



Opinion

Volume 120, Number 102 Wednesday, July 1, 2009



Free Press Viewpoint

Freedom starts from the bottom

The drama being played out on the streets and rooftops of Iran is difficult to watch, even more difficult to understand. Did the government steal the election for the terrorist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as the opposition protests? Or was the vote as fair and overwhelming as the government maintains? It seems likely that the vote was fixed, but there’s no way to prove it from here.

Whatever the truth, the protest movement – aimed at liberty and liberalization from the strict, radical conservative religious movement which has controlled Iran for the past few decades – may just have started something that the mullahs cannot stop. It seems that Iran, with 70 percent of its population under 30, yearns for freedom. And freedom is not something the ruling elite is prepared to grant. As time passes and leaders change, however, the movement may prove more durable than the aya-tollahs.

Many think the ruling cleric, or “supreme leader,” Ali Khamenei, lost his superior position when he backed the Ahmadinejad government and threatened to have protesters shot. Rather than placing himself above the fray, he descended into it. Only time will tell. Meantime, what should the U.S. do? Back the protesters? Or stand meekly by?

President Obama has tried to maintain neutrality while censoring the government and the conservative militias for their treatment of protesters, many of whom were seen being beaten or shot. Even so, both Ahmadinejad and Khamenei have accused the U.S. of meddling in Iran’s affairs. It’s a standard charge, designed to take the heat off those responsible for bloodshed on the streets.

The latest outrage is to blame the CIA for the shooting death of a young woman near a demonstration. In a carefully orchestrated campaign, starting with the president, the government it trying to convince the world that America, and not its thugs, killed a woman on the streets.

Neda Agha-Soltan was young, pretty, westernized and, by radical Islamic standards, immodest. Photos given the world press show her, head uncovered, wearing makeup and jewelry, though protest posters show her wearing a shawl. There was no evidence she was anything other than an innocent bystander, but she has become the symbol of a movement.

When the government threatens, demonstrators reportedly take to rooftops and other hideouts, where they call out in the night. A movement like that can take root and be hard to stop. If we in the U.S. sympathize, should we help?

We should not, at this point, get involved. We’re trying to run too many countries already, and while Iran, with it’s nuclear plants, is a threat to world order, it’s not within our capacity as a nation to do everything.

We should stand aside and let this movement take root in Iranian soil. Besides, what more could we do. That yearning for freedom may turn out to be our strongest ally. — *Steve Haynes*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
j.stewart@nwkansas.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

Marlin Stramel - Advertising Sales
mstramel@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Daniel Spillman

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Start of harvest a guessing game

The first load of wheat has arrived at the elevator in Lenora and the harvest is poised to take off like the fabled rabbit.

For 24 years, *The Oberlin Herald* has held a contest for people to guess the time and date of the first load in the area. Boxes and entry blanks are placed on the counters of sponsoring businesses and elevators and anyone 18 or older can give it their best shot. No purchase is required.

After the paper gets word of the first load, we pick up all the boxes and entry blanks and start sorting.

This year the winner, John Wahlmeier, is from Arizona, and when I tried to call, there was no response. We went to the Internet to check the number and found that yes, indeed, John and Francis Wahlmeier do live at the address given in San Manuel, Ariz.

Our next plan was to start calling Wahlmeiers in the area, so I got on the phone. There was no answer at the first number, and the second was busy, but we hit paydirt on the third try.

Yes indeed, the woman on the other end of the line knew John Wahlmeier, and he lives in Arizona.

“He won a contest,” I said.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

“Hey, maybe my husband is John,” she quipped before suggesting I call John’s brother Carl in Jennings.

Here I hit the mother lode. The lady, who answered the phone, said that yes, John was Carl’s brother and would I like to speak to him? He was right outside.

Seems John had come to Kansas to help with the harvest, as he has done the last several years.

John’s guess and that of Louis and Logan Keiswetter were the only ones for last Wednesday, but a lot of people have a pretty good idea of when harvest is around here. A few made some spectacularly bad guesses.

Five people guessed last Tuesday and a dozen thought it would be on Friday, including one woman who guessed the exact same time

and date twice. I figure she was really sure of when things were going to happen.

Not as sure as the man who wrote “I won” on his guess, however. He didn’t.

There were lots of guesses for the Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

We had 16 people who thought the first load would come in today, July 1, and four folks who guessed June 31, which, I guess, is also today. (Steve said they must have thought it was a leap year.)

The earliest guess was June 4. Now that’s early wheat. The latest guess was Aug. 15. I think that person had their crops mixed up.

Now that we’ve had our first load, everyone is ready to get into the fields and get that crop of Kansas gold into the bins. A big thank-you to everyone who took the time to enter, and to our sponsors, who make this fun contest possible each year.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Distinctions blur for college degrees

A Kansas high school student began classes at a Kansas university last year. She brought in 54 credit hours of college coursework taken before her high school graduation: all “concurrent enrollment” courses. She had supposedly finished close to half of a four-year college program. The distinction between high school and college is blurring.

There is wide variation in “concurrent enrollment.” Some courses are actually taken by a high school student who leaves the high school building to attend a course at a nearby university, elbow-to-elbow with mature college students. Some are taught by university faculty who travel to a high school to offer off-campus courses on evenings and weekends. But many are “dual credit” courses where arrangements have been made with the secondary teacher to offer college credit for a course taken during the day at the high school, with regular high school students sitting in the next seat. Supposedly, these courses are checked to be equivalent to college level coursework and I know that a few are. But from the performance of the student above with 54 credit hours, some are not.

Concurrent enrollment was originally designed for the few exceptional Kansas students who are way ahead of their classmates and are ready, intellectually and maturity-wise, for college level work: the “Doogie Housers” (remember that old TV series about a precocious child doctor).

But last year the Legislature moved the eligibility for taking concurrent enrollment courses from junior level to sophomore status. Now a high school student can take college courses immediately after their high school freshman year. With schools forced, under NCLB pressure, to focus more and more on getting 100 percent proficiency for their low performers, there are fewer regular advanced courses to serve the average and gifted students. Now it appears that every parent has a Doogie Houser.

Credit for typing class? Never before at col-



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

leges and universities. Typing was a business skill that did not qualify for academic college credit. Such psychomotor vocational skills were learned at technical school. But Kansas technical colleges have been handed the general education curriculum normally taught by university faculty with doctorates and research expectations. With more part time and non-tenured teachers, and no research expectations, tech schools can offer cheaper general education courses. Distinctions among college degrees are getting blurred.

In both the U.S. and Europe, discussion is underway on offering a three-year bachelor’s degree. This is not accelerated coverage of the 124 credit hours of coursework it normally takes to achieve a bachelor’s degree for sharp students, but just a three-year degree. In the British system, students attend 13 years of public schooling, so a three year college degree concludes about equal to the 12-years plus four of the American system. But this reform, watering down the college curriculum to a set of outcomes rather than 124 credit hours of “mere seat time” (as educationists are fond of saying), would be a straight trimming of a degree to three years of coursework. The plan isn’t getting much traction overseas.

The final challenge has come from President Obama’s call for everyone to go to school at least one year beyond high school. To be fair, he does not say everyone should go to college. But the media and administrators all interpret this as college. And the Kansas regents are also pushing higher college retention rates. Not retention of students who are college material, but simply retention of students, period. In this last month’s Chronicle of Higher Edu-

cation, the paper-of-record for universities, retention rates have become the bragging point for some colleges. The elite schools do not have to worry: they turn out the best because they only take the best. But with below average students entering college with questionable college credits, the distinction between high school and college level work is already blurred. Mandates that everyone will go to college are simply an extension of the No Child Left Behind mandate that all students achieve proficiency by 2014.

It leaves professors with one question: “How much do you want us to inflate grades?”

This ensures that — similar to our blurred high school diploma — the future U.S. college degree will have less value and meaning.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher’s college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org

web: www.morrisonfamily.com

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

