

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Visitor proves that ‘silence is golden’

There was no fanfare.  
No drumroll.  
It was a quiet visitor settling in.  
But this ‘visitor’ was a long time coming.  
The tri-county area of Thomas-Logan-Sheridan woke up Sunday to snow. Yes, snow! And it deposited the white stuff on and off throughout the day. The wind was a non-factor. Slight breeze. The stuff stayed where it fell.  
Then is paid another visit on Monday.  
And Tuesday.  
Amounts ranged from better than 8 inches in the Oakley area, around 7 or 8 in the Hoxie area and not quite as much in the Colby area, maybe 3 inches, although some reports put it at 4.  
But it was appreciated.  
The moisture content varied in the area. But regardless of the content, little is better than none.  
We needed that ground cover on those fields in which a new wheat crop will soon emerge. We couldn’t bear to go through another winter with a lack of moisture that is so vital to our economic well being.  
We can only hope this is the start of something good. Repeat performances by Mother Nature will be our prayer.  
February isn’t known for producing a lot of snow, but with what we have received since Sunday we are well on our way—if not there already — to beating the average for this month for the immediate Colby area which is 4-5".  
The snowfall even brought smiles to the faces of a lot of folks.  
“Nice.”  
“Beautiful.”  
“About time.”  
“Thank the Lord.”  
“Bring it on!”  
These were just some of the candid comments expressed in coffee houses and lunch tables around the area.  
They say “silence is golden.” This latest snowfall underscores the accuracy of that statement.  
Keep your fingers crossed, your knees bent that snow continues to bless all of those things that won’t grow to their fullest without its help.

Tom (TD) Dreiling  
Free Press Publisher

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### COLBY FREE PRESS

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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.

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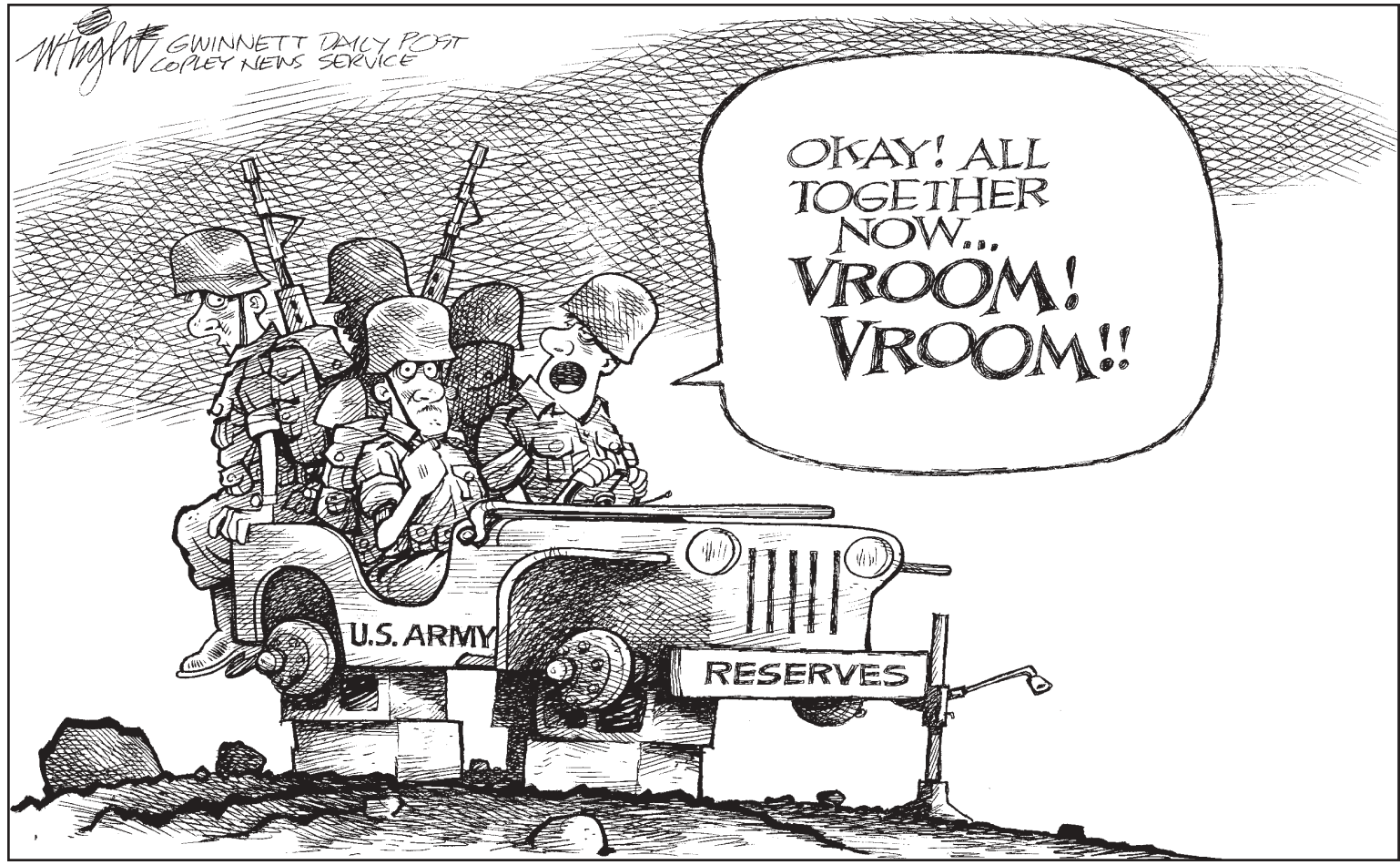
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 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 \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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## Playing with Social Security



### Tom Dreiling

#### ● My Turn

**THEY** tell us there are fewer people paying into Social Security. How can that be when reports coming out this week show another 190,000 new jobs were created, and over the past two years the figure was 2.5 million new jobs. If those figures are correct and those are *new* jobs wouldn't that mean there are 2.5 million more people paying into Social Security?

Reports also say there are more people working today than ever before and if that is correct wouldn't that mean there are more people paying into Social Security today than ever before? Something strange going on.

Those who “steal” from Social Security’s so-called “lock box” to pay for pork barrel projects are playing a game with us to further their case for altering the way Social Security benefits are paid out.

Or maybe...

Those so-called *new* jobs aren't new at all but jobs that are being filled by people laid off when American companies decided to jump ship and move their operations overseas where wages are cheaper and those dudes don't kick in to our Social Security system. In that case, then, their claim that there are fewer people paying into Social Security would be right, thanks to outsourcing of jobs.

The more they talk about Social Security the more I am convinced those doing all the talking are not focusing on the entire picture, but instead, are looking at a picture made of puzzle pieces with some pieces missing. Those missing pieces allow them to distort the situation.

Social Security has worked so well for so long, and now we are about to “fix it.” It's probably the only government program that has survived this long, and unfortunately, that is more than some politicians can stand. Once it is dismantled—and kid yourselves not because that's what is going to happen—it will become just another government program viewed as an anchor around the government's neck and they'll do away with it.

So, why should I worry at my age? Because I have children and grandchildren and guess who will be most affected by whatever is decided? You're right!

Enough of that.

AN OLD man and woman were married for

many years, even though they really disliked each other. When they had a confrontation, screaming and yelling could be heard deep into the night. The old man would shout, “When I die, I will dig my way up and out of the grave and come back and haunt you for the rest of your life!”

Neighbors feared him. They believed he practiced black magic because of the many strange occurrences that took place in their neighborhood. The old man liked the fact that he was feared. To everyone's relief, he died of a heart attack when he was 78.

His wife had a closed casket at the wake. After the burial, she went straight to the local bar and began to party as if there was no tomorrow. Her neighbors, concerned for her safety, asked, “Aren't you afraid that he may indeed be able to dig his way up and out of the grave and come back to haunt you for the rest of your life?”

The old gal put down her drink and said, “Let him dig. I had him buried upside down.....”

**NO ONE** even close to answering Question #9: “What lighted Colby sign is not what the lettering conveys?” I thought it would be easy, but it is proving not to be. Still time to get your answer in, and remember movie tickets await the winner each week. Will need your guess by Thursday afternoon.

**THAT** was sort of a nice snowfall, right? At least the wind didn't blow it down into Oklahoma! Looks good to see the ground decked out in white. And the temperatures, while not extreme, are cold enough to jar our memories of the season at hand. There will be more snows. Guaranteed.

TALK seems to indicate that Ted Koppel of

ABC-TV's “Nightline” might be on his way out. Again. Ratings are down significantly, they say. No word what they will replace his show with. I had to chuckle yesterday morning when one insider commented that CBS—which Dan Rather is leaving and replacing him will be gray-headed Bob Schieffer, and which is also the home that claims the oldies on “60 Minutes”—needs to look at people younger than 85 to fill their news slots.

**I FIND** the BTK serial killer mystery at Wichita fascinating. How it resurfaced after all these years is amazing. Apparently the killer is one of those who got away with murder and probably never left Wichita ever. Do I think he'll eventually get caught? That's difficult to answer. If it's the real BTK killer, he won't get caught, but if it's someone playing the police along, he will. And I think that's what makes it so fascinating. I guess it has swept all over the country and people in many places are researching and following it.

**TODAY** is Ash Wednesday, the start of the season of Lent. Like New Year's and its resolutions, I also do special things during Lent, like reading, reflecting. Sort of my way to prepare for the death and resurrection. I also visit my church during the weekday afternoons. That sort of thing.

ON this date in 1964, The Beatles made their first live American television appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show” on CBS.

Today's Birthdays: Television journalist Roger Mudd is 77. Actress Janet Suzman is 66. Actress Mia Farrow is 60. Country singer Travis Tritt is 42.

**A THOUGHT** for today: “Modesty is the conscience of the body.”—Honore de Balzac, French author and dramatist (1799-1850).

**HAVE** a good evening!

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## A matter of who is spending what

A fundamental change has been taking place in how we deliver governmental services in the past quarter century, but it has accelerated in the past decade.

A number of public services that previously were delivered by traditional public agencies have been shifted both to pseudo-public boards, economic development councils, convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce and to private firms and not-for-profit organizations.

One doesn't have to look far to find such services as economic development, tourism promotion, correctional services, solid waste management, foster care and adoption, for instance, being outsourced to organizations and companies who have no obligation under the law to open up their records to public scrutiny.

While we don't believe the intent of this shift of responsibility was to shield these services from public scrutiny, that is nonetheless what has happened.

The Kansas Press Association, in coordination with the Kansas Attorney General's Office, has initiated legislation in Senate Bill 80 and House Bill 2119 to bring accountability to all those who receive and spend public dollars to perform what

### Doug Anstaett

#### ● Your Right to Know

have traditionally been regarded as public functions. It has been the public policy of Kansas and certainly of the United States since the days of our founding to treat those who receive public tax dollars differently from those who provide private services. We've done that for a simple reason: those who are paying taxes to support state and local units of government have a right to know how their money is being spent, who is spending it and why.

Thomas Jefferson spoke of this more than two centuries ago. In 1781, he said: “Every government degenerates when trusted to rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe rulers.”

Our legislation attempts to redefine “public agency” to include those private companies that

derive at least 50 percent of their annual expenditures from taxes or fees collected by cities, counties, school districts, the state of Kansas or the federal government unless those entities already provide an accounting of their expenditures that could be accessible to the public.

This change to privatization of public services has shifted a huge responsibility to the private sector with no accompanying accountability. Public agencies are subject to the Kansas Open Records Act and the Kansas Open Meetings Act. Private companies doing public services are not.

We think that is wrong. Millions of public tax dollars go to these pseudo-public agencies each year. We think the people of Kansas have just as much a right to see how those tax dollars are spent as they do those spent for public safety, road maintenance, personnel and other functions. Therefore, we strongly urge the Kansas Legislature to support changes that would bring more accountability to the spending of public dollars in Kansas.

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### Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

