

First Amendment hit by reaction to a 'tweet'

First-Amendment rights are fine, apparently, unless what you say is so controversial no one wants to be associated with it.

At least that's what David Guth, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Kansas, found last week in the wake of the Navy Yard shootings in Washington.

Guth issued a "tweet" on the web service Twitter reacting to the 13 deaths: "Blood is on the hands of the #NRA. Next time, let it be YOUR sons and daughters."

Not much happened until a website called CampusReform.org posted a story on Thursday, but that sparked an angry reaction across the country. Soon, pro-gun members of the Kansas Legislature were called for the professor's job, if not his head.

At KU, his bosses were behind him - way back, it seemed. Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little announced that Professor Guth had been placed on administrative leave pending a review, in order "to prevent disruptions to the learning environment."

Higher ups at the state Board of Regents issued a statement expressing "disgust and offense" at the tweet and backing the chancellor. Ann Brill, dean of the School of Journalism, said in a statement, "Professor Guth's views do not represent our school and we do not advocate violence against any group or individuals. ...

"While the First Amendment allows anyone to express an opinion, that privilege is not absolute and must be balanced with the rights of others. That's vital to civil discourse."

So much for freedom of speech, or academic freedom, for that matter.

Gun-rights groups began calling for the professor to be fired. A National Rifle Association spokesman was quoted as calling the tweet "hate speech."

"It is disgusting and deplorable," he said. "It has no place in our society."

Mr. Guth himself was calmer.

"It got a conversation going," he told the Associated Press. "That's exactly what I wanted to do."

He said he agreed with the university's action in light of e-mailed threats he and others at KU had received.

"It's in the best interest and peace of mind of our students that I remove myself from the situation and let cooler heads prevail," he told the AP. "I know what I meant. Unfortunately, this is a topic that generates more heat than light."

Dave Guth is not the kind of guy who'd want to see anyone shot. His was a comment sent off to the world in haste. He could perhaps have chosen his words more carefully. That's one of the pitfalls of Twitter.

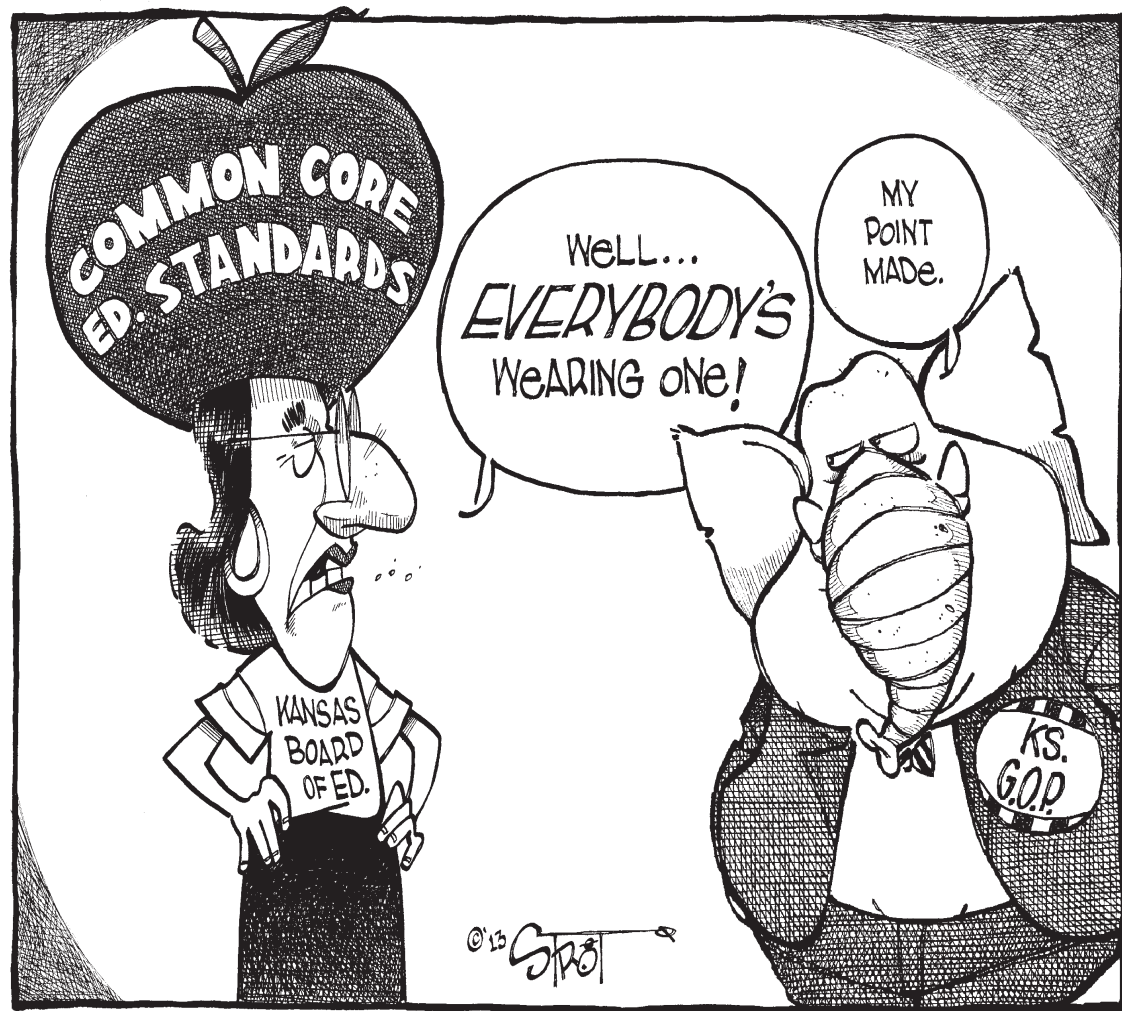
Many might agree with his argument that gun-rights groups would see things differently if some of these nut-case shootings involved someone they knew. It's not a sentiment that this newspaper endorses, by the way, but it is a legitimate argument for one side in the national debate.

The victim here, aside from Dave Guth, is the First Amendment, and the free and open debate the Founders wanted to protect when they wrote that "Congress shall make no law" abridging the right to free speech.

Those who love and protect the First know it can be lonely duty. The rights set out in the First cover everyone, from the man next door to your minister to the teacher at your kid's school, you and us and all the rest, but that includes a lot of people many of us don't like, from ponographers to the Rev. Fred Phelps.

And if we really mean it when we say we believe in free speech, then we sometimes have to defend all of them, not just pick and choose.

David Guth will find a lot of people in his corner, even if they don't buy his choice of words - or his ideas about the Second Amendment. - Steve Haynes



Open Season

Cat doesn't like husband

By Cynthia Haynes



Steve has a new pet, and Marilyn doesn't like him much at all.

Marilyn helps me around the house, which saves my sanity and Steve's life.

Luckily for us, she is great at cleaning but not compulsive about it. She's a farm girl and can live and let live when she needs to.

So, while she cast a disapproving eye at Wilbur, Steve's new pet, she doesn't bother him.

Wilbur is a spider, a fairly large wolf spider which took up residence in a couple of small potted plants near the kitchen sink. He has spun a web all around the aloe vera he started out in and has taken over a second pot with a baby spider plant the cats pulled off the mother that Steve is trying to keep alive.

The whole area around those two small pots near the window by the kitchen sink looks like

an early Halloween decoration. It's one big webby mess, and the webs make it hard to water the plants.

Still, Steve is happy with all of it. He carefully waters his baby plants around the edges of the web and looks into the cottony interior to see what Wilbur is up to that da. Mostly, Wilbur is sitting there somewhere acting like a cat. That is, he's doing absolutely nothing.

Now, I have a live-and-let live attitude to spiders, but I don't like things that bite me because they think I'm lunch, like mosquitos or ticks, and I can't abide flies because they are a dirty, nasty insect and I know where they've been.

So the other day, after chasing a couple of flies around with a flyswatter off and on for an hour or so, I noticed that Wilbur had

caught them in his web. I cheered.

I'm still on Marilyn's side of the spiders-taking-over-the-kitchen debate, but I have to admit, I'll take Wilbur over the Fly any day of the week.

And speaking of spiders, they've had a great time during this dry summer making webs all over the yard. It's gotten so bad that I'm afraid to walk through the side yard at night because I blunder into so many orb-spinner webs.

I figure that I don't want to go back into the house with spiderweb in my hair or on my feet or clothes any more than the spider wants a day's hard work destroyed by a single huge monster blundering around in the dark.

So I've made a deal with them. I keep to the sidewalk and they keep to the grass.

It seems to be working so far.

Casey's Comments

Doing the right thing

By Casey McCormick



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Some folks just don't get it. A party was held by about 300 teenagers on Aug. 31 of this year. Nothing new with that.

There was plenty of drinking, drugging and damage done there. Nothing new with that.

There was plenty of pictures taken of lewd behavior and obnoxious tweets and emails sent. Nothing new with that.

What is new is how the owner of the property dealt with it.

The home belongs to former NFL lineman Brian Holloway. Although his family spends most of their time in Florida, the other home in rural New York contains many belongings and happy memories.

If you have ever had your property violated then you know that terrible feeling when you go back. That feeling of defilement stays with you like a dark cloud.

Mr. Holloway, and the authorities, did not have much trouble identifying many of the 300 house wreckers due to their beloved social media. Like badges of honor the kids displayed the classless actions. The price tag to repair the damage is above \$20,000.

But rather than go after the high school students involved, or their

legally liable parents, he is offering a way to make a positive from a negative. A website has been established called Help Me Save 300. It has some of the pictures and messages that the kids created. But it also invites the teens to return and help fix the home.

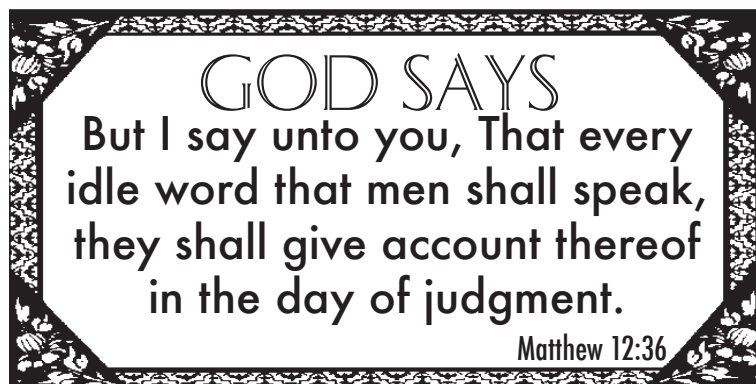
The really sad news now is some of the parents of the students are threatening Mr. Holloway with legal action for posting the information (that had already been sent by the offenders.) As a parent I applaud what he is doing. These kids deserve a kick in the butt. However they also deserve an opportunity for redemption. Maybe some of them will use this experience for a brighter future.

Helpful hints

Use white vinegar to:
• Deodorize a garbage disposal. Make vinegar ice cubes and feed them down the disposal. After grinding, run cold water through the drain.

• Clean a teakettle or a coffeemaker. Boil a mixture of water and vinegar in a teakettle, then wipe away the grime. Fill the reservoir of a coffeemaker with a mixture of vinegar and water and run it through a brewing cycle. Follow this with several cycles of water to rinse thoroughly.

• Clean a dishwasher. Once a month, with the machine empty, run a cup of vinegar through an entire cycle to reduce soap buildup on the inner mechanisms and glassware.



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