

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Towns need to know when to stop

**By John Van Nostrand**  
Why would the people of Menlo and Gem care now? After the April 3 election, both tiny Thomas County towns still don't have people on their town councils. Only one person filed for mayor in Gem and no one did anything for Menlo. Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh has been asked to see what both towns should do.

The question to ask are towns, with populations less than 100 according to the latest U.S. Census statistics, viable enough to justify having a mayor and town council? Menlo has 55 people. Apparently no one cares enough to continue the town as a government entity, so why should the towns continue as such? Consider what is in Gem and Menlo. Maybe, that should be, consider what is not in Gem and Menlo.

Gem nor Menlo have enough to be a town — in terms of what makes a traditional town. There are no retail or other economic endeavors within the towns for councils to keep an eye on. Councils can't ask about sales tax receipts because there are not any. Thomas County Sheriff's office can patrol both towns so there is not a police department to work with.

Whatever happens in both towns can probably be taken care of adequately by the Thomas County Commissioners. Gem's Lions Club is active and occasionally provides some sort of entertainment or fellowship for Gem people to enjoy. But don't expect the Lions Club to take over the council because that is not their purpose.

Just because people didn't run for council seats in both towns does not make the people in both towns bad. No one is forced to run for council and mayor seats. The interest is just not there. For historical and geographical purposes, Gem and Menlo should still stay on the roadmaps. If both towns want to be taken seriously as an incorporated entity, that's up to the people who live there.

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

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). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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### How superstitious are you?

A lot of people cringe when they know Friday the 13th is coming up on the calendar, but for me, it's a lucky day no matter what month.

In fact, I consider the number 13 my lucky number for many reasons. The most important reason is because our son, Joe, was born on a Friday the 13th.

Growing up in Illinois, our home address was 1313 W. Laurel, which was OK since, for the most part, my childhood was a happy one.

There was one time that I suppose Friday the 13th wasn't lucky for me.

In the late 1970s I broke my leg in 10 places while skiing.

Of course, I could have broken my neck or worse — so I still believe it was lucky.

What amazes me is how superstitious people can be about the number 13 or a Friday the 13th.

CNN reported today business losses could reach \$800 million because many people won't drive, fly, take a cruise, go shopping or do activities they normally would.

So how did Friday the 13th become so unlucky?

According to many sources, the fear of Friday the 13th dates back to Jesus and the biblical reference of the unlucky number 13 when the apostle Judas, who betrayed Jesus was the 13th guest at the last supper.

In ancient Rome, witches were reported to have gathered in groups of 12 because they believed the 13th person would be the devil.

Both Friday and the number 13 were once

#### Patty Decker

##### • Deep Thoughts

closely associated with capital punishment. In British tradition, Friday was the conventional day for public hangings, and there were supposedly 13 steps leading up to the noose.

Numerologists consider 12 a "complete" number — 12 months in a year, 12 signs of the zodiac, 12 gods of Olympus, 12 labors of Hercules, 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 apostles of Jesus.

In exceeding 12 by 1, the belief is that 13 is associated with bad luck having to do with just being a little beyond completeness.

Even some numerologists have gone so far as counting letters in a name — associating 13 letters in a name to be the devil's luck — Jack the Ripper, Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy and Albert De Salvo.

Fear of the number 13 is also demonstrated in many place.

For example: Many hotels have no room number 13; many buildings do not have a 13th floor; many airplanes do not have a 13th row; many ships will not start a voyage on the 13th and particularly not on a Friday the 13th; and some

cities do not have a 13th Street or a 13th Avenue.

And what historical events occurred on April 13? (By the way, most were not tragic.)

Here are a few:

According to the Associated Press, on Friday, April 13, 1970, Apollo 13, four-fifths of the way to the moon, was crippled when a tank containing liquid oxygen burst. The astronauts did return home safely, though.

• In 1743, the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, was born.

• In 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in New York.

• In 1943, President Roosevelt dedicated the Jefferson Memorial.

• In 1964, Sidney Poitier became the first black performer in a leading role to win an Academy Award, for "Lilies of the Field."

• In 1992, the Great Chicago Flood took place as the city's century-old tunnel system and adjacent basements filled with water from the Chicago River.

Probably the funniest thing I read about was a pastor in New York who, years ago, was willing to marry any couple wanting to chance a wedding on a Friday the 13th.

Whatever your thoughts are about today, I hope those who might be overly superstitious that something bad will happen are pleasantly surprised.

*Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.*

### The fabric of society

What is new in the world of politics, economics, and human relationships? We read in Ecclesiastes 1:9 (that's a book in the Old Testament — Psalms, Proverbs and then Ecclesiastes) "— and there is nothing new under the sun." You can read the entire first chapter to get the picture.

With that background, we need to look at something Abraham Lincoln had to say, after the end of the Civil War.

"As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed. I feel at this moment more anxiety for the safety of my country than ever before, even in the midst of war. God grant that my suspicions may prove groundless." : U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 21, 1864 - (letter to Col. William F. Elkins) - Ref: The Lincoln Encyclopedia, Archer H. Shaw (Macmillan, 1950, NY)

History tends to repeat itself, especially where man has any input. From the beginning of recorded history, we find a never ending cycle of individuals or nations that rose to great wealth or power and then disaster or rebellion cuts them down and the cycle begins anew. And then, a new Patriarch, family or nation emerges. The wealthier or more powerful they become the faster the rise occurs. Greed and lust for power begins to feed upon itself and if society doesn't

#### Ken Poland

##### • Ken's World

restrain the individual or group, the conditions for the masses of people become unbearable.

Those patriarchs, nations, or financial dynasties are eventually overthrown and the cycle begins again. Feuds within the family to choose the successor patriarch, feuds within the chain of command of nations, feuds within political parties, and mismanagement of wealth are all factors that destroy the system.

In the early 1900s we passed anti trust laws to limit monopoly control of resources and business. Even with those laws the wealth of our nation was being more and more concentrated, until the great financial bust of 1929. A few wealthy families held onto their wealth, but the majority of the nation was left with nothing. The scramble to survive, for most folks, was a long and, sometimes, humiliating experience. Drought took its toll on agriculture and the limited spending power of the majority of society limited demand for goods and services.

The "New Deal" programs (which were bitterly opposed by those who still had wealth) began to expand the numbers of people who

were able to put together enough resources to more than just survive. Then World War II created an immediate demand for goods to feed the military machine. The man who had a dollar to invest had opportunity to begin building, and as Abe Lincoln said, "As a result of the war — — —"

Graduated tax brackets and individual exemptions have tended to level the playing field. That allows opportunity for the individuals and small businesses to compete, grow, and prosper. Social welfare programs have attempted to provide the basic needs of those, who for whatever reason, were left out.

What we have going today is a political system that is rapidly doing away with the graduated tax brackets, de-regulating business and giving huge concessions and exemptions to national and international corporations. We are under funding or eliminating the social welfare programs.

The rich are getting richer and the poor are staying poor. (some can't get any poorer) Nations are expanding, or attempting to expand their control of resources and wealth. International Corporations are merging and becoming like nations within themselves.

Are we going to destroy the fabric of society that protects mankind from the ravages of nature — that is — man's nature of greed and lust for power?

*Ken Poland occasionally contributes to the Colby Free Press.*

#### 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.

#### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley