

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

Disturbing comment

To the Colby Free Press:

In light of the seriousness of the "Peeping Tom" incident, for the victims and their families, I thought the comments made in the "Random Thoughts" column in the Oct. 7, 2002 issue of the Colby Free Press were ill-advised.

To the reader, the comments conveyed the idea that the video tape was being handled around the law enforcement community for viewing, whereas in reality only the investigators and school personnel directly involved in developing evidence to support the allegations viewed the tape. My office, and all those in law enforcement, do not find these kind of incidents fodder for levity.

Mrs. (Maxine) Nelson was right in one comment, "it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it." We are the "somebody," but we perform our job in a professional manner and treat all involved with dignity and respect.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Jones
Sheriff
(Letter #151)

'Compassionate conservatism'?

To the Colby Free Press:

I just read the excellent column by Ann McFeatters published in the Salina Journal pointing out our inability as a nation to reconcile our history with the present situation in Iraq. We have distributed the equipment to wage war to any and all nations, dictators, or rebellious groups that we thought would give us advantage. It didn't seem to be important how they stood with regards to human rights, religious or democratic freedom.

Our president may have an excuse for having missed his history lessons in college. For heavens sakes! He was a young happy go lucky kid, born with a silver spoon in his mouth and a daddy with political pull and he had more important things to do — like having fun.

But, what is his excuse for not paying attention to our political history from the Vietnam era to the present? He really comes across to me as being the playground bully and the world is his playground. No, he doesn't have the physical prowess of a bully but he has surrounded himself with a cadre of friends who will support him. And those friends have the authority to conscript you and me to do his fighting.

Where is that 'compassionate conservatism' that he campaigned on? Where is that 'Christian ethic' he is so proud of? Maybe if he woke up to the reality of the social injustices in our own society as well as the world around us, he would realize that our unlimited resources and power to threaten any government or official that doesn't fit his mold will not bring about world peace!

Thank you,

Ken Poland
Gem
(Letter #152)

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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: jmmorriso@ink.org web:http://www.idir.net/~jmmorriso/

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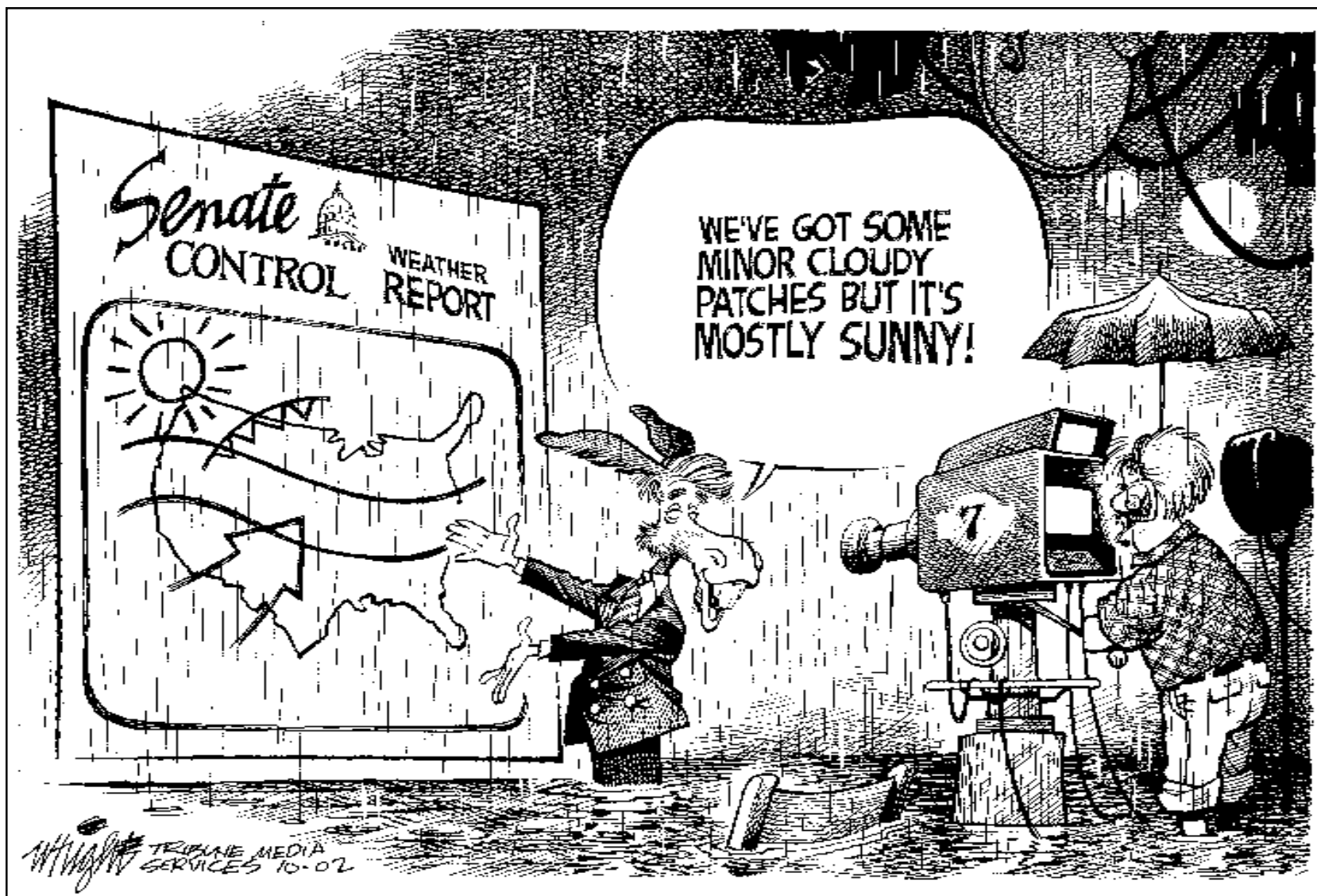
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Let's hear it for Lowell Graham

Tom Dreiling

- My Turn



WHILE the music of Tuesday's performance of The United States Air Force Concert Band and the Singing Sergeants of Washington, D. C., continues to swirl around in my head, a visitor to my office on Thursday afternoon — Mary Molstad — revealed something else about The United States Air Force Band that strikes home — home as in Colby. As in Colby Community College. Does the name Lowell Graham ring a bell? If not, he served as director of music at our own college here back in the early to mid-1970s. For many years since then, he has been associated in a prominent way with The United States Air Force Band of Washington, D. C. Mary had a clipping from another publication about Colonel Graham that she left with me and that I will share with you. His distinguished career is covered in the item. It reads:

The United States Air Force Band said farewell this summer to Colonel Lowell Graham (BA '70, MA '71) on the occasion of his retirement from 'America's Band.'

"For 28 years, Graham has been a major force in the world of music," the announcement said. "His influence has been felt in nearly every arena from music education to military protocol functions. Under his command, the Band has been featured at the world's most prestigious music conventions, performed with internationally renowned entertainers and produced recordings that have garnered international acclaim and a Grammy."

Graham was only the fifth person to hold the prestigious post of Commander/Conductor of The United States Air Force Band in Washington, D.C., known as "The Chief's Own" band.

This fall, Graham will assume the chairmanship of the Music Department at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he also holds the Abraham Chavez Endowed Chair.

Makes you kind of proud, doesn't it? Col. Graham's path to fame included a stay at Colby Community College. We add our congratulations to the many I am sure the colonel has received.

I GUESS Miss America is going to get her way,

anyway. Part of her platform is speaking to young people about practicing abstinence as a form of sexual behavior. Of course that has shook up the Miss America Pageant people — some of them, anyway — who would rather promote the use of condoms. Three cheers for the new Miss America! Finally someone's got the guts to stand up and let it be known there is an alternative method of warding off sexual behavior that seemingly floods the country with unwanted pregnancies. And shame on those on the Miss America Pageant board who would deny this lovely young lady her right to free speech. I just wish they would get out of our face.

I WAS watching with interest the "on-the-scene" report of the latest sniper shooting in Virginia earlier this week. The reporter was filling us in on the tragedy via a cable network news channel and she said, "It happened at 8:15 p.m. — 5:15 p.m. on the West Coast." What in the world did the West Coast time have to do with that report? Living in the Central Time Zone I would know that it happened at 7:15 p.m., but that has nothing to do with anything. They seem to pick at straws to fill up air time.

NOW we wait. The United State Senate and the House of Representatives have given President Bush overwhelming approval to act as he feels he should act on the question of Iraq. I watched the Senate debate far into the night, in fact it was right around midnight (CENTRAL TIME, 1 a.m. EASTERN TIME) when the Senate took its vote last night, or this morning, depending on what time zone you live in.

HAPPY Birthday to...

Oct. 11 — Melissa Boyle, Matt Miller, Janae

Schwartzkopf, Don Krebs

Oct. 12 — Dustin Herschberger, Chelsey Roesch, Andrea Zerr, David Ohlrogge, Jo Booth, Mark Leydig, Jess Baumfalk, Jeanie Krebs

Oct. 13 — Karen Molstad, Clayton Bange, Karen Raymond, Challis Horinek

Oct. 14 — Amanda McIlnay, Kenny Rogers

Oct. 15 — Inace Parker (95), Kyle Molstad, Harold Jones, Brett Mariman

HAPPY Anniversary to...

Oct. 14 — Weldon & Toni McAdams, David & Shannon Zahradka

Congratulations!

Call us at 462-3963 or email td@nwkans.com to have your special day mentioned. And *please* keep us advised of any changes in any listing. Thanks for your help!

I NEED to give credit to Grace for this one. It's called "The Push."

A man and his wife are awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning by a loud pounding on the door. The man gets up and goes to the door where a guy who obviously celebrated too much was standing in the pouring rain, asking for a push. "Not a chance," says the husband, "it is three o'clock in the morning!" He slams the door and returns to bed. "Who was that?" asked his wife. "Just some drunk guy asking for a push," he answers. "Did you help him?" she asks. "No, I did not! It's three in the morning and it is pouring out!" "Well, you have a short memory," says his wife. "Can't you remember about three months ago when we broke down and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him, and should be ashamed of yourself!" The man does as he is told, gets dressed, and goes out into the pouring rain. He calls out into the dark, "Hello, are you still there?" "Yes," comes back the answer. "Do you still need a push?" calls out the husband. "Yes, please!" comes the reply from the dark. "Where are you?" asks the husband. The guy replies, "H-h-h' over here on za swing!"

HAVE a good evening and a good weekend!

Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays.

Every farm is unique

John Schlageck

- Weekly Insight

Picture a farm and a lot of people envision the following setting — crops, machinery, cattle, a few chickens, a red barn, other out buildings and a family to till the soil. Like so many other things in life, today's consumer tends to stereotype the agricultural industry.

Step foot on a farm and this notion changes. Each operation is unique. Each farm is as diverse as the countryside itself.

Randy and Debbie Suiter farm in Stafford County. This is wheat, corn, milo, bean, alfalfa and cattle country. Before pigeonholing this farm, don't forget this family operation comes with a history, present and, hopefully, a bright future.

The Suiter family came to this area on a wheat thrashing crew and decided to put down roots. Rollin and Ora Ina Suiter purchased their first quarter in 1929. Four generations later, this operation supports four families and consists of 3,400 acres.

Plenty has changed since the original Suiter family began with 160 acres. Families have grown and moved into different homes. Old buildings have been torn down and replaced by larger structures. The operation also has increased in acreage and new technology is embraced with open arms.

One completely different change on the Suiter farm is the addition of year-around labor. The farms of yesteryear relied on summer help from students wanting to earn cash.

Today, it's worrisome, and nearly impossible to ask a young, inexperienced teenager to operate the new, high technology equipment that can cost from \$100,000 to \$250,000. To find good help, the Suiters hire employees 12 months out of the year.

Like their ancestors, the Stafford County farm family face extreme weather patterns, low commodity prices, the loss of cattle and grain markets, high input costs, numerous and costly government regula-

tions and mountains of paper work. But the biggest challenge facing them now is a threat to their confined feeding operation.

While trying to build a cattle lagoon, the Suiters worked with a Kansas Department of Health and Education official to ensure it met the specs this agency drew up. Seems the specs change with every official who has a different idea of what they should be.

"We filled out all the forms for a cost-share program through EQUIP and worked with our county extension agent," Debbie says. "We've been waiting almost two years to hear what we are supposed to do."

Another challenge is water. Although the Suiters rely on irrigation for some of their crops, during periods of extreme drought the farm family was faced with running over the water allotment. They may have to rethink the crops they plant in the future.

This may mean reliance on more drought-resistant crops until the dry weather pattern changes.

In spite of these challenges, they never seem to be too difficult that the Suiters would even consider another vocation or leaving their rural life.

"We have the opportunity to be together as a family," Debbie says. "We work and eat together — many times out in our fields. We can breathe fresh air and smell the freshly swathed and baled alfalfa. We have close ties with our neighbors and every one in our

community looks out for one another."

The Suiters believe they have some of the best schools in the country. Schools are progressive, afford the students choices in curriculum, and discipline problems are small, Debbie explains. The schools operate efficiently with no waste of dollars and resources.

Such a fertile environment for education is important to the Suiters. Like their friends and neighbors in Stafford County, they understand that an investment in their community's youth is an investment in their community's future.

"Our teachers care for their students, each and every one," Debbie says.

Rural communities, like those in Stafford County and other parts of Kansas, include farms, businesses, schools, families and a way of life that must be protected. It is a way of life that some farm families believe is headed for the endangered species list.

"We would like to carry on the dreams of previous generations who farmed here," Debbie says.

That's why they go to bed each night with the hope of waking up to a better tomorrow.

That's why they work the fields, care for their livestock and participate in their rural communities each day.

Living in rural Kansas provides the opportunity to make each day a little better than before.

The fondest wish of most farmers and ranchers remains — to pass their land on to their children. They work years to leave a legacy of good land stewardship.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.