

Opinion



Monday's Salute

Thumbs



√to **Kenton Krehbiel** — Colby's new postmaster-in-waiting.

√to the **Thomas County Red Cross Chapter** — your plea for emergency response vehicle volunteers paid off. The volunteers are **Kenneth Gatlin, Duane Cheney, David Evert, Frank Powers, Paul Woodall, Amanda Schmidt, Ken Frahm, Vern Hazlett, Taylor Miller** and **Vic Van Camp**.

√to **Sue Evans** — Regional Prevention Center director, and your crew, for securing "My Stuff" bags for kids in need in Thomas County from the Dr. Laura Schlessinger Foundation.

√to **Ray Repshire, Winona** — continued success with your eye surgery. (Details, page 4, Jan. 29 issue *Colby Free Press*.)

√to **Willie Engelhardt, Rick Tremblay, Dora Hopson, Emma Rogers** — newest members of the Senior Progress Center board. And thanks to **Merle Wolf, Maxine Jones** and **Glenn Hamme** for your many years of service.

√to **4th Graders at Colby Elementary** — for contributing to the *Colby Free Press*/Merchants Happy Birthday Kansas "Community Page."

√to **Jesse Cooper, Hoxie** — recipient of the Fred A. Tupper Airport Scholarship.

√to **Curtis Duncan** — of Goodland and formerly of Colby, on your windfall. Curtis won \$25,000 by simply investing \$5 in a Kansas lottery ticket.

√to the *eagletalon* staff — on another super issue. *Eagletalon* is the student newspaper at Colby high School

√to the **Eagle Dance Team** — you're good. Very good!

This weekly salute is compiled by TD, the Free Press publisher. Questions, comments and information about submitting a name or names can be directed to him at td@nwkansas.com, fax (785) 462-7749 or call (785) 462-3963.

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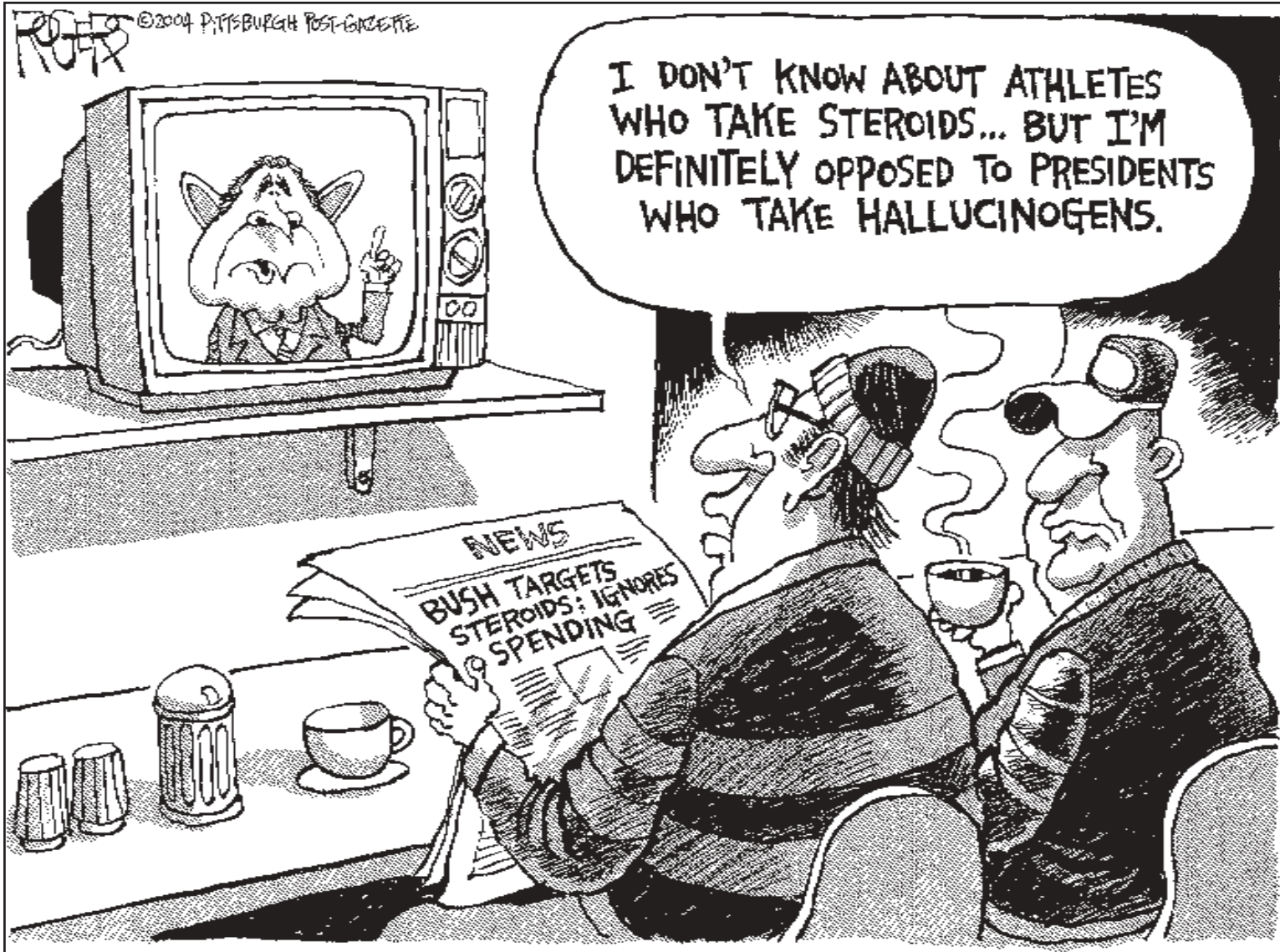
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X-ceptions to the rule

Some people watch soap operas. I read comic books. Now that I'm older, I've come to the realization that the comic books I used to read have become more like soaps than I remember. I still manage to read some comic books, when I can find them in the literary wasteland that is western Kansas.

I'm mainly interested in the Marvel Comics "X" titles.

I grew up watching "Superfriends," which had all of DC Comics' heavy hitters, Superman, Batman and Robin, Wonderwoman, Flash and Aquaman.

I also enjoyed "Spider-Man" and "Fantastic Four" when I could see them.

When I was 13 or 14, I discovered "The Uncanny X-Men."

I started with issue #209 and went from there. That one book got me hooked on Marvel's merry mutant mayhem.

I'd read comic books before that, mainly the collected back issues of "Superman" at the library and other stuff, including "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" when it could be found.

Now, suddenly, all of the things from my childhood and teen years are making a comeback.

It's left me scratching my head in wonder. That's nice and all, but just what am I supposed to think? It's not like I can run out and buy all of it.

Maybe someday. But back to my point.

X-Men's undergone some serious changes over the years.

And yes, it was only recently I realized it was like reading a monthly soap opera. But I'm hooked. I keep coming back.

OK, after years and years of whining, I finally got my wish and they killed off Cyclops, my least favorite character. He sacrificed himself, bought the farm, all that.

Then, they brought back my all-time favorite



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

writer, Chris Claremont.

For a brief, shining moment, all was right with the world. Then they axed Claremont from "Uncanny" and brought back Cyclops.

I guess Claremont's writing "X-treme X-Men" now.

"X-Men" became "New X-Men." I read that one and after catching up on what's been going on, I'm impressed.

Marvel also re-launched "Wolverine" and it's darker and grittier now. I still haven't made up my mind yet.

Then there's "Ultimate X-Men." It basically took the whole concept of what the comic is and put it back at square one.

Small cast of characters and their struggles, much like the original.

Except over the past three years, it's like some kind of twisted deja vu.

Over and over, things keep repeating.

Fight Magneto. Think Magneto's dead. Go on about lives.

Buy book. Enjoy life without Magneto.

Magneto comes back. Quit buying book.

There's also the revisiting of the "Phoenix Saga."

Except Grant Morrison, the Scottish writer whose run on New X-Men finishes up in a few months, has managed to make fans go WHAT? with his take on the mutant universe. That, coupled with the art of Mark Silvestri, has fans, including me, salivating to see how things turn out.

Now, anyone who reads "New X-Men" is experiencing the double whammy of Magneto and the return of the Phoenix.

Rumor has it somebody's going to die and at this writing, they did. Morrison killed off Jean Grey. I think this makes two or three times now.

And thankfully, despite my grumbling with how it was done, Magneto is gone too. (If anyone cares, Magneto killed Jean Grey. Wolverine went berserk and beheaded Magneto.)

How many times can the writers kill somebody off and then resurrect them?

I can count on one hand the number of X-Men characters who've stayed dead—Magick and Proteus. One character, Colossus, died but somehow he came back. Don't ask me how.

Now, if that doesn't sound like a soap, I don't know what does.

It's like a soap in that it's the same cast and the characters have more issues than a Korn album.

And the people are better looking, have superpowers and also don't stay dead when they should.

That's just in the pages of the books!

I haven't even touched what goes on in the halls of Marvel.

Rumor also has it Chris Claremont is coming back to "Uncanny X-Men." Let's just hope this time he sticks around.

Another one swirling around making fans despair is the rumor that Joss Whedon, the man we have to thank for "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (both the movie and the television series), might take over the writing duties on "New X-Men."

A nice thought but the despair comes in over the matter that it's allegedly not for another year.

I guess I'll just have to wait. But until then, there's always Days. . .

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Got to keep yourselves informed

Mike Schultz

• Plain Talk

>www.cattl elawyers.com.

A presentation at the R-CALF USA Convention was titled "Rethinking U.S. Agriculture Policy." It was given by Dr. Darryll E. Ray of the University of Tennessee (www.agpolicy.org). Dr. Ray's presentation discussed exports that did not deliver. Also speaking was a member setting on the International Trade Policy and Implementation Board, Terry Stewart from Stewart & Stewart Law Firm in Washington, D.C. Stewart gave producers a critical time line and raised awareness of what is actually going on in trade agreement policies. He informed attendees that our current policy of free trade could go worldwide. He also noted that the past trade agreements supported by legislators have traded our protection away in order to get export markets. The disadvantage to this is that in the next 5 to 12 years there will be no trade protection. This will allow the USA to have Tariff Rate Quotas or protections that will limit the amount of products (grain, cattle, beef, etc.) entering US markets.

Countries wanting access to enter into the World Trade Organization is nearing 150. R-CALF USA and Kansas Cattlemen's Association have fought to keep cattle as a perishable and cyclical product. We are working to keep our industry out of the agreements and protect it. We also want to differentiate our USA cattle industry. Many are describing it as a North American cattle industry.

We have now seen what trade has cost us with imports of beef and cattle from Canada. Exports are not benefiting producers; this became evident when Japan cut off trade with the United States. We are back to prices prior to the USDA report on the Washington BSE (mad-cow) case from Dec. 23, 2003. Remember, 10 percent of our beef exports go to Japan. This figure alone should raise awareness of what is really going on. When congress passed the Chilean Trade Agreement, the time frame agreed on by the USA was to give up import tariffs in "Seven" years. Why is this important? It serves as a baseline for all other trade agreements. Can you see what happened? These "free trade" agreements are coming and someone sold us out. You cannot be a low cost producer in a global market without lowering your standard of living at the same time.

If you do nothing you will have nothing or you can choose to become involved, participate and make a difference. Yes, we have all been misled. We need help if you are wanting to leave a legacy to your children or your community. Only you can make this choice. Do we continue to put neighbor against neighbor or do we have healthy communities where we might all reevaluate our time, family, values and goals?

In closing, this is a comment that I recently heard: "Why do people think that the local and state government should provide services, roads, medical, education, etc. when we do business abroad?"

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