if I've ever told our readers about this, but when I first returned to the *Junction City Union* as editor I routinely pulled 24 hour days to get the paper out. We printed three

days a week back then and we were critically short-staffed. I had about one 24-hour day a week, usually Mondays, where I scrambled to make sure everything was in the paper that needed to run.

As always, if we missed something then or more recently — I'm sorry. We're doing our best, I promise. We always have.

But I digress.

Anyway, you show me someone who can find an hour to read after they've been awake 24 hours, I'll show you someone who is under the age of 25 and probably an energy drink aficionado.

So for the first time in my life, I stopped reading for fun. I just didn't have the time. If at any point I've judged someone for saying they didn't have time to read, I apologize — I had no idea.

This period of frenetic work-and-nothing-but-work lasted about eight months, until the COVID-19 shutdowns of 2020.

There was still news to cover, but there were suddenly fewer events and photo opportunities. I had less reason to be outside. In fact, I was scared to go out much. I had so many COVID-19 risk factors it wasn't even funny. I ordered my groceries online from Dillons and — if I felt trapped

in my small apartment — I took long drives around Geary County. I actually slept at least five and a half hours a night.

In that respect, COVID-19 may have saved my life.

When I say that, I mean no disrespect to those who died, lost loved ones or suffered through the disease but lived and had their lives diminished for it.

I only mean that if I had kept moving at that breakneck pace, I might have actually broken.

Once I had paid at least some of my sleep debt, I dared pick up a book again.

I think I started with a book by T. Kingfisher — one of her "cozy horror" novels, possibly the *Twisted Ones*.

It was like drinking pure, clean water after a long time of not having access.

The book was a lot of fun — fast-paced and terrifying if you thought about it for more than two seconds, scary without being stupid, gory or gratuitous about it.

I still didn't have much reading time, but I took up audiobooks which I still use today and consider to be the same as any other type of book, provided you get the same utility out of it as you do a hardcopy.

My entire time in journalism, when I have had reading time it has been as treasured as it was when I was in elementary school. Even now when I have taken the slightest step back from newspapers and started working at a library, I take every opportunity to read.

It's funny that I work in a library and still have to to scrimp to squeeze in a few pages here and there.

The stereotype of librarians as having a job where they read all day is false, if you didn't know. I'm lucky to have a job where they let you read if you have downtime on the front desk. A lot of them don't allow that anymore.

These days, in addition to reading before bed I also read during my lunch hours when I can.

In a way, keeping my reading time scarce is good. It's akin to keeping something on hand as a treat, which makes it all the more enjoyable.

All in all, while I understand we can't all find time for books — I've lived through it — if we can make time, we should. In the same way as it's good to make time to exercise and eat healthy, reading — even reading fiction — is good for our minds and if we can find time for it, we should.