

Opinion



Monday's Salute

Thumbs to...



✓**Don Kready** — for lending your arm, once again, to the local Red Cross blood drive.

✓**International Students** — at Colby Community College, for that yummy for the tummy.

✓**Coach Brad Wildeman** — your efforts and hard work merit appreciation.

✓**Gem Community** — the perfect hosts for the Northwest Kansas Corn Growers Association meeting.

✓**Maurice Rasmussen** — enjoy your new home at Fairview Estates.

✓**Joe Leibbrandt** — the Extension office's newest agent.

✓**All Participants** — in the recent Alzheimer's Association "Memory Walk" for a cause well directed and accomplished.

✓**Thomas County Health Department** — one of the eight counties making up the Northwest Bio-Terrorism Region, for the responsibilities you will shoulder when the call goes out.

✓**Anonymous** — for the assistance rendered in a time of need. (The note received said those involved know who they are and they do not seek public acclaim.)

✓**School Bus Drivers** — heroes in their own right.

This column is prepared each Monday morning by the newspaper's publisher. Comments, questions or submissions can be e-mailed to td@nwkansas.com, faxed to him at (785) 462-7749, call 462-3963 or mail him at 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701. Thanks, in advance.

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Will this help the Cubbies?

Major league baseball season kicked off last week. It hasn't been too high a profile yet and probably the most noticeable happened in February.

The Chicago Cubs have cursed themselves again. On national television Feb. 26, citizens of Chicago gathered to try to rid the Cubbies of the second-longest championship drought in major league baseball.

The ball, the infamous ball that fans and players alike blame for ending the team's run for a pennant last year, was executed on live television.

The ball was in a Plexiglas container, hooked up to wires. When the signal was given, the ball was jolted with electricity. It was over in mere seconds and when the smoke cleared, the burst ball's innards were scattered inside the container.

Slow motion capture revealed the ball exploded from the shock it received.

One view wasn't enough. They had to show the gruesome sight over and over again from many different angles.

In the words of my sister, "How could anybody do that to a poor innocent little baseball?"

My sentiments exactly.

All joking aside, it wasn't all for nothing. The ball became a rallying cry to end the Curse of the Cubbies but the effort to send the ball to its finally resting place was all for a good cause — it raised more than \$1 million for charity, including juvenile diabetes.

Now, some could accuse the city of Chicago of going a little too far in the fans' quest for vengeance but come on — it's one of the things we Americans excel at — when something just



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

doesn't set just right.

We retaliate, especially when it comes to something as sacred as the American pastime.

We live in a supposedly civilized country and laws have made it virtually impossible to beat somebody to a bloody pulp without getting in too much trouble (of course, that is unless you're a hockey player) so the masses have been forced to turn to sports to quench their thirst for blood.

What if the Cubs have not only not done anything to help themselves but have only aggravated the existing curse? I'm no expert but karma is not something that should be messed with.

OK, baseball fans electrocute baseball, the most essential element of the game. No ball, no game. So what if they have, in effect, cursed all baseballs the team comes in contact with from now on to betray them in a manner that ball did?

If somebody would just let a descendant of William Sianis watch a game at Wrigley Field with a goat, it might break the curse. That's a big maybe.

To recap, the Cubs haven't won a pennant since 1908 and haven't made an appearance since 1945 when the curse of the goat was lev-

eled by William Sianis when he and his billy goat were ejected from Wrigley Field during the World Series that year.

Because no one would let Sianis back in with the goat, he allegedly cursed the team.

As a wise man once said on SportsCenter, a craftsman shouldn't blame his tools. A public execution was overkill.

They could have used another ball (execution by proxy?) and I don't think anybody would have known the difference.

It could be a possibility that the real ball is in a vault in Cooperstown, where it should be. Another fate almost too scary to contemplate is that it could be in the collection of one Keith Olbermann, MSNBC-TV anchor.

The former ESPN anchorman is a baseball fanatic. I wouldn't put it past him to have struck a deal with the devil to get that baseball. It's a longshot but what if it really wasn't destroyed and it now has a place of honor among the memorabilia in Olberman's baseball collection?

It's a situation similar to what happens in some museums — the item on display isn't really the real thing either because the forgery is so good the staff isn't aware of it or it's a reproduction to protect the actual item.

A dirty trick?

Not really.

Because what's more important — breaking the Cubbies Curse or preserving a priceless piece of baseball memorabilia?

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

Bipartisan? My eye!

Another smoking gun has proven itself to be loaded with blanks, at best. No, this is not about a weapons find in Iraq that fizzled, it's about a memo to the president that was hyped by liberal opponents as the 21st century equivalent to 18 minutes of blank tape on Richard Nixon's tape recorder.

Except it wasn't. Far from it, the memo simply told the President that Osama bin Laden's people were in America and probably wanted to blow something up or hijack an airplane. Not a bad deduction considering they had already tried to blow up the World Trade Center eight years earlier and hijacking is pretty much terrorist 101.

By the way, the full text of the memo was in several newspapers over the weekend. Just get a Sunday paper and start looking. You'll find it and be amazed at what it doesn't say.

Democrats are howling about the inaction in the face of this memo, but one of their own answered the question for them. Sandy Berger, one of the top National Security aides to President Clinton, told the commission investigating the attacks on the World Trade Center that it would not have been politically feasible to do more.

Can you imagine the uproar if the White House had interrupted or stopped flights over a memo that told them what everyone in the national security business had known for almost a decade?

Speaking of concern for contradiction, do you remember when the Democrats were screaming



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

that we didn't have enough troops in Iraq? I do, because I was saying the same thing. Now, however, that we are talking about sending more troops, we're hearing references to Viet Nam and more specifically the Tet offensive.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) asked if anyone else saw any references to Viet Nam in this besides him. Well, I do see one similarity. Our modern Congress has shown the same ability to bend to the political winds that made it ineffective 40 years ago. The difference is we have a president committed to a course of action he believes to be right. Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) compared the fighting in Fallujah and other places to the Tet offensive and again he might be right on a few points. For one thing, the Tet offensive nearly broke the North Vietnamese.

Although victory would have been dubious in light of the corruption of the south, we will never know because we decided we needed out.

The same thing can happen in Iraq and with leaders like Byrd and Biden defeat becomes a

very real possibility.

Did anyone notice, by the way, who quietly got a free pass for a private, off-the-record interview with the 9-11 commission? None other than William Jefferson Clinton. In the din about Dr. Rice testifying and the president and vice president answering questions together, that sort of slipped under the radar.

It is interesting that this supposedly non-partisan panel treats a former president on whose watch many of the actions leading up to the main event happened with more deference than a sitting president who is trying to do something about them. In the end, it all boils down to an election and a timid Republican Party. The Democrats are out of power and want very desperately to get back in. The part I don't understand is why.

They still control the Congress. Just look at the judicial appointment process and the Republican apology for an unconscionable conspiracy by Sen. Edward Kennedy. (D-Mass.) What's even better, when something goes wrong they can blame the Republicans for listening to them.

They really don't have anything to gain unless they're afraid Hillary will run next time.

Maybe both parties finally have something on which they can agree.

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• Gary Trudeau



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