

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### Making a list

From the *Lawrence Journal-World*

The soldiers of the 891st Engineer Battalion of the Kansas Army National Guard are expected to be home for Christmas, but much of the military equipment they took with them may be on permanent assignment in the Middle East.

While families and friends in Kansas will rejoice at the unit's return, the fact that the battalion and many others from across the nation are coming home without most of their vehicles is of concern, especially to state officials who depend on National Guard units to help deal with natural disasters and other emergency situations. It doesn't make sense to ship the equipment, much of which now has heavy armor, back to the states, but replacing the equipment will be essential to the work National Guard units routinely perform at home.

When Gov. Kathleen Sebelius returned from a Thanksgiving trip to visit the troops, she noted that she had been monitoring tornadoes in 15 Kansas counties and a major blizzard in western Kansas. Among Sebelius' travel group was Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour. His state and others on the Gulf Coast already felt the effect of National Guard deployments that took much-needed equipment and personnel away from the effort to recover from Hurricane Katrina. According to Kansas Adjutant Gen. Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, it will take about \$21 billion to rectify the situation nationwide.

Sebelius said she brought back from Iraq a detailed list of the equipment Kansas commanders said the 891st would be leaving behind. Kansans should hope that she will be keeping that list and checking it twice until federal officials can furnish some replacement vehicles and supplies.

#### About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com) or [pdecker@nwkanssas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkanssas.com).

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

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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: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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## Plenty at stake over my steak

Congratulations to Japan for lifting its ban last week on American beef.

Almost two years ago, Japan and other countries put a halt to American beef after our first BSE case was discovered before Christmas. Since then, American officials have been negotiating with countries that stopped American imports to resume business.

Japan is a large importer of American beef. Similar to our fast-food chains, Japan has beef-and-noodle restaurants. Much of the cattle and beef we produce ends up in those places.

BSE was pushed to the front pages earlier in 2003 when a case was discovered in Canada. Analysts said it was just a matter of time before America would have its first case. At first, I understood Japan's decision to not allow American beef.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the whole world has been cautious of everything. People are afraid terrorists will taint our water supply with contagious diseases, disrupt our utility systems and spoil our food supplies. Even though the BSE cases were far from terrorist acts, countries don't want to take the risk of circulating bad beef intensifying everyone's fears.

But what confused me about Japan is the irony. Japan has had more BSE cases than the United States. They didn't want American beef but had more problems with their own cattle production and food preparation processes. It doesn't make sense. So how did Japan handle it's own BSE



### John Van Nostrand

#### • Line in the Dust

cases?

During the two years maybe Japan realized how silly it looked not wanting American beef considering they had bigger problems? Maybe Japan liked the changes in American cattle production and slaughter processes during that time? (American cattle younger than 21 months will be allowed into Japan.)

Maybe Japan's decision will influence other countries to reconsider American beef too.

American agriculture needed this change in Japan. Japan likes the parts of cattle America shies away from. For example, there is a much bigger market for cattle tongue in Japan than there is in America.

But I look at the big picture of agriculture. For the second straight year, America produced a record corn crop. There are plenty of markets available for that grain. We need to produce more ethanol, and cars that burn more ethanol, and we also need to consider more livestock production.

Part of our trade agreements are allowing cattle and beef from other countries, like Australia and Canada. But do we really need them? Are there enough resources in America to produce additional cattle so imported cattle and beef wouldn't be necessary?

I would much rather have America find and solve its own problems, like BSE, rather than wade through the unknown of problems and how things are handled in other countries, no matter what kind of relationship we have with them. We are relying so much on what is done in other countries.

We are at stake of the perpetual political unrest in the Middle East where much of our oil comes from.

The integrity of American companies using dirt-cheap labor in China may eventually be at stake because of the many human rights violations there. Many of those violations go unnoticed or unaccounted for.

We need to be more reliant upon ourselves.

We run a community calendar on Mondays. The calendar is a weekly list of upcoming meetings and events. We want to make that list as current and complete as possible. If you are a member of a civic or support group and not on the calendar, please let us know. We just need to know when and where the group meets.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the *Free Press*

## Your turn

### Attack on science education is serious

Jack Kriss

Colby

Last Monday or Tuesday (the 3rd or 4th), the dedicated majority of the Kansas State School Board achieved a significant advance in their cause.

With all board members having set and solid opinions, the majority achieved their purpose by the brute force of a 6-4 vote. All of the discussion and hoopla was superfluous, but of course arguments were presented for public relations purposes.

Prime among the Creationists' arguments is the once nearly defunct but revived and renamed "intelligent design" idea.

I'll say more about that ploy in future offerings. For now I have some tongue in cheek comments on their prating about a "balanced" presentation, an aid to "critical thinking" and such rot.

The latter notion may be worth some consid-

eration, but not in the present context, where the Creationists' intent is to cast serious doubt on evolution and to present a faith based creation story as genuine science, which it is not.

Back to "balanced" presentation. If this is a good idea, we could next "balance" the teaching of astronomy with an infusion of astrology. The astrology fancy has an astonishing number of believers and is about as scientific as Creationism.

Similarly, we could "balance" conventional arithmetic with numerology.

However, Creationists don't like these ideas because their validity is denied by most, if not all Christian denominations, along with fortune telling, consulting the dead, etc..

And what the core of the Creationist Movement wants, despite their contrary protestations, is to teach their religion in our public school science classes.

Maybe it would suit the Creationists better if

we took information for "balancing" textbooks and inserting opportunities for "critical thinking" into our science curricula from the Bible. The Good Book contains material we could use to beef up our teaching of nutrition, hygiene, shipbuilding and on and on. It even offers an alternative to Euclidean geometry.

Well, I've probably dug myself into a deeper hole than intended with my silly shovel, but I did give the tongue in cheek warning, and I have another kind of shovel at hand.

With straightened tongue, out of my cheek, I want to say that I consider the Creationists' attack on science education to be a serious, long term and ramiform problem for our society.

I've long avoided talking about it publicly because I knew that if I said anything I would have to say a lot to be of much effect and to avoid being misunderstood.

I guess with this little bit, I'm started. There will be more to come.

### Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

