

## Other Viewpoints

### Passenger trains still needed in state

Officials need to move to protect our rail travel. When it comes to transportation plans, Kansas roads and airports garner a lot of attention. Not so much for rail. Yet recent discussions of the future of train travel in Kansas should get the attention of state and local policymakers.

The state of Kansas has shown interest in linking Amtrak's Southwest Chief to passenger rail service in Oklahoma. But concern over deteriorating track conditions from Newton to La Junta, Colo., could threaten that development and the future of passenger trains through Garden City if Kansas officials don't push plans to invest in that infrastructure.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe has proposed that Amtrak move its Southwest Chief to a line that drops south through Wichita and cuts across Oklahoma, rather than western Kansas. While Amtrak has declined, that doesn't mean the route many Kansas travelers depend on won't disappear.

Currently, the state only has about \$5 million earmarked for rail reconstruction in its 10-year transportation plan. A state like Kansas, with lingering budget issues, should explore federal funding from the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program.

Advocates of maintaining Amtrak through southwest Kansas cite many reasons to do so, including the colorful history of a route once served by the Super Chief — the "Train of the Stars" that hauled Hollywood celebrities between Los Angeles and Chicago starting in the 1930s.

In today's troubled economic times, though, it's necessary to consider more practical arguments.

Safety is a one. Transporting freight by rail lightens the load on such roads as U.S. Highway 50, a dangerous stretch that doesn't need more congestion from added truck traffic.

This region needs travel options, especially for those who don't drive. Nearly 7,000 passengers reportedly boarded and disembarked at Garden City's depot in 2009, a slight increase over 2008.

The city's loss of one of two daily round-trip commercial airline flights to Kansas City didn't help, but at least local travelers headed in that direction could take the train.

People here need such choices, which is why local officials and area lawmakers should get moving on a plan that keeps passenger rail travel from fading from the southwest Kansas landscape.

— Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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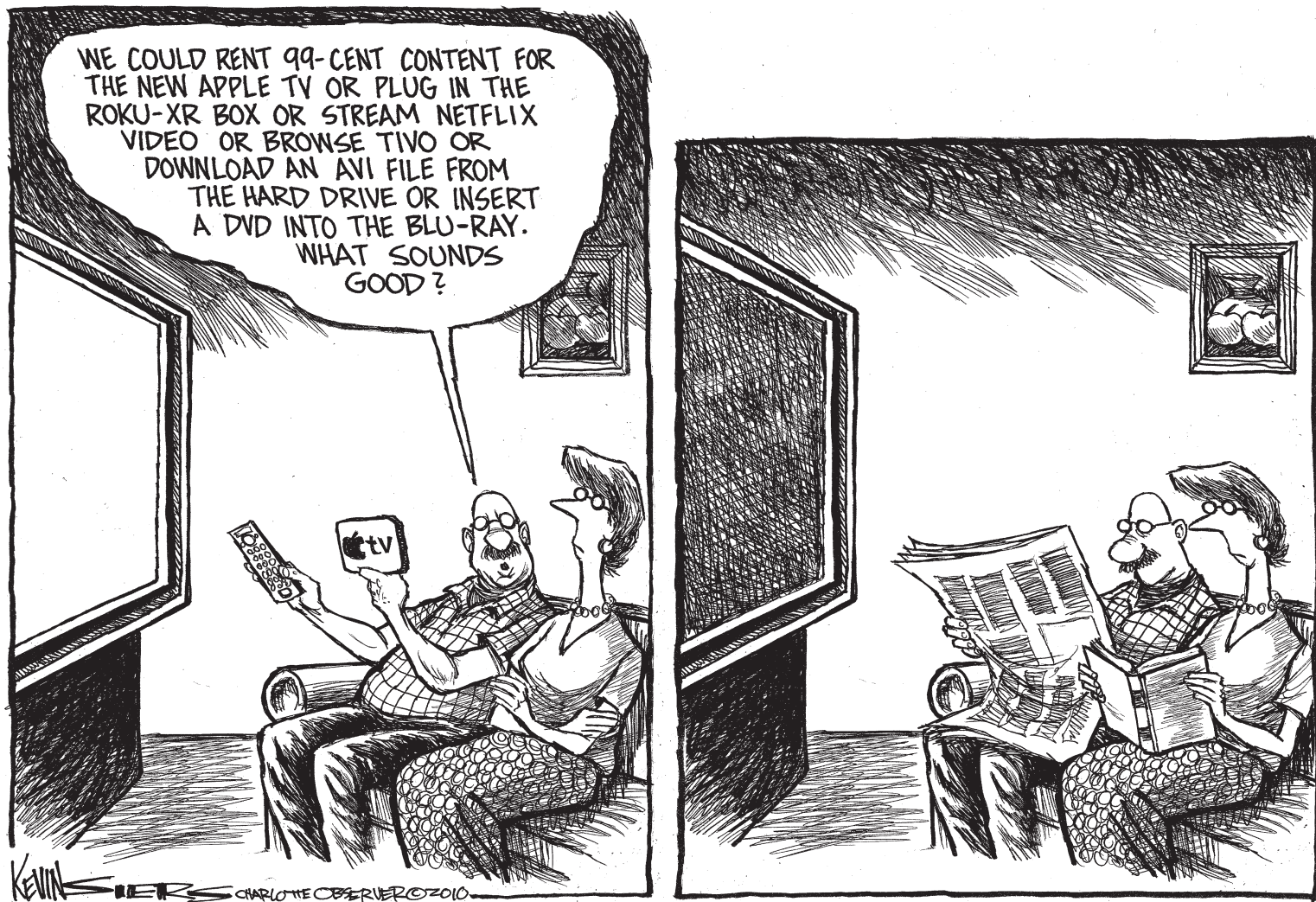
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W.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



### Fishing can mean unexpected exercise

I can hardly believe summer is almost over. It seems like it just began, and now the kids are headed back to school.

Even if summer is coming to an end, this is still a good season to go fishing. In our early fishing days, we always caught the most fish during the spring and fall, and even though the fishing wasn't so good during the hot summer days, going fishing was still a lot of fun for our family.

Actually, I had never been fishing before I married Jim Brown. However, it seems that when you become a member of his family, you also are required to become a fisherman, or fisherperson, whatever the term is. Therefore, we have spent a lot of our weekends and some vacations on the fishing banks of Kansas, Nebraska or Colorado.

As a result, our kids are avid fishermen. At least our two boys, Duane and Allen, are. Linda, our daughter, and her husband Jerry prefer to go hunting. As for myself, I never quite took to actually fishing, because I was more the type to enjoy scavenger hunting along the banks and drawing the beautiful scenery.

We usually went fishing with Jim's parents, Ralph and Polly Brown. Most of the time, Ralph's brother Carl and his wife Isabel would come along with one or both of their sons, Derald and Gene, and their families, and there would always be one or two more couples that Ralph and Polly invited.

Each family would supply their own sleeping accommodations. When we first started going, we were sleeping on mattresses in the backs of pickups or in tents. As the time went on, we started, one family at a time, getting a



**Marj Brown**

#### • Marj's Snippets

trailer, a fifth wheel, or a motor home. However, as I look back, I think we had the most fun during those early days when we had only the bare necessities.

Sitting around the campfire at night with a hot cup of coffee while the kids roasted marshmallows was the best time of day. Even with the frogs croaking, the crickets chirping and the water splashing against the rocks, it still seemed peacefully quiet; at least it was until each fisherman tried to outdo the others with his own fishing story.

Ralph's first boat was a flat-bottom affair that he made himself, and it worked just fine with a little motor attached to the back. Later, Ralph sold his hand-made boat and purchased his first factory-made boat, and it was a beauty.

Finally came the bright, sunny, Sunday morning when we were to take the new boat to Trenton, Neb., for its maiden voyage. We all had been looking forward to this day with great expectation, so we decided to make a picnic out of it. Mother Brown and I fried chicken, made potato salad and baked beans, and I'm sure we had at least two desserts or more.

Jim and I loaded the kids into our car and his parents pulled the boat with their pickup.

On arrival at Trenton lake, Ralph instructed us women and children to stay on the boat dock and wait for him and Jim to get the boat in the water, so we stood their patiently watching and waiting.

Ralph backed the boat down the ramp slowly while Jim rode in the back of the pickup, ready to release the boat from the trailer. This was a slow process with both men making sure they did everything just right.

After the boat was in the water, with Jim resting behind its steering wheel, Ralph pulled the pickup back up to the parking area and came down and got in with Jim. As they were slowly floating out farther into the lake, Ralph yelled, "We're gonna make a circle around this area to make sure everything is running all right, and then we'll come back and pick you up."

Ralph sat down and relaxed in the luxurious seat of his new boat and said to Jim, "Okay, start her up. Let's see how she runs."

Jim said, "Okay, give me the keys."  
Ralph said, "Don't you have them."  
Jim said, "No, I don't have them."  
Then Ralph said, "Oh no, I left them at home on the dresser."

Thank goodness the new boat came supplied with oars. The next couple of hours were spent trying to get the boat back up on the trailer for its trip home.

At least we had a nice picnic.

*Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.*

### Ask your doctor to get flu vaccine

Every doctor, nurse and other health care professional knows that the first rule of medical care is "to do no harm."

The ethical obligation to safeguard patients from unintended illness or injury is imbedded in the Hippocratic Oath, the moral compass that has guided the practice of healing arts for more than 2,000 years.

That's why it is so puzzling that about half of all health care professionals today don't bother to protect themselves and their patients against influenza by getting the annual flu vaccine.

Even during last year's flu pandemic — the global outbreak that caused more than 12,000 deaths in the United States — only 37 percent of US health care professionals said they got the additional H1N1 flu vaccine, according to a new report.

What's going on here?

Virtually none of these highly trained professionals would think of approaching a patient with unwashed hands that could transmit infectious agents. None would blithely permit their patients to be exposed involuntarily to tobacco smoke or other toxins that could lead to cancer or heart disease.

Yet after 30 years of irrefutable evidence that flu vaccines are safe and effective in protecting patients, tens of thousands of health care professionals decline to receive them each year. Despite intensive education campaigns every year to get staff immunized in most hospitals and large clinics, these voluntary efforts rarely achieve more than 70 percent coverage.

Studies have shown that health-care professionals turn down flu vaccines for the same reasons that other people do. They have doubts



**Jason Eberhart-Phillips**

#### • Kansas Health Officer

about their risk of getting infected, or their need for the vaccine. Some question how well it really works, or concerns about side effects.

Some just don't like getting injections. Frankly, this is appalling. Health care providers should know better than this by now. And they should set a better example for their patients and their communities in the coming flu season by getting themselves in line for the new flu vaccine as it comes on the market in Kansas in the next few weeks.

It has been well established that flu vaccination of health care professionals lowers patient risk and saves lives. When health care staff members are immunized against influenza, they are much less likely to transmit the flu virus to their elderly and other high-risk patients, some of whom may otherwise die from the disease.

There is also strong evidence that an immunized health care workforce has less absenteeism during the annual winter peak in flu cases. This allows hospitals and clinics to keep more qualified staff on duty when the demand for care is highest, and to keep down the cost of care.

So we all benefit when doctors, nurses and

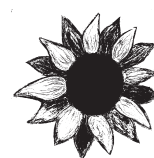
other members of the clinical team do the right thing and get themselves immunized against the flu.

That's why it may be time for patients and other concerned Kansans to give the health care professionals in our lives a good-natured reminder about the importance of getting the flu vaccine this year. A gentle word coming from you may be just what some hesitant doctors and nurses need to roll up their sleeves and get the vaccine.

This year's vaccine — which will cover both the H1N1 strain and the common seasonal strains — promises to be available in abundant supplies. And, according to new national guidelines, virtually everyone over 6 months of age is recommended to get the vaccine.

There is simply no good excuse for a doctor, nurse or other health care professional not to be immunized against the flu this year. This is a critical patient-safety issue, a matter that goes to the heart of every health care professional's obligation "to do no harm."

*Dr. Eberhart-Phillips is the state health officer and director of health in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He can be reached at jeberhart-phillips@kdheks.gov. Read his blog at www.kdheks.gov/blogs/dr-jasons\_blogs.htm.*



### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

