

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

Money doesn't grow on trees

To the Colby Free Press:

Three specific articles in the *Colby Free Press* dated Jan. 10, 2003, should make even the most weathered and trusted psychiatrist blink his eyes and scratch his dead.

1. Everyone knows the taxpayer is broke, the state is broke, and it's been direr in 2002 than it was during a like period of the 1932-33-34-35-36 dust bowl days when the viaduct was built for safety reasons. Still there's "gobs" of money to tear it out now. The word is go-go-go, it's for safety's sake. Meanwhile this past week, south of town on the same road, state crews finished digging a section of already hazardous road ditch even deeper. There are no guard rails on this extra high shoulder-less road that some claim to me: the most dangerous in the state of Kansas.

2. "Long inaugural weekend will take Sebelius across Kansas." Albeit the Democrats who gave us the Joan Finney School Finance Law, that's now paralyzing the state, will spend \$320,000 to \$350,000 celebrating the 2003 inaugural week of the governor's election "in spite of hard times."

3. Page 3. "Group goes to court over state's budget cuts." Gov. Bill Graves' November order cutting \$26.6 million from the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The agency's total budget for the current fiscal year is \$2.1 billion. "A lack of money does not relieve the state of its obligations," Rodney Murrow, attorney for the plaintiffs, told Judge Frank Thies. Is he saying, the law to tax is there, regardless of the ability to pay? The public has already been informed that the new governor believes in collecting all taxes levied.

Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation" did some pretty outstanding things. that is true. But then again maybe those terrible years of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl Days were better teachers than today's excessively expensive public schools.

"*Making Do and Doing Without" was a lesson well learned during that time, and yes, taxes were reduced.

TV's Dr. McGraw tells it like it is. Maybe our new governor and the legislature should get on the show. Almost everyone needs some straightening out some time.

Sincerely,

Lloyd E. Theimer
Colby
Letter #4

*Division of Continuing Education
and KANU
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Stadium project deserves support

THE story on page 1 Tuesday by Patty Decker, editor, about the proposed new stadium and track facilities at Dennen Field certainly bodes well for our community. The current facilities have served their purpose well, but the time has certainly come for an upgrade. A serious upgrade. And I might add long overdo. I drive by the stadium many times in any given week and always feel like something needs to be done. It's not a first-class facility anymore — although it was for lots of years. Give credit to those who are the initial organizers of the push to get something done, something in the line of vastly improved trackage around the football field and a stadium in which to sit to watch events unfold. Some will say that now is not a good time to be undertaking such an ambitious project. But sometimes neglect itself becomes the factor that drives the forces willing to step out front to get things done. Of course they cannot do it alone, it will become a community wide effort. And a year or two down the line when all is said and done fingers will be pointed with pride at the transformation. Join those who are at ground zero waiting to rebuild for now and for the future. Dennen Field can and should once again take its place as the showcase of outdoor sports in northwest Kansas.

THEY say we need this big, expensive military buildup to rid Iraq of Saddam "insane" Hussein. I say we don't need this big, expensive, military buildup — sure-to-cost many lives of young uniformed Americans — to rid Iraq of Saddam "insane" Hussein. I say hire a gunman. One bullet and it's over. On any day, any hour of our choosing. That simple.

If "insane" Hussein is the mad and evil man our leaders tell us he is, why in the world would we want to sacrifice one American life getting rid of that worthless bum? Okay, so we're not supposed to be going around the world taking potshots at leaders we don't like. But this guy, "insane" Hussein, the President tells us, is worthless, crooked, a killer. If he's all those things, then we would be doing our planet a favor rubbing him out of the picture.

FOR THOSE of you who can remember the name *Sebelius* in terms of Republicanism, isn't



Tom Dreiling

- My Turn

it strange to see a Sebelius in the governor's chair — as a Democrat? For those who forgotten or were never aware, I refer to the late Keith Sebelius, Norton Republican, who served this district so well as its Congressman for many years. He is the father-in-law of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. And if Keith were alive, he would approve.

CAN you believe that we are already halfway through January 2003? Seems like just yesterday we were talking about the November election, making plans for Thanksgiving and chattering about Christmas. Time ceases to fly, it's been.

WE will have to thank Rod for this one.

There was a case in a big-city hospital where patients always died in this one particular room, on Sunday mornings, at about 11 o'clock, regardless of their medical condition. This puzzled the doctors and some even thought that it had something to do with the supernatural. No one could solve the mystery of why the deaths occurred around 11 a.m. on Sundays in this one room. So a worldwide team of experts was assembled to investigate the cause of the incidents.

The next Sunday morning, a few minutes before 11, all doctors and nurses nervously waited outside the room to see for themselves what the terrible phenomenon was that was killing the patients in that one particular bed. Some were holding wooden crosses, prayer books and other holy objects to ward off the evil spirits. Just when the clock struck 11, Pookie Jackson, the part-time Sunday janitor, entered the room and unplugged the life support system so he could run the vacuum cleaner.

IF THE field of Democratic candidates for

president gets any bigger, they'll have to spin off and start another party.

I WAS reading with interest an Associated Press story about an 18-year-old high school basketball player from Ohio who is expected to be the No. 1 pick in this year's NBA draft if he decides to go pro. He may already be pro and doesn't know it.

For his 18th birthday, he was given a Hummer H2, equipped with three televisions and a hookup for computer games. The silver/platinum SUV was shipped from California and has a base retail price of \$49,190. Reports are his mother gave him the vehicle for his 18th birthday. But the Ohio High School Athletic Association is looking deeper into that situation. If it is proved that the player — LeBron James — broke any rules, the two-time "Mr. Ohio" would be stripped of his amateur status, and if he played in any games after that his team would have to forfeit those games. A \$49,190 gift? From Mom? Friends say the player's mother obtained a bank loan to pay for the vehicle and did nothing to compromise his eligibility.

We'll see what we shall see as this thing begins unfolding.

LIZ sent this one, as seen on a highway billboard: "Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer." -God

HAPPY Birthday to...

Jan. 15 — Dale Allen

Jan. 16 — (mother-in-law) Sally Eberle, Margo Schiefen, Dorothy Kleinsorge, Derrick Bailey.

Congratulations!

Call us at 462-3963 or email td@nwkansas.com to have your special day mentioned. And please keep us updated on any changes. We need your assistance in this regard. Thanks, in advance!

HAVE a good evening!

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New name, same old company

What lessons have been learned from the massive corporate scandals that shook our nation in 2002? Is the U.S. public, with record-low levels of trust in corporate America, less likely to be fooled the next time around? The next big test is right around the corner.

Philip Morris, the world's largest and most profitable tobacco corporation, is banking on the short memory span of consumers. And hoping that yet another massive PR campaign will win back a U.S. public that has adamantly rejected its deadly business practices.

In the 1990s, Philip Morris slipped from fifth to 496th on *Fortune* magazine's most admired American corporations list. With the plummet in public perception of American corporations that took place last year, Philip Morris is now hoping to stage a major comeback:

Later this month the tobacco giant will officially change its name to Altria.

Philip Morris has hired Leo Burnett, the ad agency that created the Marlboro Man, to roll out the new name. With the tagline "Where people and performance make a difference," the PR wizards at Leo Burnett will try to create the impression that Philip Morris is a beacon of financial strength, good management, and of course, social responsibility.

Leo Burnett has seen huge success in its partnership with Philip Morris in the past. The Marlboro Man image, described by its creator as "the right image to capture the youth market's fancy," has made Marlboro the world's leading cigarette.

A powerful image of independence and rebellion, the Marlboro cowboy is arguably the leading source of youth tobacco addiction.

Patricia Lynn

- Another Take

In the aftermath of Enron and WorldCom, however, the folks at Leo Burnett may find the task of remaking Philip Morris's battered image too much even for them. At a time when people across the United States are demanding accountability from corporations, the tobacco giant is responding with one more round of smoke and mirrors.

Philip Morris is still driving an epidemic that claims 4.9 million lives each year, a number that is projected to skyrocket to 10 million by 2030. Tobacco-related illness is fast becoming the world's leading cause of death. Whatever name the tobacco giant goes by, it will not be able to distance itself from the Marlboro Man's global rampage.

Philip Morris's latest PR stunt will not fool the people on every continent who are currently challenging Big Tobacco's deadly business practices. More than 150 countries have come together to negotiate the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the world's first public health treaty. Despite the tremendous economic and political clout of Philip Morris and other giant tobacco corporations, the great majority of countries are pushing for a strong treaty that prioritizes health over tobacco profits.

In its attempts to position itself as a good corporate citizen, Philip Morris claims to support the FCTC. Behind the scenes, however, the tobacco giant has worked at the global level to block, delay and weaken the treaty. Internal corporate documents clearly demonstrate that from the outset of the treaty process, Philip Morris has worked aggressively to undermine the efforts of the World Health Organization and advocacy groups working for a strong and enforceable FCTC.

The treaty is scheduled to be adopted in May, and the United States is one of a few wealthy countries trying to stall the FCTC's progress. The final round of negotiations will take place in February. As this groundbreaking piece of international regulation comes down to the wire, the United States is under increasing pressure to stop putting the profits of Philip Morris ahead of public health.

For its part, Philip Morris would do better to change its ways than change its name. One of the best steps the tobacco giant could take to convince the U.S. public that it has reformed is to stop interfering in the development of public health policies at the national, regional and local levels around the world.

Patricia Lynn is Infact's associate campaign director. Since 1977, Infact, a Boston-based national grassroots corporate watchdog organization, has been exposing life-threatening abuses by transnational corporations and organizing successful grassroots campaigns to hold corporations accountable to consumers and society at large. For more information, visit: www.infact.org <<http://www.infact.org>>.