

Opinion



Guest Viewpoint

He certainly deserves the Gooberhead Award

Time for another Gooberhead Award presented periodically to someone in the news whose tongue is going 100 miles per hour . . . but whose brain is not in gear.

Today's Goober is Representative John Mica, a Florida Republican who co-chairs the House task force on counter-narcotics. Mica is one of the micro-brained Congress critters who constantly seeks more funding and more insanity in America's failed drug war, which costs us more than \$19 billion a year and hasn't slowed the flow of drugs one iota. For John, though, if the program isn't working, it's probably because it's not insane enough.

So he's pushed for bombarding coca crops in Colombia with toxic glyphosate, made by Monsanto. Each year, U.S. military helicopters are used in Colombia to spray hundreds of thousands of acres with this herbicide, which can kill coca plants. But it also kills the potatoes, corn, and other crops raised by peasant farm families, and it's causing severe bleeding, testicular inflammation, skin rashes and other serious health problems for the families.

Because of this, Senator Pat Leahy added a requirement that any spraying in Colombia meet the same health standards that would have to be met if we were spraying here at home.

The Leahy provision is driving Mica crazy — a short ride in his case. He denounces it as "one more roadblock that the bleeding hearts [have thrown] in front of our program." Mica rants that glyphosate is what's in Monsanto's weed killer, Roundup, and that the spraying in Colombia is no more toxic "than what most people use in their backyards."

What a Goober. Start with the fact that this is not Roundup, but a goosed-up glyphosate that carries the EPA's highest toxicity rating. It also contains other chemicals that our government won't disclose, saying the manufacturer's trade secret must be protected.

How about we give Mica a dose of his own medicine? Spritz his family home with glyphosate . . . and then see how he feels about "bleeding hearts." — *by Jim Hightower*

Radio talk-show host and author Jim Hightower is a former agricultural commissioner of Texas. His latest book, "If The Gods Had Meant Us To Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates" (Harper-Collins), has been released in a fully revised and updated paperback edition. For more information, dial 866-271-4900.

Feedback to td@nwkansas.com

Addresses of elected officials:

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: <http://www.idir.net/~jmorriso/>

State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

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freepress@nwkansas.com

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Tom A. Dreiling - Publisher
td@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Darrel Pattillo, Sports Editor
colbysports@nwkansas.com

Maxine Nelson, family and religion
mnelson@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Representative
crystalr@nwkansas.com

Mandy Hoagland, Advertising Representative
mhoagland@nwkansas.com

Flo Rodriguez - Ad Composition, Legals

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

Pattie Stevens - Office Manager, Want Ads

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

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This spam doesn't taste good either

The other day I was reviewing my e-mail folder to make sure there wasn't something important that needed immediate attention.

Then as I was scanning the lines and lines of addresses in the in-box as a routine housecleaning chore, it occurred to me that many of the names and companies I was looking at had little or nothing to do with newspaper business. In fact, it was annoying to see some of the messages and realize that probably more than 40 percent of the incoming mail was junk.

For example, one company sent me four pages of information on a new body deodorant for guys, complete with statistics, surveys, and stories.

Another business promoting planning books, school supplies and other gadgets sent five pages and 18 picture files to clog up my attachment folder. The sad part was this was a legitimate company and I was shocked to think that they are unintentionally, but still for all practical purposes, spamming me.

Other groups must think I take life too seriously because they have been sending me this "Laugh out Loud" bunch of junk or "Your Big Fun."

I suppose if I were extremely bored (which I am not) these well-intentioned messages might provide a few chuckles, but honestly, I don't really care that more than 15 billion prizes have been given away in Cracker Jack boxes.

Even though I liked the prizes, I probably could have gone my entire life without ever wondering how many of those little "surprises" have been placed in the package.

Of course, each of the messages are trying to sell something and there's always a "warehouse clearance sale" somewhere — but you never know where that is.

One company sent me six pages and 28 pictures of their little gadgets, and for the benefit of this col-



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

umn only, I did open up this particular file to take a gander at their sale items.

They had a bunch of watches that served a multitude of purposes. For instance, there were digital alarm watches, vibration alarm watches and even mosquito repeller watches.

Other inventory included the wet/dry hair trimmer, vinegar sprayer, clip-on keylight, commando torchlight, the deluxe street rider scooter, Michael Jordan telephone and even a shower CD player. There were even items that probably every home should have such as the shatter free SOS hammer and "the visitor."

What was interesting, though, was to cross reference the shatter-free hammer that the e-mail people were selling to what a printed catalog had. My e-mail folks wanted \$20 and another catalog showed the price at substantially less than that.

However, please don't misunderstand, I have yet to be tempted to buy anything that comes over e-mail, particularly since I feel my privacy is being intruded upon. There's always the bad credit companies that continue to surface weekly on e-mail and last week I received some five pages on "the groovy dinosaur bringing me a little greeting."

Earlier this week, one company tried to entice me with the idea of sending a "jumping hippy" to liven up a friend's day. Or how about trying new phrases like, "You really cheese me off."

Yesterday I received an e-mail with a giant light bulb staring at me. The funny part about this message was that it said: "Being a loyal subscriber of our newsletter, we are sending you the best animations around...."

Loyal subscriber? No way! I don't even know where this stuff comes from and certainly don't need a light bulb to make me "giggle."

It seems like no matter how many times I have tried to send messages asking these people to "cease and desist," it just doesn't work. The e-mails just keep coming.

After having said that, our technical advisor gasped saying, "you didn't!" Apparently, people should never send replies to these companies because that's how they know you are a real person. Since they send out millions of these messages, most of whom to people that don't exist, any replies are prized and passed around to other bogus companies.

As this lecture continued, he also reminded me that along with being "prized" the message could contain viruses and many have — he has seen them.

So, here's the solution. Just delete them all, kind of like the weekly garbage collection. It's become a routine thing with me and from now on, I promised our technical guy I would never, never again open any of these suspicious messages nor would I write to them — not even for a column or research purposes.

I wouldn't want him to get upset with me. After all, he's the guy that keeps my computer running.

In all seriousness, he did say that worst case scenario would to change my e-mail address if it gets much worse, but thankfully now that I am informed, that probably won't happen.

Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Thursdays.

What's a person to do?

Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

you will find 16 because when we answered her charges she filed with the court, she put another trash container which leads us to the conclusion that we should definitely watch our step or those trash containers could appear the entire length of her property. We are so tired of the trash she has surrounding her house, her trash on the alley belonging to the city, trash tied to the fence in her back yard (fence that could belong to us.)

This trash is a haven for critters. We have seen 5 to 7 cats coming and going out of this mess. Common sense tells us that the cats are not going there for a prayer meeting, they are looking for smorgasbord. And why wouldn't they find it? This neighbor commented she had seen a large rat in the street in front of her house. I was watching one of the cats in a graceful stance waiting for what I thought was a mouse; instead it turned out to be a bird and this, in my eyes is not right. It is the season for skunks and they have been seen walking down the ally perhaps to case the joint (trash). She even had the nerve to ask Kenneth if he thought she had brought in the skunk that was

on her front porch? The worst dread of this situation is regarding the West Nile Virus to which we all have seen or heard numerous reports. I refer to the open containers lying around her property. Containers such as wastebaskets, tubs, tins, plastic, perhaps not being filled by Mother Nature, but she does water her back yard.

For at least 4 years, I have contacted the city several times to see if there is something, anything they can do about this mess.

Amid the debris there is an old automobile. The city notified the neighbor to get it removed...the neighbor chose to buy a license plate for it...sometimes you can beat the system!

The replies I get from the City are that they will check into it...Well, City, it's not that hard to see, just drive down in this area of town on East 7th, in the land that I refer to Beirut, and you will find car bodies, discarded junk, an old building that looks as though it took a bomb or two.

Behind our house is a house in dire straits, but the citizens on East 8th have to deal with since that eyesore will not pass inspection to become a rental.

In conclusion, if, because Doug Lewis will not come and survey the property again, and we are unable to hire a surveyor in time, the judge rules against us and we have to pay \$500.00 for removing 157 bricks, do you think the City is going to be of assistance to you if you are mowing the neighbors grass?

Georgia Patton Colby
(Letter #110)

'It is better to say nothing...'

To The Free Press:

Apparently our state news services didn't learn a lesson from the crow the national services had to eat after calling the 2000 election too early and picking the wrong horse.

Early in the Republican run-off in the 120th District between incumbent John Faber and challenger Doug Sebelius, things looked pretty bad for Faber.

Sebelius had won by a large margin in Phillips County and KSN News apparently thought the race was over so they called it in favor of the challenger. The problem was, Faber came back and narrowly won the election.

Perhaps the embarrassment was too much for the Wichita news folks, but they never came back to

correct themselves after Faber won. In fact, while the state election results showed Faber the victor by 150 votes as of 9 a.m. Wednesday morning, the KSN results still showed Sebelius as their pick with only 39 percent of the precincts reporting and they had not been updated since the station called the race.

There is most certainly a temptation for pundits to show off their political savvy by calling races long before all the votes are cast, but in this case it backfired and the unwillingness of KSN to go the extra mile in correcting the mistake compounded the error. There is an old adage, "It is better to say nothing and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt."

There is also an admonition from the Bible to

"avoid all appearance of evil." The bad calls have tended to come in favor of the less conservative candidates, which definitely gives the appearance of bias, whether that bias actually exists or not.

KSN, and our other news services, would do well to remember that personal opinions should be left on the opinion page and guesses, even educated ones, are not news. That would go a long way toward restoring credibility.

Kudos to those who ran and those who voted, regardless of the outcome. You are the ones who make our Republic work.

A. Jay Kelley Colby
(Letter #111)