

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

We're overlooking our real problems

Such a stir one middle-aged woman's breast can cause. Congress wants an investigation, new laws, stiffer fines for indecency. Federal Communications Commission chair Michael Powell wants new rules, slaps heavy fines on foul-mouthed radio jocks. Across the country, people howl and wail. OK, it was tasteless and tacky. If not for the fact that millions of Americans were watching the pathetic Super Bowl halftime show, not much mention would have been made. It wasn't, after all, a whole lot more than the family would see on a Sunday trip to the beach.

Nudity has become a staple on cutting-edge television, on cable but also on network drama. Just because NYPD Blue airs later, do you really think the kids aren't watching? It probably wasn't such a good idea, but a national emergency? The country has greater problems. Domestic violence, for one.

It was three weeks after the Janet Jackson flap before anyone even mentioned that the song and dance routine she and Justin Timberlake were doing bordered on abuse. He was singing about tearing her clothes off, and no one seemed to mind. So, is it OK to talk about roughing your woman up, as long as you don't show any skin on television?

Domestic violence is a major problem, though much of society still tends to look the other way. Domestic cases often are not reported publicly and far too often, no charges are filed. There's still a feeling that what people do at home stays there. Is sex on the air a problem? The feds levied huge fines against a disc jockey who calls himself "Bubba the Love Sponge" last week. We haven't heard his program, but how does it compare to the dozens of people shot and killed by cops, bad guys and good guys during the average television week?

Why is all this violence OK? Why do video game producers pander to our violent side? Maybe blood sells even better than sex. Compare the two, and decide which is more harmful. Wife beating, or skin? Murder as entertainment, or Bubba the Love Sponge?

In a world where children die every day of disease and hunger, where women are abused in country after country, where cheating amounts to business ethics and lying passes for statesmanship, is a little skin the biggest problem we have?

After the outcry this year, a repeat is unlikely at any future Super Bowl halftime. But is anyone getting worked up about the real problems we face?

By Steve Haynes
Nor'West Newspapers

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansan.com, fax to (785) 462-7749, or call (785) 462-3963. And remember that your submission needs a daytime phone number, address and signature of the writer. Phone number and address are used for verification purposes only. If you so request, however, they can be a part of your submission.

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freepress@nwkansan.com

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Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Tom (TD) Dreiling - Publisher
td@nwkansan.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansan.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Representative
crystalr@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

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Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Credit the angels

Tom Dreiling

• My Turn



your newspaper from the rack."

We hugged and went inside.

While eating, and talking about everyone and everything, Peggy mentioned that it was quite a coincidence that we all ended up here for lunch. Huh?

"Didn't you get my e-mail?" I asked.

Peggy said they never did notice a reply when they last checked on Friday so assumed I wasn't going to be available for lunch. So a stop in Colby was questionable.

And because my tardy response wasn't detected before they left on their trip, they ended up at the Village Inn at noon on Tuesday simply because Molly was starving, a term most high school seniors use. And Peggy was hungry, too.

And the newspaper rack? They were going to buy a copy of the *Free Press* which, I guess, was a second best to not seeing me.

Angels looking over us? Guiding us? Perhaps there is more truth to that than many of us realize. There is simply no other way to explain this incredible set of circumstances. It looks like the angels relayed my e-mail to their subconscious as they toolled along Interstate-70. Enough to send chills up and down your spine!

WITH spring just days away (it officially starts Saturday) we are currently getting a taste of spring's better side — warm temperatures, a little bit of a breeze. Only thing lacking is moisture, but that's certain to follow. I notice where the weather folks are predicting the lower 80s

THIS is incredible, to say the least. After this experience I am looking at things a bit differently.

Last Wednesday, I received an e-mail from my niece, Peggy Uppenkamp, who lives in the Denver metro area, informing me that she and daughter Molly, would be traveling to St. Louis (via car) to look over Washington University. Their travels would be on I-70. They would leave Saturday and return Tuesday and would stop in Colby for lunch if I had time.

I always have time for family.

So, Friday night late I e-mailed her a note that I would most definitely be around and would look forward to treating them. (I almost forgot to respond.) I told her in the e-mail that as they travel westbound on I-70 to take the second Colby exit, turn left at the stop sign, pass under the I-70 overpass and on the left is the Village Inn and that we could meet there at 12 noon. I had a couple of other goofy comments included in the e-mail, such as driving time from Hays (where they were staying on Monday night) to Colby is 1 hour, 35 minutes (me driving) but that with Peggy driving it would not be nearly that long (reference to a speeding ticket she had received en route to last summer's family reunion in Tulsa). I also told them the treat's on me and to eat lots.

And that was that.

So on Tuesday, shortly before noon, I arrived at the Village Inn. I checked around and they weren't there, so I waited in the lounge area at the front of the restaurant. As I glanced out the window I saw their SUV pull up and park in a stall just a car away from where I was parked (they wouldn't recognize my car because they hadn't ever seen it). It was 12 noon. "Right on time," I said to myself.

As they approached the door I went over to open it. I noticed they hesitated at the newspaper rack so I opened the door and said, "This is my other job — door man."

"Well, Uncle Tom!" Peggy exclaimed. "How nice to see you here. We were just about to buy

Those 'glamorous' generators

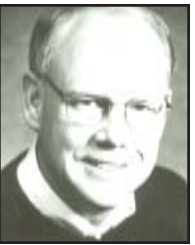
There are three essential components of a good electric system. The first is a good reliable generator; the second is a good transmission line that transmits the electricity to your community and the third is smaller distribution lines to local businesses, farms and homes.

The 'glamorous' part of the system is the generators. I don't care whether it is the nuclear reactor at Wolf Creek, the coal-fire plant at Holcomb, the hydroelectric plant at Lawrence, numerous gas and diesel municipal power plants or the wind generators at Montezuma; there is a certain majesty observing these marvelous machines. I have always enjoyed the sounds and smells, watching the gauges and every visible moving part at the Oakley Power Plant.

A couple of years ago I spent an afternoon at the Bowersox Power Plant in Lawrence. The water current turns the turbines at 109 revolutions per minute and it was very fascinating watching technology that is centuries old still supply electricity for the electric grid. Several times I have visited the Montezuma wind farm and marvel at these massive wind machines; the tower is 208 feet tall and the three blades are each over 70 feet long and I am told the latest technology is at least 50 percent larger than these.

The ignored crucial component of a viable electric delivery system is the transmission lines. These are the large electric lines that go from community to community, the support towers are so ugly that no one wants them to destroy their view of a Kansas sunrise or sunset, and they are a nuisance to farm around.

Historically, transmission lines were constructed by a utility operating as an integrated monopoly that owned the generator and held a franchise to serve the businesses and residents of a specific service area. Because of its monopoly status the rates were set by the Kansas Corporation Commission and the utility had an opportunity to earn about 12% annually on its investment. Eventually transmission lines interconnected with other utilities so that they could supply each other with electricity during planned maintenance and repairs of each others generation system. In time, because the trans-



Stan Clark

• Under the Dome

mission lines connected generation between states, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission became responsible for determining the rates that could be charged for using the transmission lines. This is a little more difficult than might be obvious on the surface; electricity follows the path of least resistance and therefore cannot be directed in any particular direction.

Newly constructed generation is likely now to be built by a company that is not a utility but has negotiated long-term contracts with a utility to supply electricity. Sunflower Electric at Holcomb is considering constructing a second power plant but would be the operator and probably not the owner of the plant. The wind generators at Montezuma are owned by a company in Florida but the electricity is marketed by the company that serves the Dodge City and Liberal area. Before more wind generation can be constructed in Kansas we have to have more transmission lines to carry the electricity to market and the crucial question becomes: How do we encourage construction of more electric transmission lines?

It has been a huge question since the California power shortages several years ago, became center stage with the blackout from Michigan to the east coast last August, and the discussion continues today. Discussions and plans do not build transmission lines.

For a few years the discussions centered around two ideas; either the ownership of the transmission lines should be separated from all generation and companies would be formed that would own, operate, and maintain the electric transmission system with rates established by FERC; or the current utility companies would

for Friday, then in the 60s over the weekend and back up around 70 early next week. Can't beat that!

IF Lisa Marie Presley continues to talk, Michael Jackson is doomed. As you know she and Michael were married for about two years. She gave an interview in Australia and said some things that raised some eyebrows. Must have been a wacky kind of union.

AND now we learn that Whitney Houston has checked into a drug rehab center. Someone said on the tube the other morning that we should pray for her. What? How insulting! Here's a woman who had made millions of dollars enabling her to feed her drug habit and now that she's in a tailspin I am supposed to pray for her? Perhaps the mouthpiece who spoke of love and prayer the other morning should have cautioned us about Whitney's problem when prayer might have helped. I focus my prayers on my son's well being as he serves his country in Korea, and the well being of all our military personnel stationed around the globe. They need it. Whitney? We all sleep in the bed we make.

WHAT is an Oxymoron?

Oxymoron definition: A rhetorical figure in which incongruous or contradictory terms are combined.

Example: "Oxymoron" — removing the Ten Commandments from the courthouse while making people in court swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God," while your hand is on the Bible.

Hmmm, never thought of it that way. Thanks, Joan!

HAVE a good evening!

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

own the transmission lines but the lines would be operated by a newly formed company established specifically for this purpose. When the 265 megawatt coal-fired plant was built at Holcomb the company constructed transmission lines that could carry about 1000 megawatts. Since electricity flows where there is least resistance, other companies use the lines. One Sunflower employee likens the system to the following analogy: You buy a brand new car; you pay for the insurance, fuel, maintenance, and taxes. Then, you also have to give the keys to your neighbor, schedule months in advance whenever you want to use YOUR car, but have no absolute assurance that you can actually use YOUR car when the time comes.

The legislature is considering allowing municipalities and utilities to use Kansas Development Finance Authority bonding when constructing transmission lines, to allow accelerated depreciation cost recovery and to allow a greater return on their investment. Talks are ongoing to construct another north-south line by the east edge of my legislative district to connect to major transmission lines in Nebraska and Oklahoma. This will relieve congestion on current lines and open opportunities for further development of wind generation in the area. Additionally, a 21 mile transmission line is going to be built this summer for the City of Kingman utilizing aluminum conductor core technology. This is a new high-temperature, low-sag cable that is simple, cost-effective and rapidly deployable technology that can deliver up to twice as much power as conventional transmission cables of identical size. Some of the plans are starting to be implemented; I am looking forward to a time when we can harness more of our wind, solar and other renewable resources to meet our nation's energy needs.

Please feel free to contact me on this or any issue. I can be reached by writing to Senator Stan Clark, State Capitol-Room 449-N, Topeka, KS 66612; by calling 1-800-432-3924 or 785-296-7399; by FAX at 801-457-9064; or by <<mailto:sclark@ink.org>> sclark@ink.org.