

# Opinion



## Letters

### About raising taxes...

(The following letter was written to Rep. Jim Morrison and Sen. Stan Clark. The author shares it with our readers.)

Dear Jim & Stan:  
When I recently visited Topeka with a host of my fellow Farmers Insurance Group agents, I had hoped for an opportunity to stop in and speak with both of you, but you were both obviously busy and out of your offices. Stan, I saw you briefly during the Senate session that our group observed that day.

Jim, I appreciated your recent article in the *Colby Free Press*. I think you are on the right track. When I had an opportunity to visit with you briefly in the Colby Post Office last week, I became convinced that you are. I shall state my position herein, and hope that both of you take notice:

Kansas must raise significant new revenue. To any citizen with an ounce of common sense, this means that taxes are going to go up. It is a fact of life, and we had all better get used to the idea. Those voters who are writing to you, calling and e-mailing saying, "Don't raise any of my taxes!" are either not aware of how the state operates, how schools, highways and other mandated programs are funded (or they have their heads buried in the dirt that was blowing Sunday afternoon!) The things and programs that are financed by the State Government are very important to all of us. Perhaps the most important of these is support for our schools. You legislators and the Governor have been put on notice by the judge who said, "Increase school funding, or else!" Ultimately; eventually, you will have to raise our taxes to do it. We all know that.

So what do I think would be the most fair, equitable, sensible way to do that? These tax increases must come from the most broadly, distributed group of Kansans. That means the bulk of the increase must be an across-the-board sales tax increase. That way, everyone who buys something in Kansas will be contributing, in proportion to their spending. (And don't try to put it on the "sin" taxes, either, such as alcohol and tobacco sales or on gambling — that's just supercilious, as well as inadequate!) A second best, though less desirable source, would be an income tax increase. However, it MUST NOT come from increased property taxes! And that is precisely where it will be levied if you do nothing, or continue to vote against proposals to increase sales and income taxes. You both know that school districts are allowed to increase their property tax levies via the "Local Option Budget" and they will absolutely have to do this all across the state, unless you and the Governor enact a better way. That means the bulk of revenue will come from our out-dated property-tax system, and be paid for by the beleaguered property owner. That is the most unfair tax of all!

Stan, I know you oppose any form of tax increase, but I urge you to reconsider your position. Tax increases are coming, and you have an opportunity now to make it more equitable and fair when the time comes. A percentage or two of sales tax for everyone to pay will be the most palatable. I do not want the tax revenues that are needed to come from property taxes! I shall be listening and reading carefully for a change in your position as the upcoming elections draw nearer. I know it may prove difficult to persuade the knot-heads who are crying, "No new taxes!" but you must persuade that vocal few that a sales tax increase would be better for them than the other choices. I assure you of my strong support in that effort. Please don't hide behind the vocal minority and defer your difficult decision to the local superintendents and school boards. They will hurt us worst of all with the L.O.B., and I am counting on you and Jim not to let that happen.

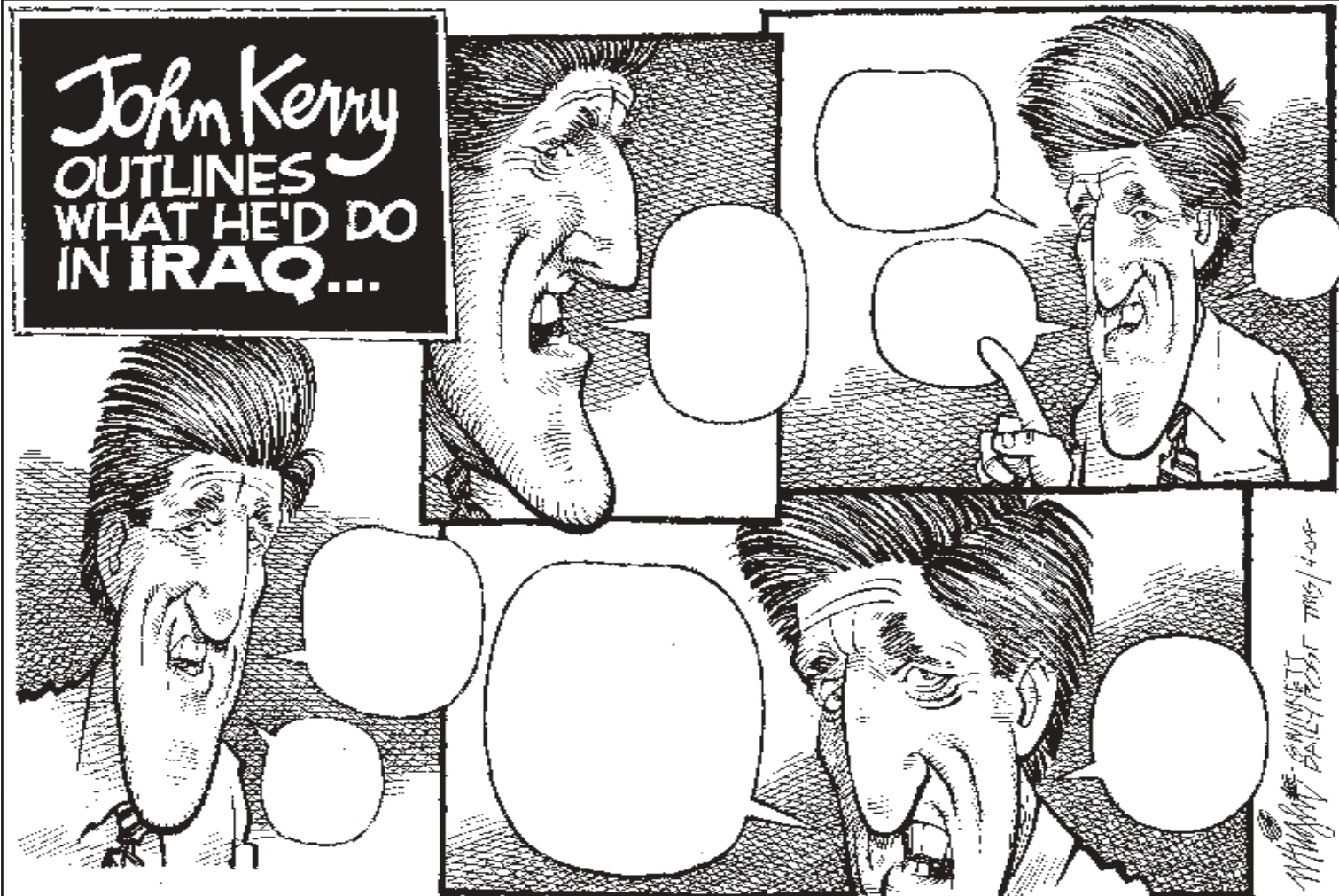
Sincerely,  
  
**Rod Eisenbise**  
Colby  
abiseco@st-tel.net  
(Letter #24)

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## I visited *Jesus* at his home

The headline probably caused an eyeball or two to pop. But the headline is true. Yes, I found *Jesus* at his home this past Sunday. Quite a coincidence, huh?

"And just where does *Jesus* live?" you ask. I answer, "2601-A Augusta Lane, Hays." How did *he* ever come to live at that address? Well, that's a story in itself.

You see, some while back, St. Joseph's Parish in Hays had a service that involved apostles and *Jesus* prior to the Last Supper. And the roles of the various biblical figures were assigned to members of the parish.

Well, low and behold, my nephew, Tony Dreiling, was asked to be *Jesus* in the re-enactment.

When news of his selection swept swiftly through the family network, complimentary words raced via cyberspace to his computer. After the initial response to his selection (Tony's in his mid 40's), the family's lighter side began to show through. E-mails began with, "Dear *Jesus*:" The messages were then humorously crafted to take advantage of the situational role he portrayed.

One uncle from Tulsa (Gene) made reference to the fact that *Jesus* has come a long way, from riding on a donkey to driving a Jag.

The Sunday visit elicited comments like, "Gosh, didn't know *Jesus* lived this well," in reference to the new digs *nephew Jesus* and wife Cyndy moved into, which, incidentally, are in the shadows of TMP-Marian, a Catholic high school. The Augusta Lane *Jesus* even offered his guests 'refreshments,' with his wife at his side.

The more the family chats about Tony's role, the more humorous the situation becomes. But he's good natured, deeply involved in his church and would have been disappointed if this opportunity slipped by without family 'input.'

Oh, today's *Jesus* does work for a living. He's employed by the United States Postal Service in some kind of supervisory capacity at the post office in Hays. I don't know what all that means — but *Jesus* does.

**MY DRIVE** back home to Colby late Sunday afternoon was like riding one of those thrill things at an amusement park. The wind was more than



### Tom Dreiling

#### ● My Turn

I anticipated when I set down on I-70 and the dirt just added to the stress. Bucking the winds, which at that time of day were trying to determine their own direction, was unnerving. My general driving time from Colby to Hays, or in this case Hays to Colby, usually takes an hour and forty minutes — when I slip a little beyond 70 mph, it takes a little less. In the wind and dirt on Sunday, it took me 15 minutes longer. The spooky thing was gong around the 18-wheelers and some of the bigger recreational vehicles, some of which were having difficulty staying on the road. Those had to be thrill rides of their own. I thought to myself that for first time Kansas travelers this was one heck of an impression to leave them with. How often have you driven through a state for the first time and whatever the weather at that time was your impression of overall conditions in that state? Boy, Mother Nature was sure upset with us for some reason Sunday, although Tuesday wasn't a quiet day out there, either.

**THEY** are beginning to scare us again. Homeland Security has been talking of late about possible attacks by terrorists right here at home (*home* being this country, not Colby specifically). Soft targets, they say. In fact, Condi Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, was babbling about perhaps even an attack just days before the Nov. 2 election, much as they did days before Spain's voters went to the polls, resulting in a leadership change for that country. In this country, they talk about shopping malls, railroads, places where masses gather — classified as soft targets. Yet, despite all this scary talk, the color-coded bar hasn't been changed. The bar in question is the alert level. If in fact we are taking steps to defend ourselves against an attack,

should not the bar reflect that concern? They tell us not to change our daily routine. Just be ourselves. Sure. You bet. With some goofy people casing the place (*place* being our country) we're supposed to act as if nothing's wrong? We know something is wrong. We're reminded of it each and every day (just listen to the news). I think if truth be known our leadership itself is surprised that nothing has happened here since 9/11.

**HERE** are some actual analogies and metaphors found in high school essays. Feel free to smile:

✓She grew on him like she was a colony of E. coli and he was room-temperature Canadian beef.

✓She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.

✓From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and Jeopardy comes on at 7 p.m. instead of 7:30.

✓Her hair glistened in the rain like a nose hair after a sneeze.

✓Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph.

✓They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth.

✓The plan was simple, like my brother-in-law Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.

✓He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a garbage truck backing up.

✓She walked into my office like a centipede with 98 missing legs.

**ENOUGH** is enough!

**HAVE** a good evening!  
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*Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. E-mail td@nwkans.com, or fax him at (785) 462-7749.*

## They have done a great job

Thomas County Commissioner Duane Dawes is retiring, and last I heard, Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock hadn't made up his mind whether to run for reelection or not. These guys have done a great job and I learned a lot about government and politics from them. It was a pleasure to sit at the feet of our tribal elders and watch them work.

One of the first things they did when they came into office was to seek approval for the elevator in the courthouse. (I encouraged them a little bit.) Since the courthouse was on the National Register of Historic Buildings, they had to have permission from the State Historical Society to install the elevator. The previous commissioners had been trying for several years to get permission but kept being told their plans were not approved and reminded that there was a hefty fine (for each and every day for each and every commissioner) if they disregarded the historical society's ruling.

Never mind that the building violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), an elevator was not going to be approved. Never mind that signatures had been collected on a petition for the elevator, and photographs and suggestions had been sent, approval was not going to be granted.

Kersenbrock remembered that there used to be an entrance on the south side of the building and suggested it be opened up and the elevator installed. Rep. Jim Morrison and then-Senator Sheila Frahm got involved, and eventually, the historical society said, more or less, "Oh, is that what you wanted. Why didn't you say so?" After a nine-year struggle to get permission from the historical society, approval was finally granted in October of 1993. (I think interpretation of the Historic Register regulations have been changed somewhat since, but this was early in its history.)



### Maxine Nelson

#### ● Random Thoughts

Installation took several months and it was a red letter day when the elevator was inspected and licensed. The elevator sees constant use, and is beneficial to many people.

The commissioners have been good about complying with the ADA. I remember the day I took my manual wheelchair to the commissioners' meeting and we took Commissioner Ron Evans for a ride around the courthouse. He soon found out some of the disadvantages of being in a wheelchair, and I think we all learned something. (The chair would go into the 'accessible' bathroom, but you would have to climb over the armrests on the side to get to the stool.)

Also taking place the same week as the elevator was inspected was approval of the Thomas County Office Complex, which had been the Good Samaritan Center. (The county owned the building, and the center was managed by Good Samaritan.) When the hospital representatives decided to build the new Prairie Senior Living Complex to replace the Good Samaritan Center, the county had an empty building on its hands. Since the county was in need of office space, the commissioners decided to make it into an office building. Months of consultation, discussion and remodeling went into making it what it is today. (I see the office complex is about to get new carpeting, and it certainly needs it. When you start tripping over the wrinkles in the

wall-to-wall carpet, it is time for a new one.)

An ongoing headache for the county commissioners has been the Thomas County landfill. From an earlier unfunded mandate which included closing the local landfill and transporting all the trash elsewhere, or hauling it to an incinerator, the state and federal governments finally decided Thomas County qualified for a small arid landfill exemption (if I remember the terminology correctly). In other words, because the amount of trash was small, and because it was a long way down to the water table, and we had good solid soil between the landfill and the water table, we could continue to use the established landfill.

Then the state found a small plume of contamination from the landfill, and the commissioners learned they had to close that pit and open another.

I don't remember what year that was, but at the time I retired, going on two years ago now, they thought they had arrangements made for state approval for the new pit. A few months ago, Evans said it still had not been granted. He told me he had spent many sleepless nights worrying about the landfill, and I would guess he still does.

There are many other details in the day-to-day business of the county which the commissioners must conduct, keep abreast of the current state and federal laws, and find funds where there aren't any.

Despite that, I have never heard them say a bad word about anybody. They have done a great job, and I wish the best of luck to our new commissioner or commissioners.

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*Maxine Nelson is a retired Colby Free Press reporter and editor. She writes as the mood strikes her.*