

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Same ol’, same ol’

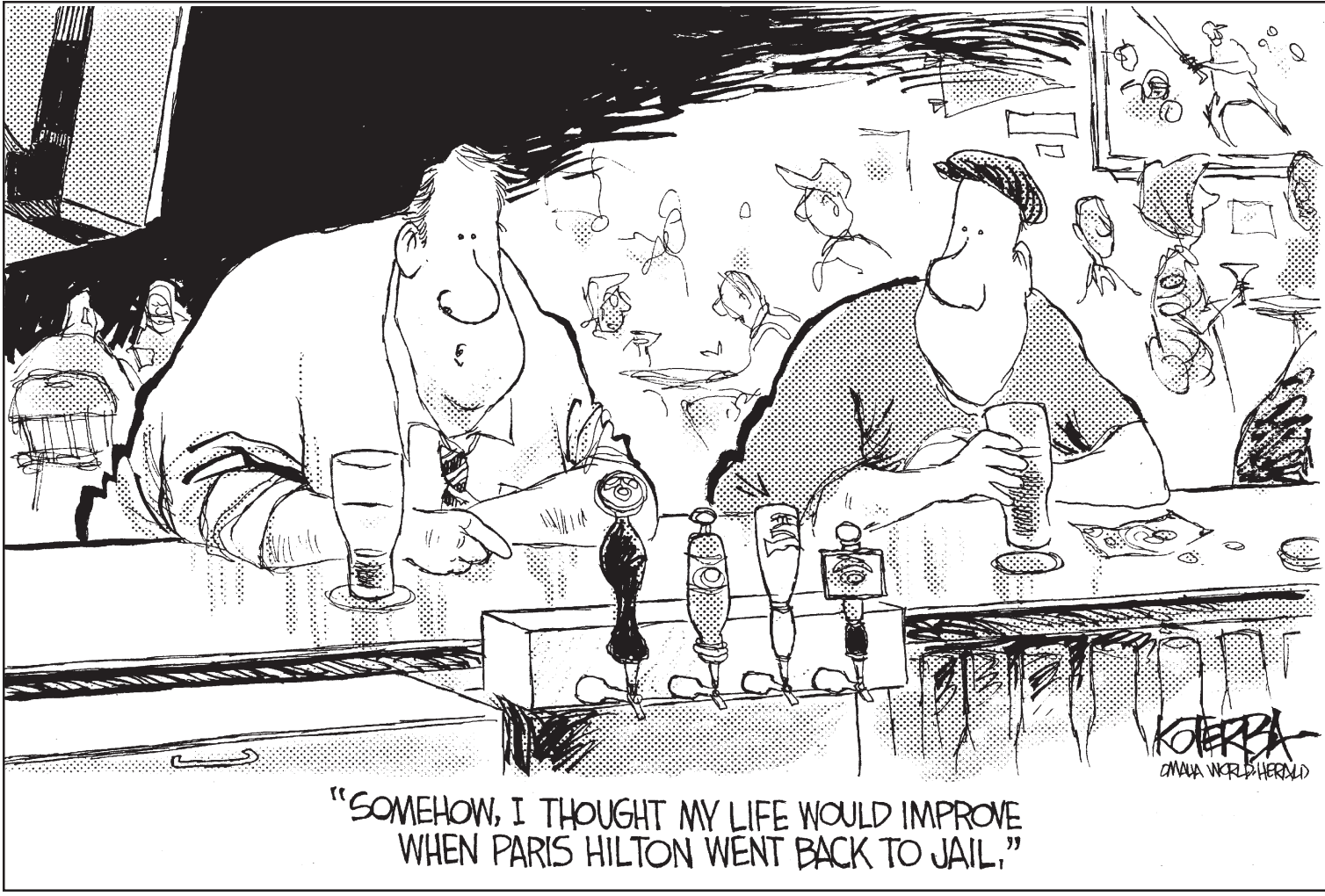
By John Van Nostrand
The city of Colby and Bosselman truck stop officials are working on the details of building a second travel plaza for Colby.
The city of Colby is also preparing to repair a portion of Fourth Street this summer.
A gallon of gasoline still hovers around the \$3 mark.
Despite the ad nauseam stories about the price of gasoline the past few years, we Americans will continue to keep driving and government and private industry will continue to do their parts related to America’s addiction to the vehicle.
The price just has not hurt enough to make a widespread change in our habits.
There are people who have made changes in their lifestyle to reduce the pain of paying for gasoline. People carpool to the office. Others are more strategic by becoming more efficient with their errand trips, driving to closer vacation destinations and so on.
For several years now, various media outlets have turned the initial story about the increase in gasoline to something new they just have to fill in the blanks.
TV news anchor: “With the price of gasoline now at (insert local, current price here), has it changed people’s driving habits?”
Video of person with car at gasoline pump: “Oh, I don’t like paying (insert current price here), but I still have to drive to (insert reason for driving here.)”
Video of another person at another gasoline pump: “I’ve done (insert explanation of reduce driving) and it has helped a little but I remember when gasoline was (price of gasoline during father Bush’s administration.)”
The price of gasoline stories will be more effective when more significant things happen. We don’t hear about the car dealer closing because people didn’t buy enough cars just because of the price of gasoline. We still hear about the various metro areas across the country and their awful rush hours and backed up traffic at 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
The occasional, mass e-mail forwards informing people not to buy gasoline on a certain day to lower the cost are a waste of time and effort. That theory has more holes than Swiss cheese. People will purchase gasoline either the day before or after.
Americans will be scraping the bottom of the barrel for gas money when the day the oil companies start scraping the bottom of their barrels for that last drop of oil.

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

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Mouse problems



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

I had a good laugh the other day when a friend and co-worker showed me an article from Waterville, Ma., about a man who was taunted by a mouse.
According to the Associated Press, the victim, Bill Exner, 68, captured this mouse in his home on three different occasions and each time the little rodent escaped.
At first, Exner didn’t know he had a mouse taunting him, but when his dentures start disappearing he became suspicious. Either someone was playing tricks on him, he was becoming absentminded or there was a mouse in the house.
“We moved the bed, moved the dressers and the night stand and tore the closet apart,” he told the Associated Press.
“I said, ‘I knew’ that little stinker stole my teeth — I just knew it.”
After an exhausting searching for the dentures, Exner and his wife discovered a small opening in a wall where they suspected the mouse was coming and going.
Realizing they would need some help, Exner said his daughter’s finance’ volunteered to help.
“He brought a crowbar and hammer and he sawed off a section of wood and pulled up the molding and everything,” Exner said. “It was quite a job.”
After tearing through, the family retrieved the dentures from inside the wall.
The future son-in-law then suggested that Exner boil the dentures in peroxide and whatever else he could find to disinfect it.
Exner’s wife, Shirley, believes the mouse isn’t done with him yet. She said the rodent continues

to come out of the wall and stares at both of them.
“He (the mouse) is taunting him — I swear he’s taunting him,” Shirley said.
As I said, when I read the article I couldn’t help but chuckle — particularly when I visualized this couple sitting on their bed or wherever and watching this mouse on his haunches heckling them.
The mouse story reminded me of a situation when I was a youngster living in Illinois. My parents had an older home and every winter we had mice problems.
I didn’t like my dad’s solution to ridding the house of mice because he would set traps and I thought they were inhumane.
Not that I wanted the mice either, but anticipating those traps snapping was too much for my imagination.
Consequently, I would wander around the house and “trip” the traps before the mouse found them. It was a good plan except, but unfortunately I missed finding one of the traps and a mouse was caught.
The weird thing was the little guy survived the trap, and for the most part, unscathed, but I think he may have banged his head somehow because

when we found him he was dazed.
Of course, my father wanted to rid our house of the little animal, but the rest of us felt the mouse escaping the trap was a miracle of sorts. Please, you have to remember, we were children making this decision.
I think our sad faces were too much for our dad to handle. He allowed us to keep the little mouse in a cage until he fully recovered from his slight concussion.
Our new little house mouse was named, Boris, and we cared for him as only a child can do.
As the days went by, we discovered our little Boris must have been knocked on the head harder than we thought and might not be able to handle the great outdoors anymore.
Not wanting to appear like the bad guy, my father said I could keep the little mouse as long as I took care of his cage, etc.
Surprisingly, Boris lived happily for another three years and was quite friendly.
It might seem odd to some that we kept this field mouse for lots of reason, but as a young child looking back, it seemed like a good lesson in compassion.
As a parent myself, I probably wouldn’t have allowed my children to keep a field mouse.
Instead, I came up with a better solution to the problem — we have two cats and no self-respecting mouse would even attempt to take up residence with us.

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

The farmers’ community

By John Schlageck
Kansas Farm Bureau
A century ago when this state consisted mainly of farm and ranch families, it was a common sight to see neighbors helping neighbors. They swapped farm machinery. They loaned labor back and forth to work harvest threshing crews. A barn raising presented another opportunity for friends to help build and support the community.
Kansans have always been an active bunch. Citizens of this state have always believed they can “get the job done.”
Today, Kansas farmers and ranchers do their barn raising by supporting education. They’re helping their communities with their tax dollars and strong belief in education.
There are certain areas across Kansas that have experienced more than their fair share of catastrophic weather this year. With such natural disasters, there has never been a greater outpouring of this neighbor-helping-neighbor concept.
Since Kansas was settled, farmers and ranchers have supported their communities. They’ve always appreciated main streets that are bright, clean and well maintained. They’ve actively participated in the school system, served on the county planning board, taught Sunday school

and worked with other community organizations and activities. Farmers and ranchers have been part of the fabric that has made Kansas the viable state it is today.
Some people have the mistaken belief that government can control the economy and provide a better life for its citizens. This is unrealistic. Both for theoretical and practical reasons, governments are unable to control the economy and create jobs.
Kansans know this. Our communities have never stood idly by and waited for the federal government to care for them. Instead they have formed alliances to tackle community issues, foster business/entrepreneurial development and ensure an environment where they will continue to grow. One need only travel to the storm-ravaged towns near Greensburg to see evidence of this.
We’re all familiar with the population and demographic trends in Kansas. Move them around however you like and they always add up the same way — rural Kansas is becoming more rural. We want our hometowns to be thriving, active centers of social and economic activity. Most 21st century farm families in Kansas have one or both of the spouses working full or part-time off the farm. If there are no jobs available in town, it’s harder to keep that fam-

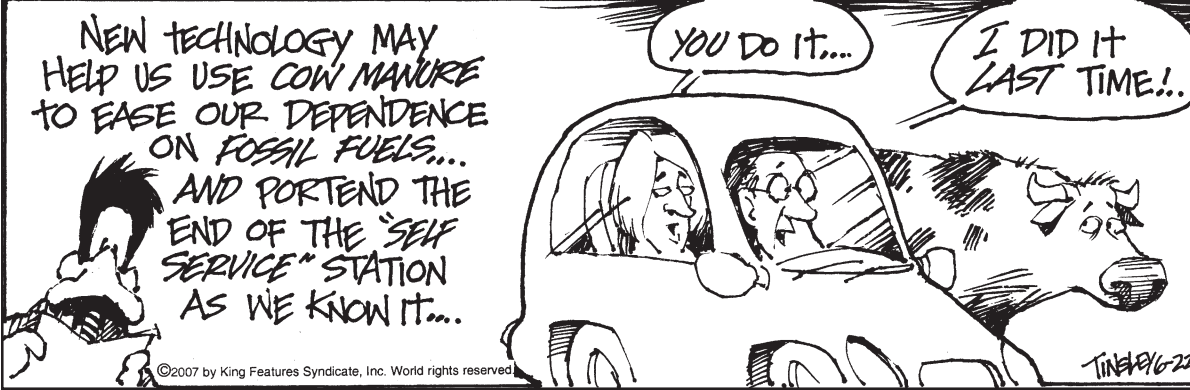
ily on the farm.
Our towns need places where folks gather naturally. This means a place where they can talk about mutual interests — children, the high school football team, the remodeled library — just about anything that relates to the welfare and well being of the area.
Restaurants, grocery stores, churches — with committed leaders willing to live and become a part of the community — active participation in the school system and involvement in farm and community organizations are all ways to re-kindle interest.
Vibrant communities thrive and grow when farmers retire in their towns and/or become actively involved in local affairs. The voice of the farmer adds value, experience and more often than not — common sense.
Agriculture has always been a crucial ingredient helping drive the economic machinery of our state. Kansans are proud of the leadership our agricultural community provides. Working together, rural and urban, with progressive community leadership, we can improve our standard of living and the quality of life in Kansas.
Editor’s note: John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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