

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Baughn begins to find the answers

Some people may think Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn should not be sheriff anymore after what happened last week. Those people may be right, but that won't solve his problem.

Baughn did the right thing — he admitted he has a problem and plans to do something about it.

Last week, Baughn stabbed himself after he drank too much during the state's sheriffs' conference in Junction City. Baughn said the drinking, combined with recent stressful situations at work and at home, led to him putting a knife in his stomach. He is recovering from his injury.

Baughn said he has drank in the past but stopped, but admitted drinking during the conference. He said he had one too many drinks one evening. We only hope Baughn did not intend to abuse alcohol.

If alcohol causes a problem in your life, you have a problem with alcohol. It's that simple.

The problems of alcohol abuse have created a laundry list of issues; from breaking up marriages and families to the occasional, fatal drunk-driver accident. Baughn could have ended his life.

What can be done with those who abuse alcohol can be found from coast to coast. Many towns, including Colby, have an Alcoholic Anonymous chapter. Those who attend AA meetings share their problems related to drinking and strategies on how to improve their life. Baughn said he will never drink again.

Stress is something everybody has in their life, in one way or another. Baughn is no different.

Baughn has had his share of stress at work because of the recent death of a deputy and another deputy injured. Other than mourning the loss of a coworker, the office probably had to reschedule responsibilities, which is a job in itself.

Baughn said he has problems at home.

We all have our breaking point.

There is hope, and Baughn found that too.

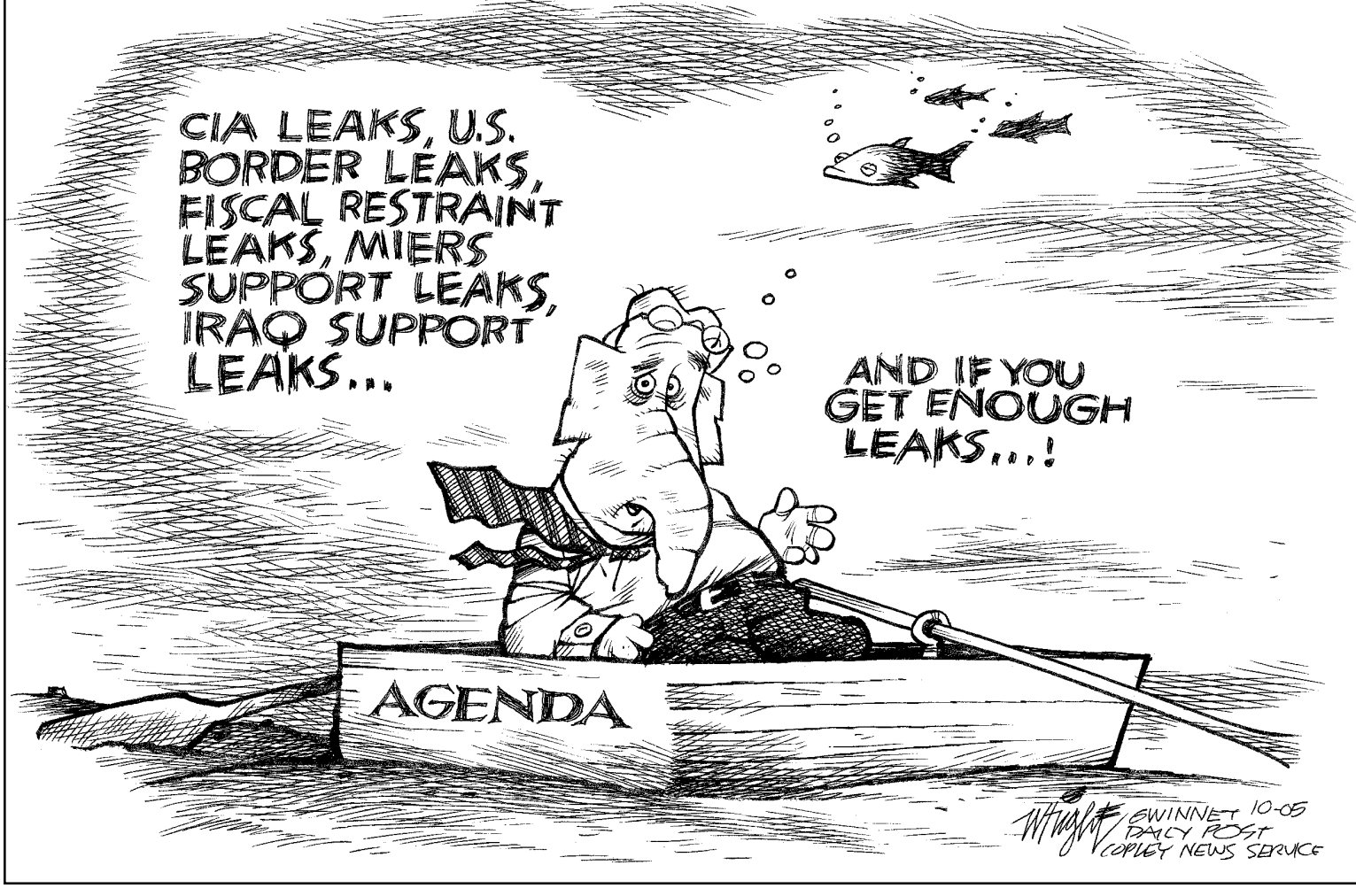
During treatment after the attempted stabbing, a psychologist told Baughn he has had too much stress. Communicating problems with others, like a psychologist, is a good way to handle the stress. That communication may lead to how to cope with the issue, if it doesn't solve the problem. Baughn said his stress treatment will continue.

Physical exercise is another way to ease the stress. Baughn plans to do that as well.

Baughn mentioned using his Christian faith as a way to improve his life. Amen.

The future of Baughn continuing to serve as Thomas County Sheriff has not been determined. Baughn is doing the right thing about making sure his future as a person improves.

John R. Van Nostrand



## A holiday not on the calendar

The end of the year holiday season is coming. Families are probably scheduling Thanksgiving dinner from what will be served to where it will be served at. Christmas decorations are slowly making their presence at stores.

One holiday that should be created, but every federal office doesn't have to close for, is Spouse Day. Let me explain.

My wife Jennifer took the lead on preparing for our move to Colby. The moment I hung up the telephone in late August after accepting the job from Steve, Jennifer found a box and started packing things.

Jennifer fielded most of the ensuing calls from people interested in purchasing our house. She answered the questions from the couple who eventually purchased our house. Jennifer made herself available. If not, I don't know if the couple would have agreed to purchase the house as quickly as they did.

Jennifer was on the phone with our mortgage provider for our house in Iowa and making the financial arrangements for our house in Colby.

At the same time, Jennifer still had to take care of our two young children and work on closing out our various accounts from the utilities to the bank as soon as we knew the house sold.

Her focus and determination to get things done correctly and in a timely manner was second to



**John Van Nostrand**

- Line in the Dust

wants it. I need to get better at doing those things.

Jennifer and I are on two different wavelengths. She appreciates order and organization. I tend to find the easier, less complicated ways to finish things. But when one spouse does something for the other that benefits family operations, that makes the marriage stronger.

While in Iowa, Jennifer occasionally had evenings to herself, usually to scrapbook with friends. I cleared my schedule to stay home to watch the kids.

Jennifer was invited to speak at a Walk to Emmaus in March, a three-day faith-building event. Finding someone to watch the kids all day on a Friday was tough, so I used one of my personal days to avoid finding an all-day sitter.

At Emmaus, a woman asked Jennifer who was watching the kids, and Jennifer said I took the day off to do so. The woman was surprised I did that and wished her husband would do the same for her.

Husbands and wives, it is important to acknowledge your wedding anniversary, but do a little more. Surprise your spouse with flowers, a gift or just a big hug and tell them how much you appreciate them.

## Your turn

### Safety of travelers comes first

We are writing in response to your recent editorial about the Kansas Department of Transportation's policy on closing Interstate 70 and other highways during snow and ice storms.

Before the ink dried on your recent editorial, our agency had already met with local law enforcement personnel, emergency preparedness managers, troopers from the Kansas Highway Patrol, and our own employees from all the communities from Hays to Goodland along I-70 to discuss this very issue. On Oct. 20 and 21, we discussed our policies and heard comments from the local officials on how these policies affect each community.

You pointed out the frustration of local residents not being allowed through our snow gates in order to get home or work during a storm. Though it has never been our policy not to sort traffic, we realize some of the setbacks that have occurred in the past due to shortage of manpower or intense weather conditions. We addressed this situation during the meetings mentioned above. As a result of our discussions, troopers now have access to open the snow gates. In the future, the patrol and our local highway crews will make a coordinated effort in sorting

local traffic.

Still, there may be isolated incidents when the gates will be locked and unmanned. It might be due to "white out" or blizzard conditions where no one — including the traveling public and our employees — could safely travel on a roadway. Or, it could be because of a shortage of manpower, due to our crews plowing, working, and clearing other roadways involved in a storm. But it would never be because we would "put up a sign and go home."

We understand the frustration you and other citizens and business owners feel when travel is temporarily affected due to our road closures. Please keep in mind the safety of the traveling public always has been and always will be our top priority in every storm and road closure situation.

This year's snow situation arrived on Oct. 10 and ushered in an early winter storm, dumping two feet of snow between Limon and Denver. While some may think that this storm should have been Colorado's problem by allowing traffic to pile up in Colorado, our policies and common sense suggest otherwise.

As a neighboring transportation agency, the

department has the responsibility to make sure motorists are not allowed to travel into a situation, such as being stranded along the road in a blizzard, in which their lives could be at risk. We must balance traveler inconvenience with the potential risks of traveling into a serious weather situation and the likelihood of finding food and shelter along the way.

Although snow was not a factor in Kansas during this particular storm, travelers who were headed west on I-70 would eventually run into a closure in Colorado. When we know the roads will be closed on any portion of I-70, a coordinated public message is relayed to the media, local officials, and we strategically place variable message boards as far east as possible. This allows the traveling public plenty of time to pull off the road, use an alternate route, and seek a room, since motels could be filling up further west along I-70.

Chris McDiffett, Norton District 3 engineer  
Kansas Department of Transportation  
Capt. Kelly McGuire, Hays commander, Troop D  
Kansas Highway Patrol

**COLBY FREE PRESS**  
155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701  
freepress@nwkansas.com

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.

**John Van Nostrand - Publisher**  
jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

**NEWS**  
**Patty Decker - Editor**  
pdecker@nwkansas.com  
**Tisha Cox - General Assignment**  
tcox@nwkansas.com  
**Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter**  
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

**ADVERTISING**  
**Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director**  
crystalr@nwkansas.com  
**Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales**  
jasminec@nwkansas.com  
**Cindy Davis - Advertising Sales**  
cdavis@nwkansas.com

**BUSINESS OFFICE**  
**Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager**  
lea@nwkansas.com  
**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**  
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: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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## Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

