

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### Flag waving

**The Hutchinson News**  
We do not know whether to fret about rampant intolerance or simply chalk it up to the rule of unintended consequences.

But in our increasingly divided society, every public statement suddenly has taken on an outsized meaning.

Just consider the situation in which J.R. and Robin Knight now find themselves. The Meade couple received a brightly colored rainbow flag from their 12-year-old son. He found the banner while visiting his grandparents in California. He sent it to them as a gift.

The Knights, although aware of the flag's status as a symbol of gay pride, decided to fly it on a pole outside their hotel. They told reporter Tim Vandenack of The Hutchinson News that they liked the bright colors and bold stripes.

But the flying of the rainbow flag caused a stir in the county of 1,600 people. Some residents objected to it. ... They asked the Knights to remove the flag. The Knights refused, noting that it would be the wrong message to send to their son.

Word about the controversy spread far beyond the southwestern Kansas community. A local CBS network affiliate reported on the flag flap. And then it hit the Internet. In response, the couple has received an estimated 2,000 e-mails from people all around the world expressing support for their actions.

But the Knights simply sought to fly a brightly colored flag sent to them by their 12-year-old son.

Last week, someone took matters into their own hands and, during the early morning hours, cut down the flag. The Knights promise to fly another rainbow flag; they've already received two more from their legion of supporters.

Before matters get more out of hand, let's step back, take a breath and reflect on this situation.

Does this reaction now imbue any rainbow banner flown in Kansas with an assumed meaning? Must quilters, bunting manufacturers and kite makers carefully select the colors used in their products? Will building contractors and interior decorators need to stay abreast of all the colors tied to various social issues and make sure to walk the straight and narrow in Kansas?

Let's hope not.

Instead, let's show more tolerance and understanding, allow the Knights to fly their rainbow flag and appreciate the splash of color it adds to a small town on High Plains during the middle of a dry, hot summer.

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@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

#### Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison](http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)



### Blood donation a simple task

I did something last week that could potentially save a life or two. I donated blood for the first time at the American Red Cross blood drive Wednesday in Colby.

I was a little nervous, mainly over the eventual meeting with a needle, but I got over it.

I've done stories on blood drives before — writing about all the requirements, and what happens when a donor goes in, from start to finish. And for anyone who hasn't donated blood, I can attest to the fact the entire experience was pretty much as advertised.

You read all of the material they have, mainly all the requirements for donors, and all the things a person shouldn't do that makes them ineligible to donate blood.

Then there is a mini physical. They take your blood pressure and prick your finger for a little blood test.

After that, there is a short wait before getting lead over to the area where the nice Red Cross personnel will swab your arm, and jab you with a needle to get your blood.

That part didn't take too long. I just sat there while the donation took place. After that was over, the needle was removed, with instructions on how to take care of the spot.

Following that, I was sent to a table with other donors to get something to eat.

The amazing part is how simple it all is.

I know some might balk at donating because of a fear of needles or a lack of understanding of how it works.

But it can save a life, and the Red Cross staff and volunteers do a wonderful job of answering questions, and taking care of people while they donate.



**Tisha Cox**

#### • Off The Beaten Path

To donate, a person must be healthy, at least 17 (that changed this summer in Kansas, where 16 year olds can donate with parental permission) and weigh at least 110 pounds.

Also, a person can donate every 56 days. According to the Red Cross Web site, if someone started donating at the age of 17, donated every 56 days until they were 76-years-old, they could donate up to 48 gallons of blood.

Plus if I can do it, anyone can.

The next blood drive in Colby will be sometime this fall at Colby Community College, sponsored by its nursing class. The next Red Cross blood drive will be in January.

For information, go to [GiveLife.org](http://GiveLife.org) or call 1-800-GIVELIFE.

#### Road tripping

I took a trip home to Lakin this past weekend. The drive isn't too long, and normally the countryside flies by without my giving too much thought to it.

But this time, I couldn't help but notice the condition of the crops as I headed south.

Corn south of Oakley is burned up, and it didn't improve much the closer to home I got.

Scary to consider how much damage drought

is causing, and I can't remember a time crops looked like that this time of year.

We also took the obligatory day trip to Garden City. That was nuts, with so many people gearing up for school starting in the next two weeks.

Despite crowds and the heat, it's always good to go check out how things are going in the old stomping grounds.

Not much has changed in Lakin, but out in the fields, more center pivot irrigation systems have gone in, and Garden City keeps growing and changing.

#### It's official

Last week, an announcement came that made car enthusiasts very happy, including me. Thursday, General Motors announced the new Camaro is a go, probably for 2009.

Oh yes.

Exciting? Maybe not to everyone, but I'm happy about it. Finally, a new Camaro that looks like a Camaro, and a car that will give the other "new" pony cars coming out a run for their money.

With gas prices already high, some people wonder if it's a good idea to bring back the muscle car.

With changes in automotive technology, and more efficient engines and some creative thinking, there is no reason that the cars can't be a success again, and maybe the new muscle car era will last longer than the first one did.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. [tcoc@nwkansan.com](mailto:tcoc@nwkansan.com).*

### Competence? Personality? Arrogance?

We had two individuals involved in the medical community that let arrogance and personality stand in the way of providing health care choices for the rest of the community.

The issues go back further than their confrontation. Jealousy and competition seems to have fueled an aggressive fire to discredit and eliminate a very good and popular doctor from our community. Money and politics may be influencing the decision far more than the facts in this confrontation.

I have resisted addressing this issue, but we can't seem to keep it off the front page or the opinion page of our local paper, as well as papers across the state.

The community has survived the departure of one of those individuals and the truth is we will survive, if indeed, the other one departs. That isn't to say that we won't miss the services of a very good and well liked physician that many have learned to trust and love. Nor is it to say that justice will have been served if we lose the services of Dr. Hildyard. I hope he will be able to retain his license and desire to practice in this community, for the sake of those patients who have depended on his care. Health care and medical expertise, in our community, will certainly not be enhanced by his departure, if it comes to that.

I have not been privy to any of the hearings, nor do I know who to believe as regards charges and denials. I respect the authority of the hospital administrator and board of directors. They have a responsibility to protect the patients as well as the employees from verbal abuse, regardless of the importance of the abuser. The way the system works, doctors have the privilege of

#### Ken Poland

#### • Ken's World

using the facility and not the guaranteed right. That does not justify the hospital administrator nor the board of directors the privilege of arbitrarily denying a doctor access to the services available because of personality clashes. My limited knowledge of all the fracas tells me it is personality more than medical competence.

It would be nice if they could all just sit down with a cup of coffee or glass of tea and let bygones be bygones. I'm not picking on the lawyers, but so far, they are the only ones who have benefited from the confrontation. The cost of litigation and the time spent has depleted valuable resources for both parties. In spite of the warring parties great monetary costs, it is the community that is the biggest loser. Inconvenience and apprehension are deterrents to healing and good health.

Dr. Hildyard has not been my primary care giver. If you choose him for your doctor, is that any skin off my nose?

We all have choices and no one is forcing his patients to use him and neither should anyone refuse to allow them to.

Some of you remember Dr. Custer, from years back. Times have changed and I'm sure if he were in practice today, he would have to tone his voice down a little and keep his personal opinion of the nurses, other doctors, and hospital

administration to himself. For sure, his vocabulary would have to be altered. He was not infallible nor irreplaceable and neither is Hildyard.

Custer was my doctor, because I thought he was the best physician and surgeon for me, not because of his arrogant attitude or his verbal abuse of those around him. As I recall, he had more than his share of the patients in the St. Thomas Hospital, when he was practicing here. The hospital and community survived when he left. Some of us wondered how we would ever replace him, but we did. Hildyard was one of those replacements and has proven himself to be a very good and competent doctor. We also had other good doctors practicing in the area. No man or earthly institution is indispensable or irreplaceable. That includes specific hospitals and doctors. Many doctors have come and gone in the last 40 years. We are fortunate that we have had some of the best and our community attitude will dictate how many of the best come and stay.

St. Thomas Hospital was replaced by Citizens Medical Center, over the protest of many. Unfortunately, Citizens Medical Center can fail or be replaced, due to the intransigence of a few or in spite of the protests of many.

Hildyard and board of directors: Let's mend the fence and get on with providing the best medical services in northwest Kansas! We may have to petition the bureaucracy and political structures to leave it to us to choose our own health care providers. If it takes an appeal to the courts, then let's appeal. We need Hildyard in our health care system.

*Ken Poland lives in Gem and occasionally contributes to the Colby Free Press.*

#### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

