

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Way to go Trojans!

Congratulations to the Colby Community College Lady Trojans basketball team for qualifying for the national tournament. The tournament, played in Salina, begins Tuesday.

This is the first Lady Trojan team to qualify for the national tournament. And it would be hard to find a better team. Colby, led by coach Tom Stephens, is taking an 18-game winning streak to Salina. Tuesday's Region 6 Championship win over regular-season opponent Barton County was a classic example of how good the Trojans are.

The Trojans had built a 14-point lead during the game, but Barton County was good enough to trim that deficit one point with 18 seconds left in the game. But Colby kept it's composure and held on for the win. All championship games should have that kind of excitement.

Colby Community College sports fans need to return the favor and take their excitement for the team to Salina next week.

— John Van Nostrand, publisher

Your turn

Thanks for the help

Sue Draper, unit treasurer
Jane McDougal, board member
Colby

Thank you to all who supported our recent mail campaign for the Salvation Army Thomas County Chapter. Thanks to Palace Drug Store and Colby Photo for allowing us to put counter kettles in their stores.

The money raised in Thomas County is used to help with a variety of needs. Vision USA helps with eyeglasses for those who qualify. Help with food, rent, utilities, medical needs, clothing and transportation are some of the areas where the money is used.

As needs rise, our level of donations this year was reduced. Donations are accepted at any time and can be mailed to Salvation Army, 225 N. Court, Colby, Kan. 67701.

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@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

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All in a day's work

If you haven't attended a county commission meeting lately, or at all, you ought to try it sometime.

I love attending the meetings of Thomas County Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen. While the trio is 100 percent committed to making the lives of Thomas County residents the best they can be, they certainly have jovial hearts.

For instance, two completely unrelated topics prompted a lighthearted moment right before bids for a new mower were opened during their meeting March 6.

Evans was upset by media coverage and criticism of how local, state and federal officials handled hurricane devastation in Louisiana. His disapproval of the situation made him comment about a plan of action he's developed should the board be faced with a similar crisis. And anyone in earshot could have heard Evans' plan that morning.

"I'm tired of reading about people pointing fingers, so I'm going on the record saying in case of a hurricane I'm commandeering all the school buses in Thomas County because I won't be accused of people not being able to get out of the county and buses being half under water," Evans said.

Once the laughter stopped, Evans proceeded opening bids for 15-foot, three-section mowers the county sought.

Part of what makes covering the meetings fun is not only the unpredictable comments by Evans, but his occasional quick trip to his file cabinet to retrieve a document he's put there for future reference.

I'd love to be a mouse in that file cabinet. Who



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

knows what sources of wisdom lurk inside? As far as buses half under water in northwestern Kansas? I'd be happy to see area buses with wet windshields.

Christiansen is the quietest of the three commissioners and sometimes it's hard for him to get a word in edgewise. And then there's Steele.

When I started reporting on the commission meetings Jan. 6, I walked into the meeting room and found two blue stripes of painter's tape dividing the large desk where all the action takes place. Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms told me the tape was there since Steele tends to "encroach on the other commissioners space." You should have seen Steele face when he walked in the room and saw the tape, sat down and found out his co-works had penned him in.

Harms was correct, because if you ever attend a meeting be prepared for papers to be scattered wide and deep in front of Steele. Tape now removed, Steele provided another moment of laughter at the March 6 meeting.

A much needed purchase of chairs for the commissioners now has them sitting up to the huge wooden table all at the same level.

Prior to the purchase, Paul sat a good seven or eight inches below his fellow commission-

ers. The new chairs are great, and they came with gadgets.

While reluctantly a quiet commissioner, Steele laughed with the rest of us in the room when he nonchalantly reached down while Evans was talking and released the vacuum in his chair.

Whoomp!
Steele dropped a good 10 inches down and stopped with a jolt. Laughter rang through the commission room and all of were as shocked as Steele as to what had occurred.

Back in place, the meeting proceeded and the county was once again in good shape. But, all jokes aside, the current county commissioners are some of the best of which I've reported about in my 13 plus year career. Not only do they get the job done, they make sure taxpayers are getting their money's worth.

— — —
This past weekend my faith in humanity was restored. Unbeknownst to me while shopping in Colby Sunday afternoon my necklace came off from around my neck. I didn't notice it was gone when I got home and changed clothes, but noticed when I dressed for work Monday morning.

A quick trip to the phone to call the store, and low and behold, as I described my heart shaped diamond necklace my husband gave me two Valentine's Days ago she held it in her hand.

Monday I retrieved my necklace and I'd like to say a great big "THANK YOU" to the honest person who turned it in to the front desk. God bless you for having done that act of kindness!

Why don't we get it?

A lot has gone wrong for the Bush administration lately and some of the problems defy any explanation.

I'm not talking about the flap over Dick Cheney's hunting trip. That was no more than celebrity gossip. It might have been political news if he had shot a Democrat, but even then there are more important things going on, such as the Dubai Ports deal.

What is really amazing to me is the Arab company was taking over for a British company and no one has even batted an eye about that.

I know, the British are the most reliable allies we have, but we have been selling and outsourcing bits and pieces of our national economic infrastructure for more than 15 years now and it isn't just the mean old Republicans doing it.

There hasn't been a candidate capable of making a difference in the race who wasn't a free trader since Ross Perot, who was apparently right about that giant sucking sound in spite of his other shortcomings as a nominee.

The Dubai fiasco has led some conservative members of the House of Representatives to push a bill to require American manufacture of goods necessary for homeland security. That sounds good, as long as we answer a few questions which might reveal the extent of our outsourcing.

First, what is necessary for homeland secu-



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

rity? Does the idea of the most used service pistol by United States forces being made by an Italian company bother anyone?

Second what is an American company? Chrysler is now owned by a German cartel and many foreign manufacturers have facilities in our country or own a substantial part of companies considered to be American.

A lot of folks are going to blow a gasket when they find out Halliburton (through Kellogg, Brown and Root) is in the running for the Dubai deal, but there are only a handful of companies in the world capable of doing the job and when you limit it to the Americans, there is even less competition.

We are told outsourcing is a necessary short-term evil and that things will turn around once the burgeoning middle-class in India start buying America products. What we are not told is that it is quite likely they will be products made by Americans working in America for companies owned by others.

There is a reason the Korean auto manufacturer KIA recently opened a plant in America. Regardless of the uproar about our schools, we still have the best educated work force in the world.

Once a manufacturer wants to go upscale they must have quality. Shoddy might pass muster for a cheap product, but not when it becomes chic and America still has an edge in quality control.

So, while we continue to outsource jobs and try to compete with the cut-rate volume sellers, we are being beaten at our own game and gradually bought out by the third world.

At some point in time, unless we do something, the places will reverse and it will be low paid, poorly educated American workers turning out shoddy products to be sold in the Indian equivalent of the five-and-dime store.

What can we do? Demand American-built quality at a fair price. No more free rides to global conglomerates. Invest in the workforce by tying welfare to education.

At one time, no one could match our ability to mass manufacture high quality goods, but that is passing and indeed is no longer true in some areas.

It's time to make a decision. Either lead the free world or let Dubai run our ports.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelley@st-tel.net.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

