

Opinion



Monday's Salute



to...

Thumbs

✓**Kiwanians, Firemen** — for a super fireworks show!

✓**Sada Munkres** — for your part in helping to foil the jewelry store robbery.

✓**Bradley Herndon** — new pastor at Colby's First Baptist Church.

✓**Richard Homm** — for the opportunity to sit behind the 'mike' at a rodeo in Wisconsin.

✓**Marc Gilman** — on your appointment as Colby's new utilities director.

✓**Curt Stephens** — on your election as chairman of the Colby Community College board of trustees.

✓**Janice McCart** — new CEO at Citizens Medical Center.

✓**Theo Kleinsorge** — on your appointment to the Class of 2008 at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

✓**Shane Waterman, John Morgan, Brian Saddler** — on your involvement in and showing at the Technology Student Association convention in Nashville, Tenn.

✓**'Litter Troops'** — for keeping our roadsides clean and attractive.

✓**Quentin Bear, Samantha Juenemann, Jami Williams** — on being named recipients of the 2004 Thomas County Farm Bureau Association scholarships.

✓**KXXX** — on your 57th birthday!

(This column is prepared each Monday morning by the newspaper's publisher. Questions, comments or submissions to him at td@nwkansas.com, by fax to 785-462-7749, by mail to 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701 or call the office at 785-462-3963. Information for inclusion must reach him no later than 9 a.m. on Mondays.)

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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

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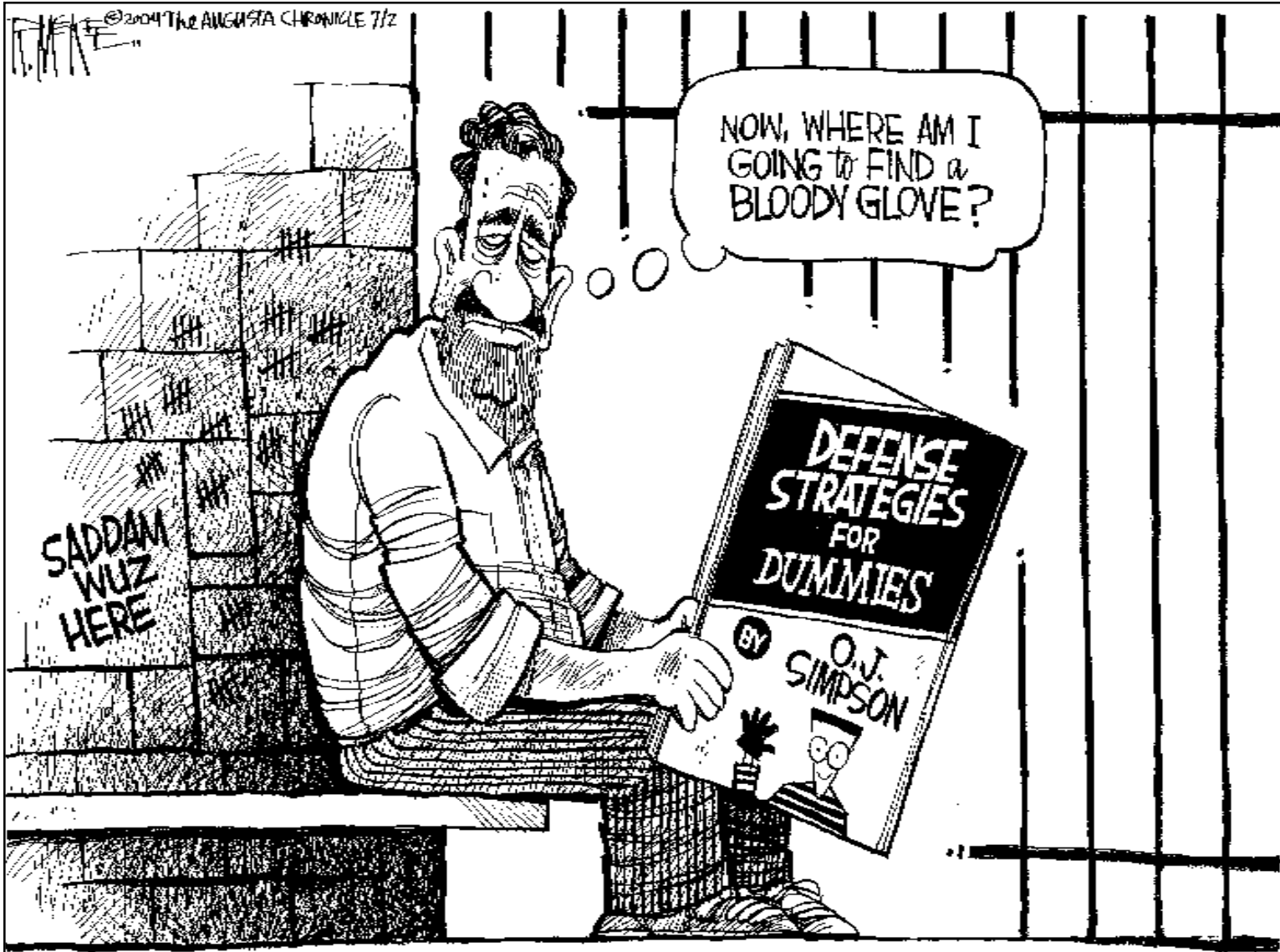
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Let's talk a little hockey



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

I had all but forgotten about hockey by the time the finals finally ended and was writing off an interesting off-season.

In a little over a week of said off-season, things are jumping.

July 1 is the date when things start to happen. The finals and draft are over and it's the beginning of the free agent signing period, which, this year, the last person on Earth I expected a reminder from gave me a wake-up call — my little sister reminded me that one the most dreaded stretches in the hockey year is at hand.

That lead to the discovery the Rangers had released Eric Lindros which made me angry but revived hope he might yet get picked up by a decent team. (Lindros and the Rangers together, I have learned, are a lost cause. Now the two are mutually exclusive again. That is worth a column on its own.)

And according to my source, Detroit might be interested in signing Lindros. I hope that doesn't happen.

I'm surprised the Canadian journalists aren't jumping all over the Lindros release but unless they know something I don't, they're keeping quiet. Hardly a peep yet but if there's a rumor, I'm sure we will hear about it.

(Got some time and wanna learn about hockey politics and psycho hockey moms, go look up "Eric Lindros trade" on any Internet search engine.)

Rangers captain Mark Messier is in limbo again this summer, except he hasn't been traded like he was last year. He's going to take his sweet time this summer deciding if he wants to come back for one more year.

Other relatively big news is the Rangers retained Tom Renney as coach. Stupid, stupid move. He couldn't coach Mark Messier in Vancouver so what makes him think he can coach him in New York if he comes back?

Colorado dropped a bombshell Wednesday, July 7 with the demotion of head coach Tony Granato and the hiring of Joel Quenneville to replace him.

Coach Q, as he's known around the league, whipped the St. Louis Blues into a successful, consistent team and he did it without a roster full of overpaid, underachieving players. In his seven years in St. Louis, he did have a few well-known names but nothing like what he will have to work with in Denver.

General manager Pierre Lacroix's hiring of his former assistant coach is an unusual move but one that will hopefully be greeted with enthusiasm by players and fans alike.

Other big changes are former Detroit Redwing Dominic Hasek is now in Ottawa after the Senators traded Patrick Lalime, who is one of the best young goalies in the league today. He's now in St. Louis, which can use a good goalie.

There are more big names people might have heard of that are free agents this summer, including Paul Kariya, Teemu Selanne, Brett Hull, Chris Chelios, Brendan Shanahan, Pavel Bure, Al MacInnis, Sean Burke and Felix Potvin.

Switching gears, it's time for a little hockey fun. Here are some hockey trivia facts:

There were originally six teams in the NHL — the Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Redwings, New York Rangers, Boston Bruins, Toronto Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens. There

are now 30 teams in the league, 24 in the United States and six in Canada.

New York state has three teams — the New York Rangers and Islanders and the Buffalo Sabres. A Gordie Howe hat trick is a goal, an assist and a fight during a game.

Gordie Howe, the greatest Detroit Redwing ever, is the only hockey player to ever play the game in six decades. (Howe was the Wayne Gretzky of his day.)

Mark Messier is the only player to ever captain two different teams to the Stanley Cup finals (Edmonton and New York).

Hockey is one of the fastest growing sports in the south, not NASCAR, which is growing in the north. Go figure.

The average age in the NHL has gone down while size has gone up to 6'2" 200 pounds. The game has also gotten faster.

An NHL hockey rink is 90 by 185 while an Olympic sheet of ice is slightly larger at 100 feet wide and 200 feet long.

The Stanley Cup is the only professional sports trophy players get to take home for 24 hours. All the members of the winning team, including the coach, trainers, etc. get one day with the trophy to do with as they please.

Peter Forsberg was the first player to be allowed to take the Cup outside North America. He took it to his hometown in Sweden. Lord Stanley's Cup has now been all over Europe, Russia and also Japan. Europeans in the league now almost outnumber Canadians and Americans.

(Parts of the above column were taken from <http://www.tsn.ca> and <http://www.southcoastal.com/history/cup.htm>.)

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Keep your eye on the middle twenty percent

The responsiveness of our national economy is amazing. One day we are in the midst of the longest bull market in our nation's history, and then suddenly the boom is over. Bearish economic trends are touted, consumer confidence wanes, investors seek safe havens for their capital and the declaration is trumpeted that we are in an official recession.

Conversely, when the pundits and prognosticators perceive that the latest economic indicators have turned sufficiently positive, consumer confidence soars and once again the nation is back in business.

This observation is not intended to trivialize the significance of economic data or to disrespect those who keep and purvey the statistics. It does, however, recognize that it is not the data that makes markets move, it is the public perception of the data which carts the course for our near term economic fortunes.

An ever more fascinating aspect of our financial markets is the fact that, when provided the same exact information, the public never perceives the data in the same way. In the best of times, the bear's growl, snarl and predict the worst of things to come. And in the worst of times the perpetual bulls, the keepers of the glass half full, charge into the future, confident that we will all soon awake to new growth and prosperity.

Truth is, it is the middle twenty percent of our



Gerry Fulwider

• A View From the Range

citizenry that determine our markets. Forty percent of our neighbors lean toward bearishness. They consistently yield to a cautious, prudent philosophy, and reliably perceive all market data as justification to predict future economic perils. The second forty percent consist of bulls that are certain the same data confirm that the best is yet to come. It is this middle twenty percent that will diligently evaluate the data. It is their perception and resulting response that will ultimately tip the scales and determine the market's direction.

And so it is in rural America. Arguably, our friends and neighbors who reside in the towns of northwest Kansas may be far removed from the markets of Wall Street. Mother Nature and the crop conditions in Brazil have a greater influence on our prosperity than the Dow Jones Industrials. Nonetheless it is suggested that it is this same bull and bear philosophy that will ul-

timately determine the future of our communities.

We are all forced to make decisions predicated on our perception of the economic future of Thomas County. Should we start a new business? Is it wise to expand my current business? Should we build or purchase a new home? Can I plan on the value of my home or business appreciating at a rate equal to or greater than inflation? Is it fair to hope that my children and grandchildren my one day call Thomas County their home?

To answer such questions, data is required and we at Thomas County Economic Development Alliance do like data. In the upcoming weeks, TD (Tom Dreiling, Colby Free Press publisher), has agreed to provide this column as a forum for us to present economic data pertaining to our community. We will present both the good and the bad for the reader's judgment.

It will be written in a "modified no spin zone" with any commentary directed neither to the bulls nor the bears but to that middle twenty percent whose perception will ultimately determine the future of our communities.

Gerry Fulwider is executive director of the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance. He can be reached at 785-462-4511, or e-mail gerry@thomascounty.com.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

