

Opinion



Monday's Salute

Thumbs



to...

✓**Herb Sunderman** — on your years of service on the Colby City Council.

✓**Greg Koenig** — the community awaits your arrival as Eagle football chief.

✓**Colby School Board** — for the ‘break.’

✓**Mike Woofter and Jon Eicher** — deserving honors, indeed.

✓**eagleatalon staff** — your newspaper just keeps getting better.

✓**Bill & Deb Mariman** — the dogs and their owners are excited.

“**Ring Round the Moon**” cast — you impressed a lot of local and area folks.

✓**Bill Biel, Tina Harris, Kristen Ostmeyer and Harold Sulzman** — your installation will enrich the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce board.

✓**Phil DeYoung** — on your appointment to the Colby City Council from Ward 1.

✓**RSVP** — for all you do in the area of volunteerism for Thomas County as highlighted by the *Free Press*’ “Community Page” on April 22.

✓**Brian Staats** — on your successful tenure as president of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

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 drop by or mail to the office at 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701.

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/jmorrison
State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

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freepress@nwkansas.com

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

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcox@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

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The march to the Stanley Cup

Spring. When a hockey fan's fancy turns to thoughts of Lord Stanley's Cup and the long march to the finals.

The signs of spring showing are hockey players in the playoffs stop shaving and let their hair grow out.

The first round isn't even over and there have already been triple overtime games and several of the series were sent to crucial game sevens.

If we're lucky, the second round will be over by the middle of the first week in May, but I think that's wishful thinking. It's taken two weeks to get the quarterfinals over but for the teams that ended their opening rounds early, they get to rest during that time period.

Already, I've tried not to lose sleep by staying up to watch overtime games and the west coast Vancouver-Calgary games from the Garage in B.C.

Speaking of the Canucks, they choked at the crucial moment in overtime against the Flames who beat them in seven and are now playing Detroit in the second round and are hoping to win their first Cup since 1989.

I know the Vancouver fans will be wondering what might have been for a long time and blaming it on the absence of Todd Bertuzzi who was suspended for his brutal hit on Colorado's Steve Moore last month.

Aside from crying over spilled milk, the playoffs are the pay-out for fans and players alike. Fans get to see no holds barred hockey and the players at this point in the season are playing for no other reason than the privilege to drink from Lord Stanley's Cup.

Players don't get paid once the regular season



Tisha Cox

• **Off The Beaten Path**

is over so a championship is their motivation.

Ever seen the Stanley Cup? I have, but I couldn't get that close. It's the only trophy to bear the name of the players who win it. It's also special for another reason—everyone on the winning team gets one day with the Cup to do with it as they please.

The silver chalice has done everything from sit in the dugout at a New York Yankees game to serving as an oat holder for a race horse to being used during a christening back in 1996.

It's also been a Jell-O mold and has been thrown into various bodies of water over the years.

And only in recent times has it been allowed out of the United States and Canada. Colorado's Peter Forsberg was the first player who was allowed to take the Cup out of the country. Along with its handler, the trophy went to Forsberg's hometown of Ornskoldsvik, Sweden in 1996.

The next year, it made its first trip to Russia. The original trophy was a silver chalice whose replica now graces the top of the modern incarnation of hockey's championship prize.

Made of sterling silver, the modern cup's top bears the likeness of the original, followed by a

neck and then five removable rings that make up the body. As the rings fill up, they are removed to make room for the future.

The rings are engraved with the names of the players on the teams who win the Cup.

Besides the playoffs, there's going to be a lot of hockey over the next few months. Said playoffs won't end until the beginning of June, and at the same time, the World Championships will be going on.

Players whose teams didn't make the playoffs or who were knocked out early get the chance to represent their countries at the championships.

Early this fall, the best of the best will face off in World Cup play in Germany, an event that hasn't been held since 1996. It starts in early September. The last time, the United States won. I remember the team they fielded. It was a tough, hungry team, many of whose members later went on to win Stanley Cups over the past few years.

That says a lot about the caliber of players and the event. Then it's training camp and onto the beginning of another season.

But first, teams have to get through the next two rounds to see who plays in the finals. And as usual, the finals promise to be a grueling, sudden-death series. It only takes four games to win it all but sometimes it takes seven games to win those four.

I can hardly wait.

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

Keep an eye on your kids

John Schlageck

• **Weekly Insight**

Before long kids will toss their schoolbooks and pencils in the far corners of their rooms, don their Magellan garb and embark on a course of outdoor exploration.

For many rural children, railroads, dumps, junkyards, abandoned properties and ponds make exciting places to explore. It is up to parents to decide where suitable adventure sites may be found. It is also their responsibility to forbid children from exploring hazardous play areas.

Each year, hundreds of railroad trespassers are killed and injured, according to the National Safety Council. Children who crawl under or pass around lowered gates, walk the tracks, cross trestles, take shortcuts across railroad property, hop trains, climb in, on or around railroad cars run a tremendous risk.

This spring take the time to warn your children of these dangers. Instruct them to obey warning devices and insist they never cross a railroad track until they have looked both ways and are sure it is safe.

Never assume children will act like responsible, mature adults. Kids will be kids. Advise them often because they forget.

There is always something magnetic about a junkyard. When I was growing up in northwestern Kansas we had an abandoned dump within easy walking distance. We dug and sifted through the trash at the site for hours, collecting little treasures to add to our growing collections. Sometimes these “keepers” as we called them consisted of rusted iron spikes, neat-shaped bottles, broken wrenches and tools, chemical

containers and other cast-offs.

While we weren't aware of it or didn't care, the risk of injury was always present. Wasps, snakes, rats, spiders and other creatures scrambled and slithered to move out of the way of our excavation projects. Broken glass and boards with rusty nails threatened to cut or puncture our small feet. I will never forget the pain and tears of stepping on a nail.

Dumps also feature trucks, bulldozers and other heavy equipment. It's difficult for operators to see children scooting among the debris. Such equipment can easily crush kids. Warn your children to stay away.

Dark deserted buildings - including barns and abandoned farm houses — often have the reputation of being haunted. Such structures were always considered another adventure when I was a youngster.

Big kids often dare little kids to go in. I remember accepting the challenge and brushing my way through cobwebs and crawling around rodent holes and fleeing mice. Although I survived, I wouldn't advise any child of mine to do

the same.

As a youth, my dad always warned me again and again about swimming ponds. I guess the repetition paid off because I never swam in such pools of water until I was in high school and an “okay” swimmer.

Remember to tell your children about such ponds. They are deep. You can be into water up to your knees the first couple of steps and the next — over your head.

Where there are no lifeguards, kids drown. Fencing off ponds may help.

Warning signs also may serve as a deterrent, but kids always find a way into the water.

Farm machinery also offers up plenty of safety hazards for youngsters. Combines, tractors, disks, toolbars all have the potential to crush or maim young hands, feet and bodies.

Talk to your children. Warn them about such potential hazards. Then warn them again. Saving one child's life is worth the effort. Many times it takes more than once for them to grasp your warnings.

Lead by example and remember that as a parent you have been entrusted with safeguarding your children's well being. Having a child is indeed a treasure. Take care of, cherish and nurture this wonderful gift.

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

