

Opinion



Monday's Salute

Thumbs



to...

✓**Cathy Gordon** and **Chris Gordon** — on your election as delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Boston this summer.

✓**Trooper Tod L. Hileman** — on your promotion by the Kansas Highway Patrol.

✓**Ron Redick** — the new High Plains Mental Health branch office manager in Colby. Welcome!

✓**Dawn Stephens** — good luck with your physical therapy clinic.

✓**Bob Renner** — on that super cool birthday gift!

✓**Leilani Thomas** — keep those informative “On the Road” column coming.

✓**NW Kansas Corn Growers** — on your big annual meeting in Gem on Tuesday.

✓**Kiwanis Club** — for another exciting “Easter Egg Hunt” at Colby’s Fike Park.

✓**Les Brown** — best of luck on your move.

✓**Blood Givers** — and potential donors, don’t forget the blood drive on Wednesday at the high school from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

✓**Nick Wells** — and all others associated with the Colby Community College Endowment Association’s annual fundraising auction, for another very successful evening.

✓**All School Crossing Guards** — thanks, thanks, thanks!

This column is prepared each Monday morning by the newspaper’s publisher. Comments, questions or submissions to td@nwkansas.com, fax (785) 462-7749 or call 462-3963. Thanks for you help!

Addresses of elected officials:

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
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. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web:<http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorriso>
State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

freepress@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

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

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

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Representative
crystal@nwkansas.com

Kathy Brooks - Advertising Representative
kbrook@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

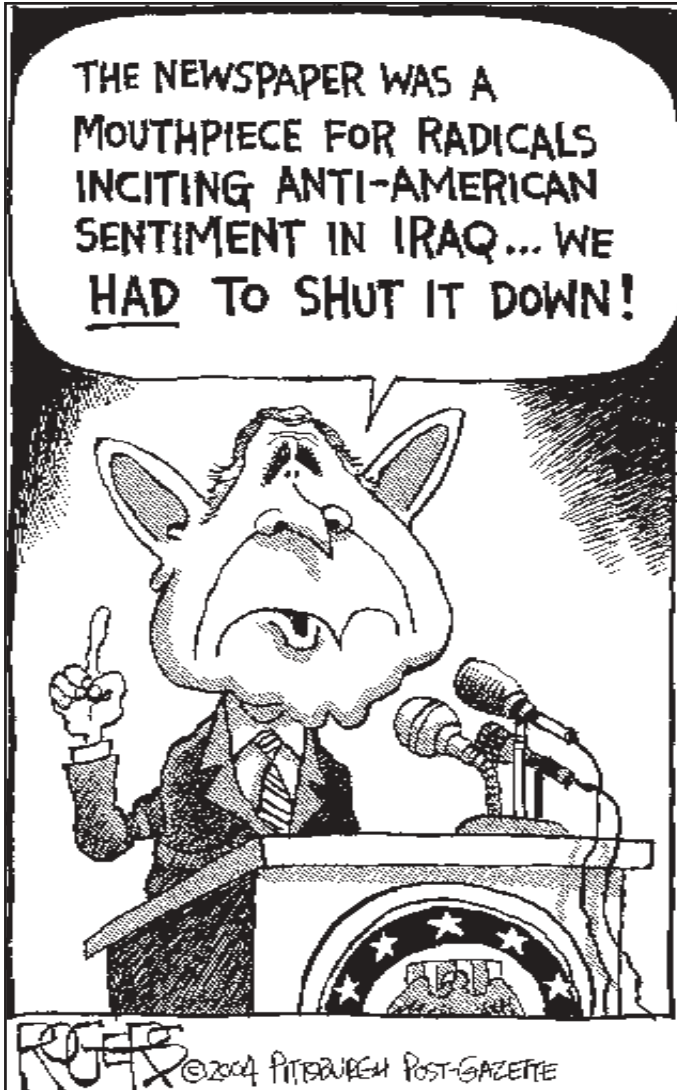
PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company



These ‘cons’ are lots of fun

Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path



I had always scoffed at and shied away from science fiction conventions, mainly because of the way the people who frequent those events are portrayed in the media.

That was when I was in high school when I really had no chance to even get near a convention. All that changed when I went to my first con, as they’re called, in Oklahoma City.

It’s amazing how things can change.

Since, I’ve been to two Starland conventions, an anime con and another gathering in Denver. Three of those were in one year.

The one that had the most “normal” people was NanDesuKan, the anime (Japanese animation) con in September, 2001. Lots of kids and families were at that one and it was one of the most fun events I’ve attended.

The anime con was the one I enjoyed most, besides the spring 2002 Starfest event that my sister went to also. But NanDesuKan was fun because it was unique and everyone was out to have a good time.

It wasn’t driven as much by the guests and panelists, most of whom were Japanese voice actors and Americans who did adaptations of the Japanese works, people I had never heard of.

It was more about getting together and celebrating a common interest, and it wasn’t as hectic as the other events I’ve attended. I think the fact it was less than two weeks after Sept. 11 in 2001 contributed to the atmosphere but it was still memorable in its own right.

Some people dressed up in costume and some were quite creative, including a Speed Racer. (I find myself having to explain that one quite a bit but if you want to know more about

Speed, go to <http://www.speedracer.com>, which will explain everything.)

The regular scifi cons usually bring people out of the basements and woodworks in costume.

At the 2002 Starland spring con, there was a detachment of Imperial Stormtroopers that nearly rumbled with the local Klingon regiment.

Seeing “real” Stormtroopers from Star Wars was a kick. Those guys were more than happy to show off their custom-made armor (some of those people make their own) and their weapons.

I learned quickly that some of the “Star Trek” fans can be really, really uptight, especially the ones who dress up as Vulcans or Starfleet personnel but the Klingons are usually pretty happy-go-lucky and easygoing, amazing considering that’s a complete 180 from how Klingons are “supposed” to be.

We met two actors from the classic “Star Trek” series, William Windom and Jack Donner, who had memorable guest appearances on the show, and actually got to talk to them both because everyone was busy getting autographs from Connor Trinneer, who is a cast member of the third-year Trek series “Enterprise.” (Two words: zoom lens.)

We also attended sessions with “Spider-Man’s” Tobey Maguire and Batman-to-be Christian Bale. I also had a five-second run-in at the anime con

with Scott McNeil, a Vancouver voice actor who did the voice of Wolverine in the animated series “X-Men Evolution.”

There are panels, discussions, games, displays, a dealer’s room and showings of movies and other programs of interest.

Most of the people are nice but there are a few hard-core fanatics that scared me and made me glad I’m relatively normal compared to some of them. My younger sister, Chris, got dragged to one of the Starland cons and I don’t think she was too impressed, although I think she did enjoy the panel with Christian Bale before the movie “Reign of Fire” came out.

And she thought Marina Sirtis, who was in the television series “Star Trek the Next Generation” and several Trek movies, was totally out of her mind.

Anyway, it was kind of nice to let her see how the other half lives, although I think it was a traumatic experience for her. For me, it was hectic because it was the first time I had to watch out for another person at one of those events.

By the way, I wasn’t the one who dressed up as a Jedi for the midnight premiere of “Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones.” Oh, and Chris, I’m going to hold you to the bunny costume thing. . .

Cons are fun. Don’t get me wrong, I love my science fiction and anime but I don’t think I’ll ever do that many in one year again. Not unless the guest of honor is someone really, really good, like, say, Hugh Jackman.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkansas.com.

Why should you serve?

John Schlageck

• Weekly Insight

While farmers and ranchers continue to fill our plates with food, their plates are filled with an ever-increasing number of issues. Such issues include escalating production costs, tightening use of water, continuing drought in some western Kansas counties, an ongoing search for new markets for agricultural crops and increasing oversight and regulation to mention a few.

And while these are good times for some in production agriculture, they are very trying times for others. Living out on the land in the rural areas of our state, farmers sometimes experience feelings of isolation — that I’m only one voice, one person, one family and one small enterprise in an age of dwindling farming populations coupled with a continuing exodus to larger, regional urban centers.

That said, membership and leadership roles in farm and commodity organizations are more critical today than ever before. There is strength in like-minded people. There is strength in numbers. There is also credibility when farmers and ranchers tell their own story with a common thread and a common purpose.

Even though spokespersons for this vital industry continue to advocate on behalf of agriculture, farmers and ranchers still speak best. There is no substitute for farmers and ranchers telling the agricultural story.

You begin at sun up and work until sunset during spring planting season. You put in 16-hour days during harvest. You bundle up and head into a fierce snowstorm to help a heifer calve. You must demonstrate the same courage and conviction when telling your story.

Make time. Take time. Those outside our profession aren’t going to be the ones who defend us and tell our side of the story. If our story is to be told, we must make sure the job is done. It is up to you. It is up to me.

That leads me to the following question, have you ever asked yourself, “Why should I serve?” Each day people ponder and anguish over this question. These same people wring their hands and spend sleepless nights trying to decide.

One of the strongest reasons to serving hinges on the personal satisfaction an individual derives from giving of him or herself. John Ruskin once said, “The highest reward for men’s toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.”

Before you decide to serve on a board or committee, evaluate the organization’s position. If you believe in the ultimate goal but disagree on how it’s being implemented, it should be a challenge to serve and redirect the methods used to achieve this goal.

Some people hesitate to serve because they are unsure how the board or organization operates. No one enjoys appearing foolish or unin-

formed, yet each group has its unique procedures. Everyone must serve as a novice while learning working procedures.

Never feel embarrassed because you do not know all the answers. Remember, you will not be alone when asking questions.

Perhaps you are uncomfortable about serving and the thought overwhelms you. In that case, don’t bite off more than you can chew.

First participate on a small scale until you become comfortable and confident. Begin by serving on a committee. Next expand your sights and serve on a local organization. Continue stepping up your involvement to include county, district, state and national organizations.

Once you have committed your time and effort to serving, be dependable, prompt, prepared and contribute to that committee, organization or board.

“Leadership is that intangible quality in an individual which makes men do better than themselves; which makes men dream greater dreams and perform braver deeds.” This quotation embodies the spirit of people working together for the betterment of their industries and communities. It comes from one of Sam Rayburn’s, Bonham, Texas, addresses to Congress. Rayburn served as Speaker of the House under eight different American presidents.

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.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

