

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

300 millionth may not have been born

From The Manhattan Mercury

We're at 300 million people now, plus or minus a few souls, and counting. And while that threshold might be cause for concern, there's more reason for optimism.

As for the precise number, even the Census Bureau doesn't know; it acknowledges that its population clock is only a best guess, based on a birth every 7 seconds, a death every 13 and a new immigrant every 30 seconds.

Funny thing about those immigrants, what with illegal immigration being the controversy it is this election year. It's likely, for instance, that our 300 millionth American was born — or is about to be born — to a Hispanic, possibly a recent immigrant.

And on the subject of immigration, it's worth noting that newcomers have helped the United States avoid some of the alarming demographic trends in many other developed nations, including Japan and some European countries. Their populations are aging quickly, resulting in fewer workers to support growing numbers of elderly and retirees. Moreover, those nations could well run short of workers needed to keep their economies growing. Ours, in part because of the contributions of immigrants, continues to expand and create jobs for new workers.

... Americans who think we moved quickly from 200 million (1967) to 300 million ought to know that we'll likely be at 400 million before mid-century, possibly within 37 years. That's fast, particularly when one realizes that we didn't reach 100 million until 1915.

There was a world war, poverty and disease back then, and there's plenty of war, poverty and disease now. That might suggest that despite our advances in so many areas — medicine and technology among them — we're no wiser than we were 200 million people ago.

Fortunately, we retain the opportunity to acquire such wisdom as well as knowledge — and to put it to good use for the many millions of people yet to come.

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@nwkanas.com or pdecker@nwkanas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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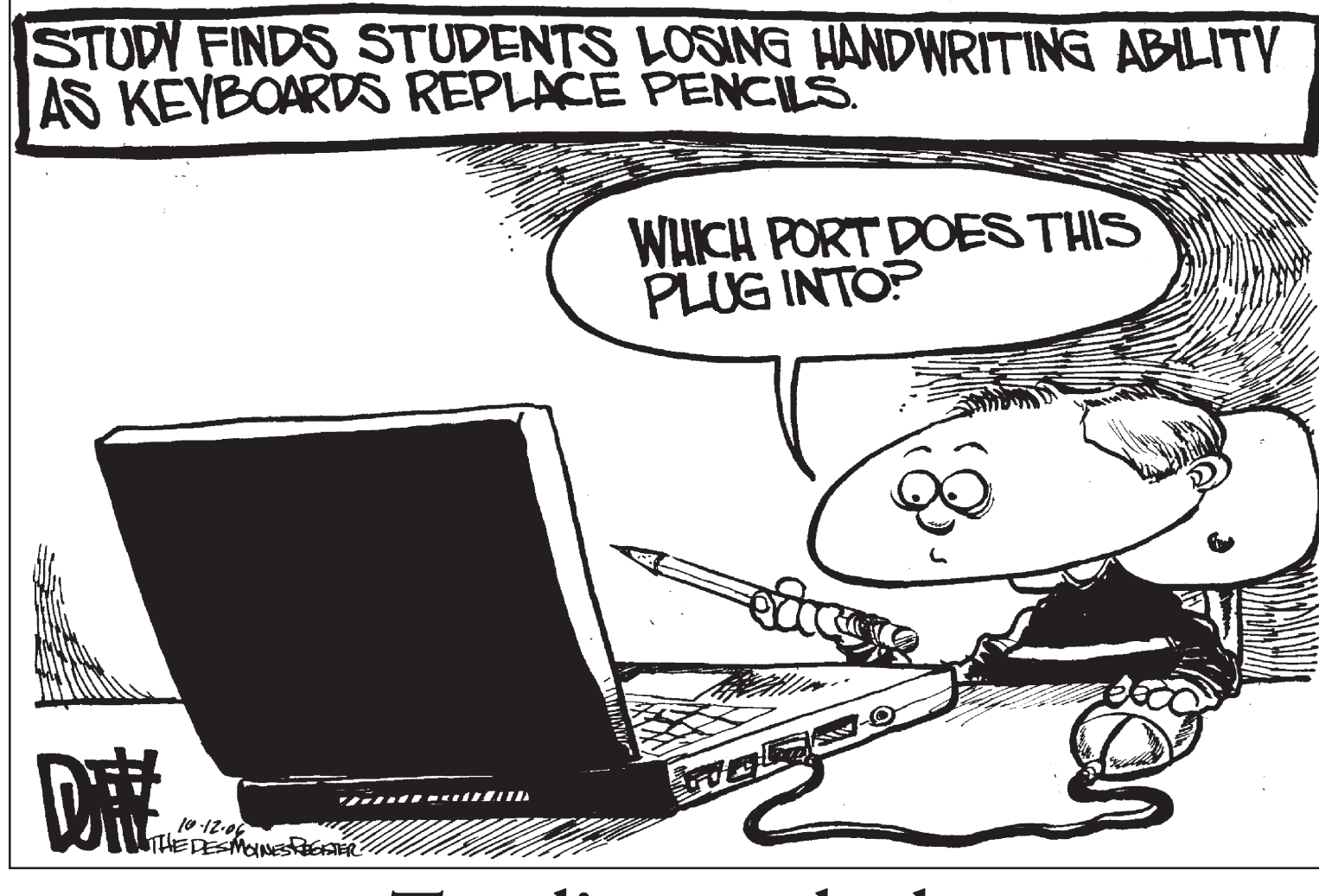
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Treading my luck

John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust



Newspapers have three objectives, entertain, inform and educate. Sometimes a story can have all three wrapped into it. I got my education from one of my own stories.

If you remember, in late August I wrote a story how area tire repair shops are handling the newest technology related to tires. On newer models of cars, the driver is informed when a tire's pressure is low through a warning sign on the dashboard. One of the people I called for that story was Bob Luck at J&J Oil (Honestly, he told me about the story idea to begin with).

One of the last things I remember Bob saying was something to the effect that a majority of car owners don't pay enough attention to the condition of their tires. So true.

I knew then my mini van was needing two new tires. When we purchased our used van three years ago, two of the tires were new, the other two were not and eventually replaced. A simple test to see if new tires are needed is to hold a penny upside down in the tread grooves. If you can see the top of Abraham Lincoln's head, you need new tires. I could have seen the top of Abe's stovepipe hat if he would have been wearing one.

I didn't think much of the tires until Oct. 7. We went to visit my parents in Sterling, Colo., by way of Highway 25 through Nebraska to U.S. Highway 6. South of Trenton, Neb., we noticed the aftermath of a scary looking semi truck accident. The skid marks the truck left seemed as big as speed bumps. I immediately thought of the van's tires — but kept driving.

According to Hitchcock County Nebraska Sheriff's Department, the driver of the truck col-

lided with a cow in the road and the truck ended up in the ditch. The driver, from Wyoming, was injured and taken to McCook, Neb., for treatment.

Our van's tires left my mind after we passed the scene, but came up again during the trip home the next day.

The rain that day stretched the entire 200 miles home. When we hit the ruts in the road at the right time, pooled with rain water, the van hydroplaned for a microsecond. You could see the needle on the speedometer race to much higher speeds before the van hit dry pavement and snapped us back into reality. I thought about the tires at those times. We arrived home with no problem.

Last Tuesday, wife Jennifer called me at the office.

"John, the van's steering wheel shakes a little when driving around town and it really pulls to the right," she said.

Again, I immediately thought of the tires before she finished the sentence. I didn't want to think anymore. I wanted to act. I called J&J Oil and asked if they had the size of tires the van

needed. Sure enough, they did.

When I took the van in I got to see what the old tires looked like after they took them off. On the inside of the right front tire, a portion of the tread had separated from the body of the tire (if that makes any sense) and a steel belt was exposed. (For those of you who don't know tires — that's not good.)

I slowly let go of a deep breath.

"Nice timing," I lightheartedly said to the man while putting the better tires on the wheels.

"Yeah," he said.

I thought of that truck accident. I thought about what my response would have been if one of the tires blew, sent the van to the ditch and injured any one of us, especially my children. How would have I felt seeing the shredded tire still spinning after I climbed out of the van?

How would I have felt hearing the tow truck operator comment about the tires while pulling my van out of the ditch?

I thought of driving home in the rain. What would have happened if the tires would have blew out when hitting the dry pavement? No matter which route linking Colby to Sterling, you have to walk miles before seeing a person, let alone a house. Walking in the rain makes those things worse. We were fortunate nothing did happen while traveling.

I don't want to be one of those people in the majority who don't pay attention to their car tires anymore. I don't want to learn the hard way.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Colby is blessed this week

Bradley L. Herndon

Colby

Over the last two years I have read the letters to the editor and many times I have wanted to put in my two cents on everything from God in politics to the apparent insane actions of many.

I have refrained and (you should be glad) I didn't ramble on for ever over all the little things that concern me about our community. But, what I have to say today is a positive thank you.

It has to do with the leadership of our community and the people who care enough to bring some of the best and most inspiring leaders in the nation to our community.

I have heard coach Dan Gable speak on tape and have been impressed with his nearly super

human drive that has been the great reason for his success over the last 30 years.

I am not a wrestler, wrestling coach or even a fan of wrestling. It just isn't my thing. But I can learn a great deal from this man who is the best of the best at what he does. I would like to thank coach Steve Lampe and the rest of the people at the college for bringing this outstanding man to Colby to help inspire our community to achieve great things.

As a young teacher I heard a former teacher of the year named Guy Doud speak to an in-service for the Mid-Continent League at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays.

I was impressed by his passion for his profession and his desire to make the best of what he

had for his students. I was inspired, motivated and encouraged to become a better person, a better teacher and to do more for my students and other people.

I am looking forward to being able to hear Mr. Doud speak this Saturday evening at the Heartland Christian School Partners for the Future Banquet. Thank you to the HCS Board and their administrator Jessie Vincent for bringing this outstanding leader to our community to remind us of why we teach and why we need good people in teaching.

We are a community blessed with great opportunity and these two events in the same week are not only worth your time and effort to make but could be the most inspiring events of the year.

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. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. 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. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

