

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

About those dog shootings

To The Free Press:

What's going on here? Three dogs were killed (that we know of), two in the past month by the same "police officer." Aussie was killed because he "wouldn't give the mail back," and he dared to growl at people he didn't know, that were in his yard.

Now, another dog has been shot, because he "appeared" to be dangerous, according to an unnamed witness.

Now, I quote Office Shull, "If an animal does attack an officer or is attacking someone in a vicious manner, it's not uncommon to shoot the animal. Obviously, this doesn't happen very often, though."

Obviously, it does in this town! Attack is the key word. If a dog growls, is that considered an attack? Apparently in Colby they think it is! That is what dogs do when they are frightened.

Whatever happened to Animal Control? There are other ways to restrain an animal, if they really are attacking, other than killing it.

I have seen similar confrontations involving people, with the officer using "unnecessary force!"

Maybe there should be more restraints on the officers, rather than the animals!

Maybe we should contact PETA, The Humane Society, and the ACLU!

Next time it could be your dog or perhaps a person!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jackson
Colby
(Letter #129)

Our letter policy

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address.

Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published.

We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

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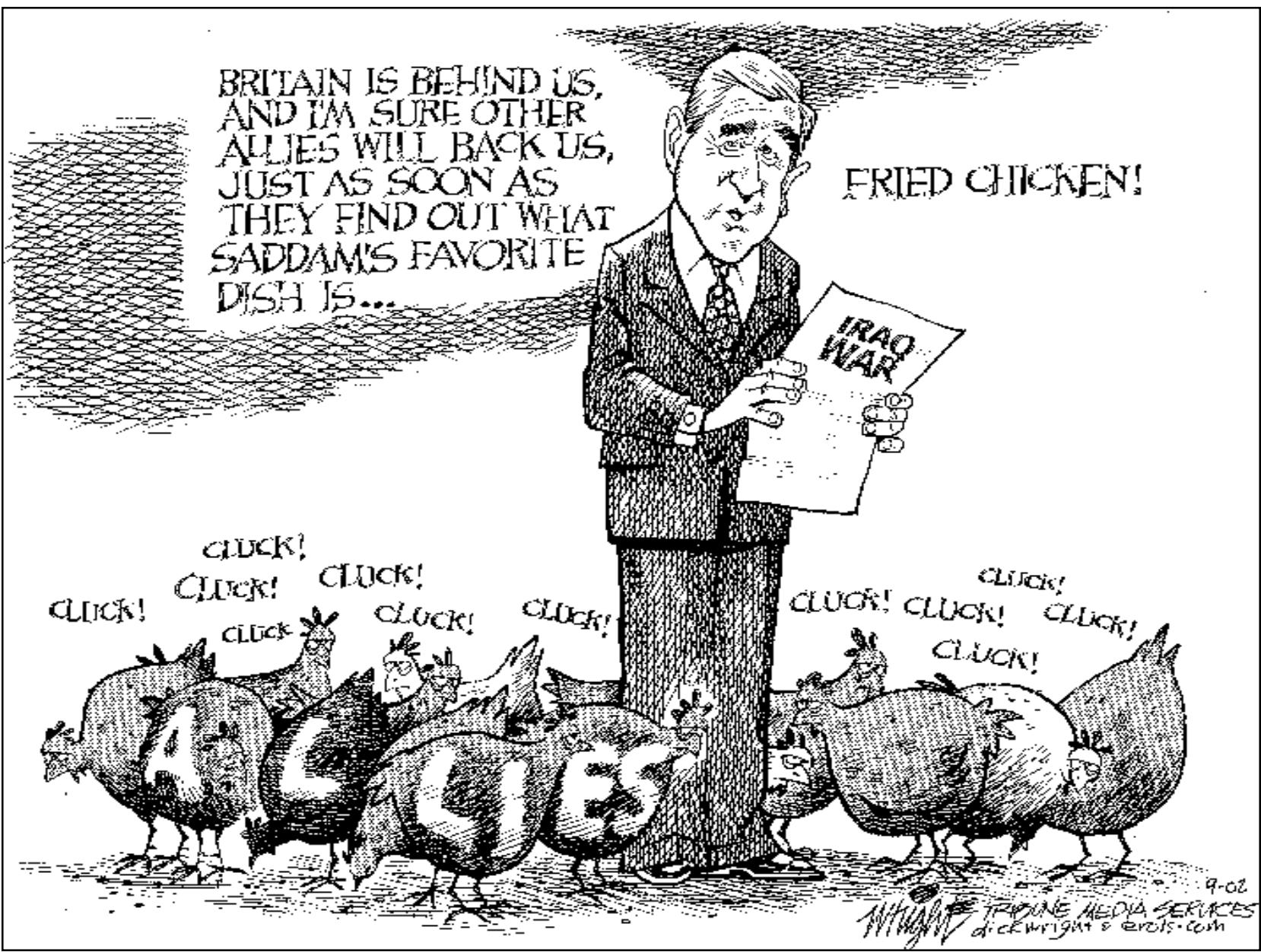
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I have been blessed

Michelle L.
Hawkins

- Pursuit of a Richer Life



There is a song on the radio by Martina McBride called *I Have Been Blessed* that is a song about all the small things in our lives which we take for granted.

Lately with all the negative things we see in the news, it is sometimes hard to realize there is good to out-weigh the bad.

Many times I see things, even in Colby (yes our small rural community) that break my heart. Especially after working for the school, you really learn to appreciate your family. Seeing kids whose parents could care less, would bring me to tears on many occasions.

It wasn't until I was in college when I really began to understand how truly blessed I was. I was 18 years old, had two parents at home who had been married at that time coming up on 20 years, talked with my parents on nearly a daily basis and was truly loved and cared for.

My parents now are going to be celebrating their 28th wedding anniversary on Oct. 5. In this day and age, it seems to be becoming more and more rare to see a couple stay together that long. Even more amazing, I can only remember my parents having one big fight. Of course we all have little tiffs when we become annoyed with the ones we love and I am sure there were more than just that one fight, but my parents cared about our family enough to not fight in front of my brother and I. That says so much.

In college I met people whose home life was less than ideal, and no, my family isn't the Cleavers, but at least we care about each other above all else. It always seemed to amaze me when fellow students would go weeks and sometimes months without talk-

ing with their families. My mother jokes that we should own a portion of AT&T, but the fact of the matter is...she isn't too far off. Even when I was in Baltimore and Ft. Worth, I would call on my commute to work or while going to the mall, or over to a friends, just to see what was going on.

The first time I spent Christmas alone was more than a big deal. I was staying in Texas and going to spend the holidays with my roommate's family. They were supposed to be traveling to Iowa the day after Christmas, but it began to snow and ice and they decided to leave early. I had never felt so alone. I know I cried most of the day and called home at least four or five times. It wasn't that I was missing the gifts and festivities, it was that I missed being with the ones I loved.

Time and time again I am reminded of my good fortune with friends. I have so many people that enrich my life by their friendship. At one point, an "office colleague" said that they didn't understand how I could tolerate having people over at my house all the time. It isn't a matter of tolerating it, it is a matter of embracing it and cherishing the time I share with my friends.

Yes there are people at my house every night (or I am at theirs), and yes I am very active socially, but that is what enhances and adds colors to my life. I wouldn't want it any other way.

My grandfather, Don Hawkins, who was from Brewster, passed away in March. Just recently, his best friend, Ross Tygart also passed away. They were the best of friends and always together. At Ross's funeral, a wonderful eulogy was read about him and his life. A beautiful section was written about the friendship he and my grandfather had shared. It read:

Ross and his long-time friend, Don Hawkins, were a familiar sight heading to the country to shoot prairie dogs. Don credited Ross for giving him the motivation to continue after his ultra-light accident several years ago. He said Ross would come by every day and take him out to the country or take him to Colby or Goodland, or on occasion, a local gun show and push him around in a wheel chair while he was still unable to make it on his own. Don returned the favor in later years when Ross broke his hip. He visited him in California and in Florida, always coaxing him into getting out and trying to interest him in the computer, as an outlet and a way to get in touch with his friends.

When I read this excerpt, it brought me to tears. Having friends like these is what make our lives worth living, and give us the satisfaction of knowing...we have been blessed.

Hawkins is Family Page and Religion Page editor, and also a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Colby Free Press. Her column appears on Tuesdays.

Stop and smell the roses

Jay Kelley

- Speaking My Mind



I've been covering high school football in Brewster this year. Like all small town newspapers, ours is notoriously short-staffed, a fact I became well aware of during a two-year stint as the only sports reporter covering three high schools and a community college.

I don't really miss the hustle of full-time reporting, but I like writing and I like football so I volunteered to cover the varsity for the Brewster Bulldogs. It's only one night a week and I have to admit, I'm having fun.

Brewster plays eight-man football. If you're not familiar with the game, it's very fast. The field is only 80 yards, so any big gain is magnified and a mistake can easily turn into a touchdown.

It's not really the football that is the most fun, it's the people. Northwestern Kansas is an area of small towns, many of whom are struggling to survive in the modern farm economy, but the people are not much different than their ancestors.

Yes, we drive new cars, combines are computerized and, for those in the big towns back east, we haven't had an Indian attack in about a century.

The people still hold many of the values of rural America that made us great. Hard work, honesty and a belief in God and the necessity of worship are foundations of many, if not most of the towns in rural America.

A friend of mine, who lived in Arkansas and Texas

before coming to Colby, noticed that most of the people he met smiled and greeted him at the store, whether they knew him or not.

"They seemed to be content," he said.

There is a lesson in that for us, I think. Even in the rural settings, we have many of the same problems faced by the major urban areas. We do have crime, and it has been reported that depression is a major problem among agricultural workers.

Given the prices for grain and livestock, it's no wonder, but you couldn't tell it Friday night.

Brewster was on the road, so we were in "enemy country" and the people were just as friendly as if we had been next-door neighbors. The senior class was serving barbecue pork sandwiches at the concession stand and the boy who waited on me called me sir.

(I'm not always sure I like that sir, by the way. I forget sometimes that I'm old enough to be a sir!)

With our air conditioned houses, privacy fences and

Internet connections, we can go around the world without leaving our homes. The problem is we sometimes need to leave home and visit the neighbors.

We need to keep the attitude that makes us stop when we see a car broken down on the highway, or hold the door for an older person, whether we know them or not, at the store.

Smiles aren't out of place in a small town and that's a good thing. They shouldn't be out of place anywhere and I hope they never are.

It's nice to see that the high school football game, where local kids are the stars, is still the biggest thing on Friday night in the fall. On Monday morning in many of our coffee shops, the high school is more important than anything the NFL did.

I know we need to keep perspective. It is, after all, only a game. I think most of our people do that. Folks are just as proud of their teams when they're winning as when they're losing, for the most part.

Yes, we need to be aware of the world around us and we need to keep pace with technology and modern isn't necessarily bad.

A wise man once said that life was a vapor and riches fleeting, at best. He encouraged us to slow down and enjoy life. Good advice, I think.

A. Jay Kelley is the evangelist for the Church of Christ in Colby, and a former reporter for the Colby Free Press. His e-mail is jkelly@nwkansan.com

Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

