

Feb. 18, 2018

## 'calling Dick Tracy!'

"Who's Dick Tracy?"

*Who's Dick Tracy?! Was she kidding?* How could anyone not know Dick Tracy?

Several years ago I wrote about trying to buy a cell phone when the salesperson mentioned that with the right phone, you could make video phone calls.

"Wow!" I had exclaimed. "Just like Dick Tracy!" My smile quickly faded when it dawned on me that there was an entire generation that didn't know Dick Tracy. This was probably 16 years ago. Make that two generations, today.

"Why are you crying, sir?"

The first Dick Tracy comic strip made its debut nearly 90 years ago, so I guess it's understandable why she didn't know who he was. Still, it just seemed un-American, like not knowing that Betsy Ross invented apple pie, or that American hero Louis Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon. I mean, what are they teaching kids, nowadays? Sad.

Two weeks ago I was covering Catholic Schools Week activities when I had a similar epiphany regarding the passing of time and my rocky relationship to it. It dawned on me that when I first started with the *Southwest Kansas Register* 18 years ago, I was the age of many of the parents of the grade school kids.

Last week, suddenly and without warning, I was the age of many of the grandparents. I realized that I was looking at the children of the children I covered 18 years ago! At some point when my back was turned, the years had whizzed by in a blur.

This strange phenomena had caused my beard to turn grey, my face to begin to acquire the look that a piece of paper has when you wad it up and then try to smooth it out again, and my eyebrows to grow unruly, like overused toothbrush bristles.

"Should I go see a doctor?" I wondered. Then I thought, "No. That's stupid." Then I thought, "I could use a burrito," because I was hungry.

The day after this thought invaded my brain, I travelled to St. Dominic School in Garden City where the students were studying the 50-year history of the school (Happy Anniversary, St. Dominic School!), and imagining what life would be like in another 50 years.

The predictions were pretty typical for first graders: schools floating in the sky; robot teachers; and teleportation through worm holes. That last one was kind of amazing! I mean, this was a first grader!

It left me wondering if the kid might have his own show on the Discovery channel someday.

Then I thought, what if, in the mean time, he accidentally transports himself to a world where they don't have the Discovery channel? What then?

I decided that this would be a bummer for the occupants of this interdimensional world, because Discovery often carries quality television—shows about moonshiners, gold-hunters, outdoor survivalists ... guys who wear overalls without shirts—you know, the best in educational TV.

*Wait? What was I talking about? Oh, yeah:*

Do you remember anticipating the future when you were a child? What did you hope for? Flying cars? Taking a vacation on the moon? *Living on the moon? Of course the moon would be colonized by the time we grew up!*

What about having a robot for a best friend? I thought about that one a lot, as I'm sure did other bully fodder like me: "You talkin' to me, Butch? Huh? You talkin' to me? No, I think you're talkin' to my friend Gort, here! Say hello, Gort!" ZZZzzzzztttt! (I'll leave you to imagine what the ZZZzzzzztttt! indicates.)

Maybe some of you who grew up on farms thought about having a farm on Mars some day. Or robot cows (which is udderly crazy when you think about it).

When my mom was a little girl growing up on a farm, her dream for the future was an indoor bathroom! And electricity! My dad probably didn't think much about flying cars as a boy, especially at a time when an airplane flying over would draw everyone outside to see it!

As adults, what do you hope for the future? Chances are, most of you aren't thinking about flying cars. Well, I am. But most *mature* people my age aren't. As you get older, thoughts about the future become less about us and more about the world your children will encounter.

Will there ever be peace on earth? Sure! It will be on a Tuesday afternoon in May, for about 12 minutes. Then someone will step over a border and here we go again. Will there be an end to hunger? We'd have to end greed, first. What about crime? Disease? Will there still be elephants? Will they all be in zoos? Will people be in zoos and the elephants be in charge? That's a distinct possibility.

A great man once said not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Jesus isn't saying we can't have fun thinking about flying cars, or that we shouldn't "envision world peace," as the bumper sticker says. What he's saying is that no matter what is to come (and what is to go), the one constant is God's unconditional love for us, a love that will someday plop us down in his *flying car*—Jesus at the wheel—and take us right through that ol' *worm hole* to a world more wondrous than we could ever begin to predict!