



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Let those sirens whoop it up already

Imagine a parade without sound. Imagine a band marching along, not playing their instruments or a crowd of kids on a float, sitting quietly with their hands folded in their laps. Not much of a parade, is it?

Our ambulance service has recently gotten some complaints about their use of sirens in parades and at home football games when the Eagles score a touchdown. The complaints said they were too noisy, and that it violated state law. However, the service has done this for years, and they're not the only ones.

Dawnelle Umberger, our emergency management training coordinator, contacted other ambulance services around the state to see what they do, and got a wide variety of responses.

Some, like Argonia, Hamilton County, Concordia, Horton, Marion County, Lane County and Kiowa County use sirens in the parade. Not constantly, but they hit them when passing kids or large groups for entertainment. The Belle Plaine ambulance service said they try not to hit the sirens around babies.

Most are split between using or not using the siren at football games. The Stockton ambulance service was asked to stop by school officials, who called the siren use unsportsmanlike. In Washington, a small north-central town, and in Lane County, the ambulance services opt not to blow the siren, taking the philosophy that they are on duty at the games, and when people hear a siren they should know that there's an emergency.

That's a good point, but most of the services who responded said they just blow a quick blast for a touchdown and save the sustained siren for an emergency.

There is a law that covers this. You can find it under Chapter Eight, Article 17, the Uniform Act Regulating Traffic, Equipment of Vehicles. The act regulates everything from brakes to air conditioning, and 8-1738 specifically regulates horns and warning devices.

The act requires every emergency vehicle to have a siren and, "such siren shall not be used except when such vehicle is operated in response to an emergency call." Now, that language doesn't specifically prohibit sounding a siren at a game or a parade, but it would seem to prohibit any use of the siren other than in an emergency.

That's the letter of the law. In practice, lots of ambulance services do it.

We think they should be allowed to use sirens and lights briefly at parades. We think this is a good way for people vital to our community to show their support and get recognition.

For football and other sports, we want our community – the whole community – to support the Eagles, the Trojans and the Crusaders. And that includes the ambulance service, firefighters and anyone else who wants to make some noise.

To cover the legal aspect, there needs to be new language added that allows this specifically at the discretion of each ambulance service. Perhaps Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer or Rep. Jim Morrison could consider this for the next legislative session.

We understand the complaints. Dennen Field is smack in the middle of a residential area and the sirens are loud. The regs even specify that sirens have to be loud enough to be heard at least 500 feet away. But parades and football games should be noisy. They should be boisterous and fun. There are only four regular parades each year and 19 home football games, counting junior varsity, C-team and middle school games.

A little noise for a couple hours 24 days a year isn't excessive. – Kevin Bottrell

### 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@nwkansan.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@nwkansan.com

#### NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor  
kbottrell@nwkansan.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter  
aheintz@nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor  
mballard@nwkansan.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor  
colby.society@nwkansan.com

#### ADVERTISING

Heather Woolfer - Advertising Representative  
hwoolfer@nwkansan.com

Andrea Bowers - Advertising Representative  
abowers@nwkansan.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative  
kballard@nwkansan.com

Kyle Hunter - Graphic Design  
khunter@nwkansan.com

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager  
rtubbs@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator  
support@nwkansan.com

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

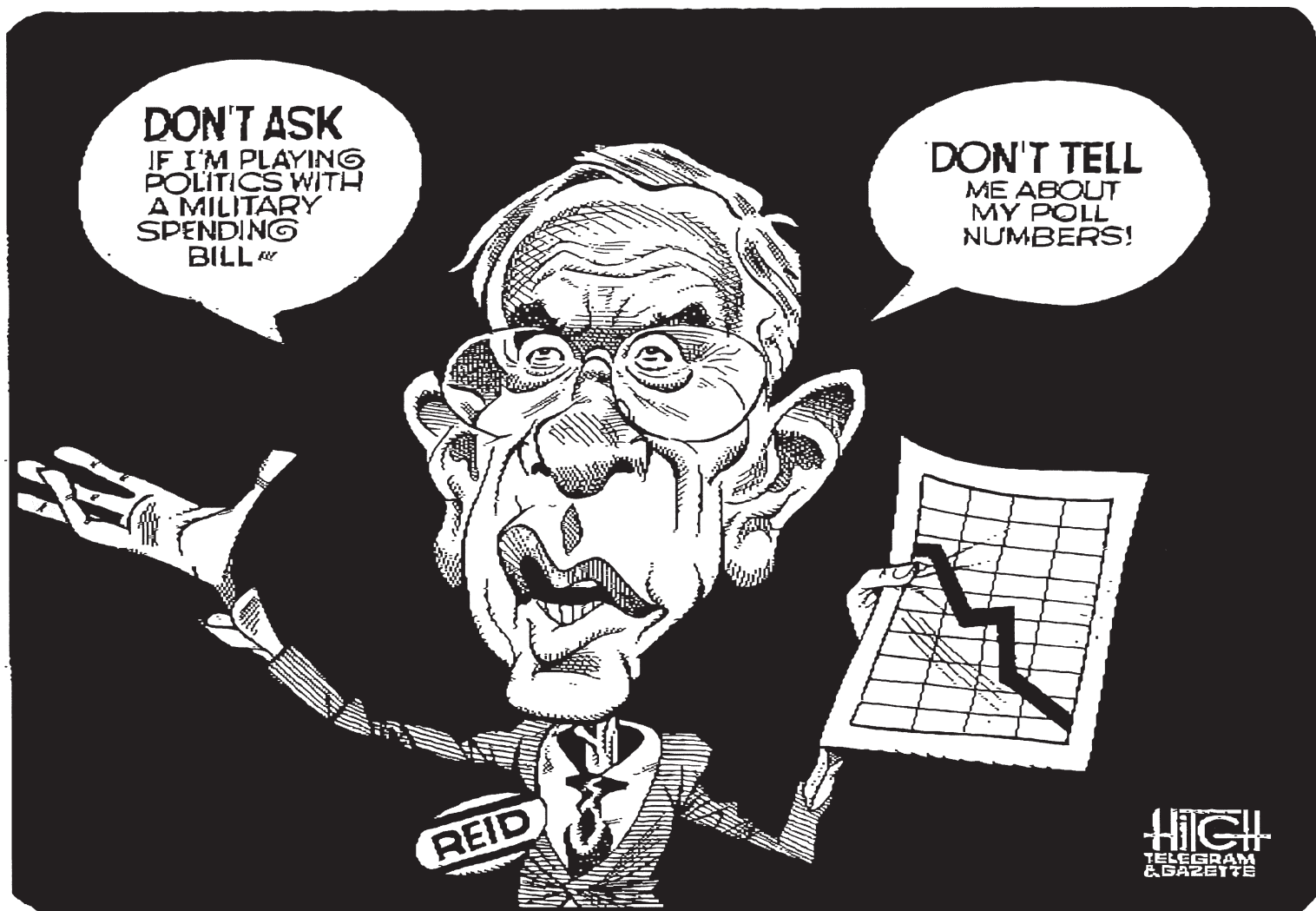
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

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



### 125 years and still going strong

It's been 125 years. That's a long time, or a little time, depending on your perspective.

For a kid, it's a very long time indeed. For the ancient cities of Europe and the Middle East, it seems fairly insignificant.

I lived for a time in a house built about 1888, when Thomas County was in its infancy. My brother and his wife spent three months in Europe one summer, staying in the 800-year-old apartment of a friend. Kind of puts things into perspective.

As a relative newcomer to Thomas County, I have to say I feel a bit like an outsider with all the nostalgia thick in the air this year. After all, I didn't go to school here or raise my kids here. My parents and grandparents aren't buried here.

I feel a bit like the new in-law at the family reunion – or the out-of-town spouse at the class reunion. I don't know all the "in" jokes. I don't remember the big tragedy or the big triumph. And no one here has ever heard of Boog Horse, the school-bus driver that got a high school football field named after him.

Because I do remember – but my memory is for another town a few hundred miles north of here. The storms and fires and memories of new construction I carry in my head might be from Thomas County, but they are probably from other places where most of my life has been spent.

To compound the problem, my mother told



**Marian Ballard**

#### • Collection Connections

the stories of all the places she had lived, along with stories told to her by others she had known. It gives me a strange feeling at times to realize I probably know more about a county superintendent from another state who's been dead for 50 years or so than I do about the trials and tribulations experienced by school administrators through the years in Thomas County.

Colby is a growing community, so I'm sure I'm not the only one. In fact, of those that work at the *Free Press*, I think one person was born here, while maybe five graduated from high school here.

The Great Plains is a place where transients should feel at home, though. The native Americans were permanent migrants, moving their villages to follow the food supply. The entire area is covered with the trails of those who passed through on the way to somewhere else. I can think of the Butterfield Trail and the Santa Fe Trail here in Kansas, along with the Mormon Trail and the Oregon Trail not too far

north of the Nebraska line. Some trails were used by settlers, some were used more by long-haul teamsters.

Then there were the cattle trails. Many of the herds stopped in Kansas at the rail heads, but some just kept right on going, heading for the rich pastures of Wyoming and Montana.

It seems like the Great Plains never really got settled until all those bent on going from coast to coast got past. Somehow, it took a while for people to come to appreciate the wide open spaces, to learn that this wasn't a desert but a breadbasket.

Colby is still a way station on a trail of sorts, as businesses thrive providing services for travelers on I-70. Some of those travelers are families, as in years gone by. Many are on business. And many are those same long-haul teamsters, driving big rigs instead of mules. Seems the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Meanwhile the "desert" is blooming, doing its part to feed the world. And Colby is blooming, too. Newcomers may be confused occasionally, but that's OK. We know the old timers welcome us.

Thomas County, after all, has a great history, but its real promise lies ahead.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

### Online student buyers beware

"We do not accept online coursework" is appearing on more U.S. university websites and college catalogs.

Schools of pharmacy, medicine and nursing are among the first turning away transfer credit for online laboratory coursework. Some programs in the performing arts are joining them.

The George Washington University Medical School website for a Doctor of Medicine bluntly states: "No, we do not accept online coursework." The University of Colorado School of Pharmacy says: "We do not accept any pre-pharmacy math, science or public speaking courses taken online."

The University of Southern California School of Pharmacy declares, "We do not accept on-line classes for math and science pre-pharmacy courses." That means online lectures don't transfer either. That University of Wisconsin Pharmacy School concurs that: "All prerequisite science courses must be taken in a classroom setting."

The Texas Tech University School of Allied Health Sciences Physicians Assistant program concludes: "... online science courses will not be accepted." Some schools exclude all online courses: Currently at the University of San Diego, the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Business do not accept online courses at the undergraduate level."

With the first generation of undergraduates from online programs now applying to professional and doctoral programs, faculty are making decisions on the inadequacy of students who have taken courses online. A sample rationale is explained in the restrictions established less than two years ago by the University of California system:

"...Online lab science courses will not be approved unless they include a supervised wet lab component. Since UC has not seen computer software that adequately replicates the



**John Richard Schrock**

#### • Education Frontlines

laboratory experience, computer simulated labs and lab kits will not be acceptable. UC faculty considers the experimentation process a critical component of any laboratory science course because it brings the scientific process to life. Although online labs have been created by several online providers, UC faculty is not convinced that they adequately replicate the wet lab experience..."

While online labs are obviously questionable, similar concerns are mounting for performance classes that require the presence of a teacher to demonstrate and correct techniques. Again, the California policy details their concerns: "Online visual and performing arts courses will not be approved because it is difficult for students taking online courses to experience the required performance component of performance arts courses and/or replicate the expected portfolio component of visual arts courses. UC faculty believes that performance is a necessary component of any performance arts course. Whether it is a course in band, choir, drama, dance or painting/drawing, the immediate feedback and coaching of an instructor (adjusting the toe point of a dancer, correcting the musical intonation of a student musician, advising greater voice projection for a student actor, or demonstrating correct technique for a student artist) is a critical and necessary component of any course."

Selective liberal arts colleges such as Grinnell never ventured into the online business.

But on many nonselective state campuses, a tension exists between administrators who want to compete with the online for-profit schools, and faculty who are far less enamored. A survey of public universities and colleges, "The Paradox of Faculty Voices: Views and Experiences With Online Learning" released August 2009 by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities found 70 percent of faculty members believe online courses to be either "inferior" or "somewhat inferior" in learning outcomes when compared with face-to-face instruction. Even surveying just those faculty who teach online, nearly half gave it an inferior or somewhat inferior ranking.

The popular American comedy show "Saturday Night Live" ran a skit this last year based on the most important lesson at an online university being on how to hide the fact you have an online degree. This is no laughing matter with legislators where government loan programs are supporting what can be questionable "coursework."

Currently there is a biology master's degree offered completely online just across the Kansas border. My colleagues at Kansas doctoral institutions have indicated they would never accept such a student. But neither that online program nor the current Kansas catalogs reveal that the value of such an online degree is limited and perhaps useless for continued study.

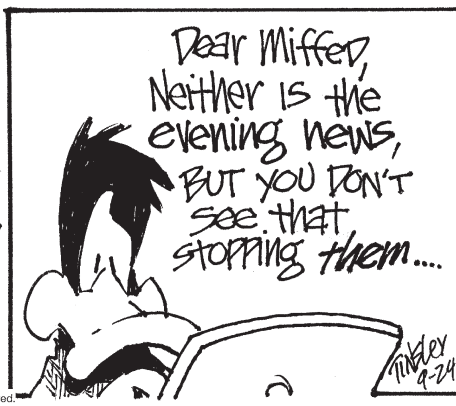
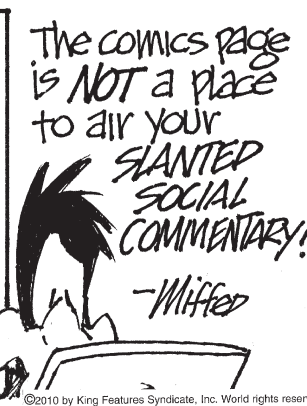
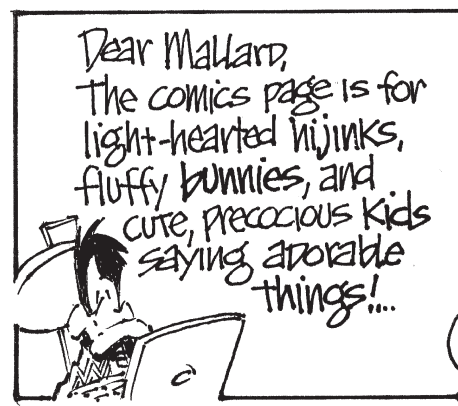
Students contemplating online courses or programs would be wise to first check to be sure the online courses or degree will be accepted.

More and more, that answer may be "no."

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.

### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



©2010 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.