



Free Press  
Viewpoint

End of era leaves  
void in space flight

The liftoff of the space shuttle Endeavour on Friday marked the end of an era. That phrase or variations of it has been repeated ad nauseam by television personalities, government talking heads and pundits across the country over the past week.

The world is looking on this event with a funereal attitude that is altogether unsurprising given the government’s lack of focus in the future of the space program.

Things were a little different 40 years ago. When Apollo officially ended in 1972, early due to budget cuts, NASA was nine years away from the first shuttle launch. However, it was still running Apollo missions. Apollo spacecraft were used to build Skylab in 1973, and there was the little-remembered Apollo-Soyuz Test Project in 1975, where American and Russian spacecraft docked for the first time.

Skylab was a good testbed and the first manned space station of any kind. When it burned up in the atmosphere in 1979, the first shuttle flight was only two years away, and by that time NASA was heavily into testing its new craft.

There was a lot going on between the moon landings and the shuttle flights. Now, however, the United States is without a functioning spacecraft for the first time in decades. We are, without a doubt, no longer the leaders in manned spaceflight.

Had the president not cancelled the Constellation program, which was already up and running, we would not be looking at the end of the shuttle era with such finality. Constellation, a Bush Administration proposal, would have taken us back to the moon within the decade, but that is a dream it seems we must abandon.

There is hope, however. The crew vehicle of the Constellation program, called Orion, was already into the construction phase and Lockheed Martin in Denver built a prototype. This craft is being repurposed as a “multipurpose crew vehicle.” The craft holds four astronauts for missions up to 21 days. But it’s just a crew capsule similar to Apollo’s command module. It can go into orbit of the moon or an asteroid or even Mars, but it couldn’t land without a second spacecraft.

In conjunction with the capsule is the proposed “heavy lifter,” a rocket that NASA says will carry us beyond low-Earth orbit and out into the solar system. However, this rocket isn’t even out of the design phase. It will be years before it is even ready for testing, which means that the crew vehicle will be stuck going to the International Space Station, just like the shuttle was.

The problem the space program always runs into is money. Space travel is an expensive undertaking, and Congress never seems willing to adequately fund NASA programs. The latest is the House’s budget proposal which cancels the Webb space telescope.

What we run into is a cycle of leaders with the vision to create good plans for space travel and their successors who don’t have the political will to stick with them.

Perhaps the greatest irony is that the space program is a casualty of the end of the Cold War. Without the threat of the Russians, there seems to many to be little need to be the leader in space travel. The problems of our own small world seem bigger than the benefits of exploring the universe, and so our journey into space that began as a giant leap, has now shrunk to small steps.

If government is unwilling or unable to shoulder the burden, then what choice do we have but the privatization of space travel? – *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 @ 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.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher  
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor  
kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter  
colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor  
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Tomi Miller, Christina Beringer - Society Reporters  
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard, Shannon Harris

Advertising Representatives

abowers @ nwkansas.com kballard @ nwkansas.com sharris @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design  
khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager  
rtubbs @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator  
support @ nwkansas.com

NOR’WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager  
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker,  
Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

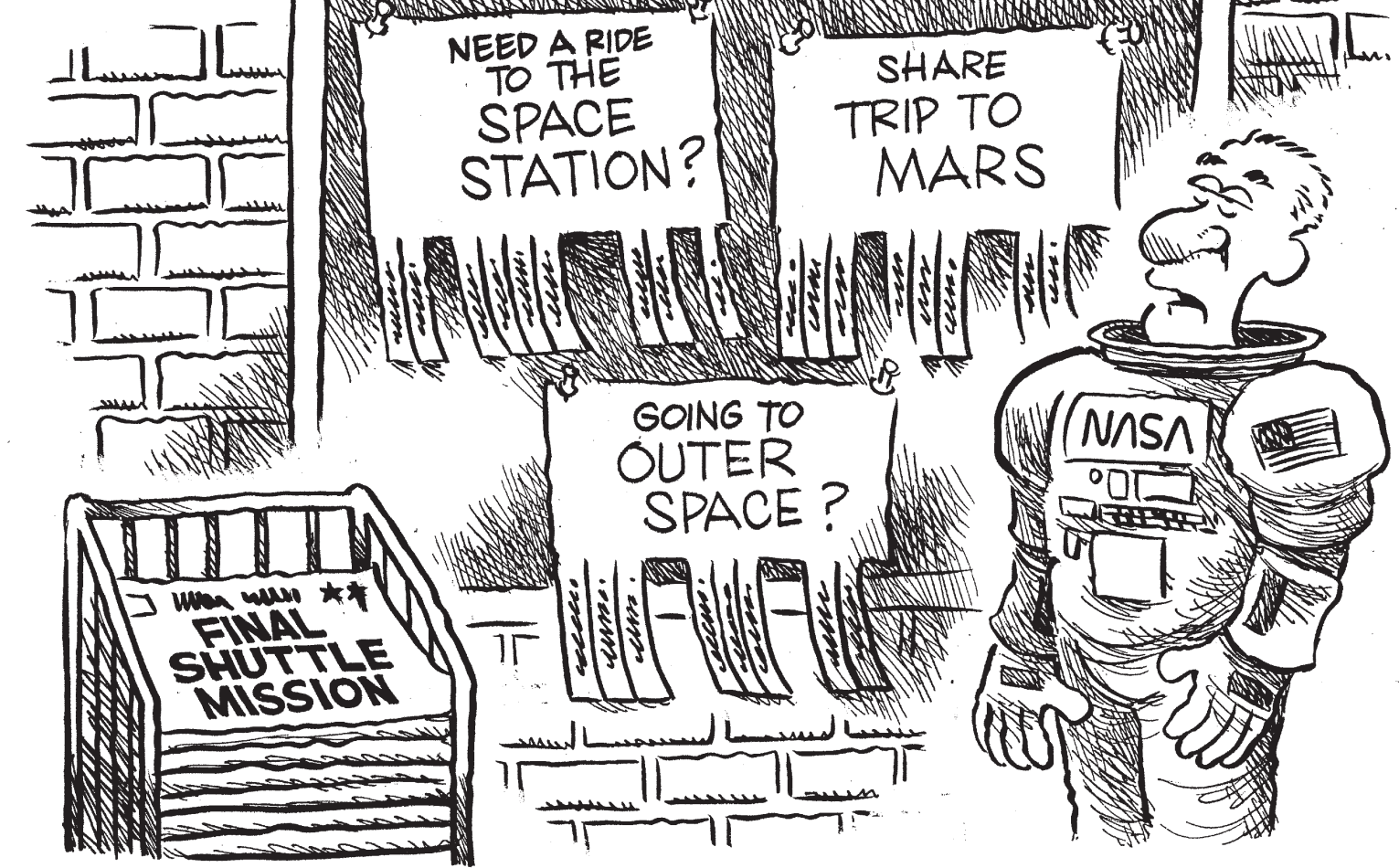
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, by Nor’West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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

MARGULIES  
©2011 THE RECORD  
www.northjersey.com/margulies



Beware of melting cars

I now realize there is another thing we will need to be cautious of as our summers continue to get warmer. It also will be something that automobile manufacturers will need to worry about.

This came to light the last Thursday afternoon in June when Jim and I were returning from Hays. At one point that day while we were sitting in the concrete parking lot in front of the Veteran’s Administration office in Hays, our car thermometer registered 114 degrees. I later heard on the radio they were officially reporting a temperature of 108 degrees for Hays that day. They obviously weren’t taking their readings in any of the parking lots.

When we headed back to Colby around 4 that afternoon, the traffic was particularly heavy with a lot of large trucks traveling our way. We were going 74 miles per hour. The new signs had just gone up that day listing the speed limit at 75 mph. and most other vehicles were going around us like we were standing still – also the wind was blowing between 35 to 40 mph.

We were in the process of passing a small car when we heard a noise like something hit the back of our car. Jim looked out his side mirror and said he saw a red object fly across the highway and land in the median.

I said, “Maybe it was something that had



Marj Brown

• Marj’s Snippets

frown off the car we passed and hit our car as it went across the highway.” Jim said, “I think it looked like the big, red cover off of one of our taillights.”

We talked about stopping, but the traffic was so thick at that moment that we decided it would be too dangerous to be walking around on the highway.

When we arrived home, we found we had lost the lens from one of our taillights. The glue holding it on had actually become so hot that it melted and the wind caught the lens and blew it off. When we checked the other light we could see that the lens was also loose on it. The next day we were told that we couldn’t replace just the lens; we had to buy the entire light apparatus.

This experience has caused me to wonder what other parts of our cars are just glued on. Are the windows just glued in? Might we be driving down the highway some day and our

windows will come crashing in on us or fly out across the highway smashing into other cars?

When it gets even hotter, will the asphalt highway start melting and our tires collapse into the muck like a hot marshmallow on a s’mores cookie?

Maybe it’s time for someone to invent a new form of daily transportation. I can remember the days before air conditioners in cars when we took a trip through the Nevada desert and had all the car windows open and even had our feet hanging out the windows – all but the driver that is. Then car air conditioners were invented and that problem was solved.

How will this problem of melting autos and highways be solved? It’s time to sit down at the drawing board and come up with a solution. Perhaps it will be something like giant air-conditioned tubes that run from one place to another where people sit in seats and get out at their destinations like the subways in New York.

Start racking your brains. Let’s get this thing taken care of before the worst happens.

*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.*

Message of safe food needs to be told

The conversations are endless. Consumers want and some demand to know the origin, safety and nutrition contained in the food they eat or feed their families.

Little more than a decade ago, seemed like most people could give a hoot about their food. Heck, 20 years ago, the only time the press paid any attention to food was to tell consumers when prices went up.

It’s obvious farmers, ranchers and other people who want to sell food want to tell the public about their product. But are they being heard? Does their message resonate with today’s savvy consumer?

Or is it being sidelined by well-funded, well-managed and strategically placed ads and social media campaigns?

During the last several years, agendas championed by some environmental groups have been less than kind to agriculture. Some have flooded the public with figures on soil losses, pesticide-related mishaps and alleged failed attempts at using pesticides to reduce infestation.

Technology has often been labeled the No. 1 environmental enemy. But here’s the flip side of that coin, and it’s a story agriculture must tell over and over again.

For food producers, farmers and ranchers, technology is the application of knowledge. As humans, we survive by adapting the environment to our needs.

Someone much wiser than me once said, minus technology, we would be just like other primates – confined to tropical regions and subject to extinction due to environmental changes. To survive, we must disturb the environment, conserve resources and continually create them.

Resources are made, not born. Land, ores, petroleum, etc. – the raw materials of this planet – are not inherently resources. They do not inherently further human purposes.



John Schlageck

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

We as humans must determine what is useful and how to use it. Topsoil becomes a resource when a farmer tills the soil and plants wheat, for example. Ores become resources when metals are extracted from them.

During the past two centuries, technology has been creating resources more rapidly than humans have been consuming them. By every measure of price and availability, resources have become more abundant.

Without science and technology, today’s farmers and ranchers would be unable to feed the world. Farmers use technology responsibly. They constantly use new farming methods and practices. Their minds are like the fertile soil they farm – always ready to embrace new ideas.

But new ideas and new farm technology are costly. It is in the best interest of farmers to use them carefully and sparingly. Misuse would add to production costs, which would result in an even lower return on investment.

Food produced in the United States is safe. More than 40 years of Food and Drug Administration testing has shown the majority of our fruits and vegetables have no detectable pesticide residues. This underscores that American farmers use pesticides properly.

Every year, the government spends billions to support food and agricultural safety and quality inspection. The private sector, state and local governments spend an estimated \$7 billion.

Farmers and ranchers support efforts to

evaluate and enhance the current regulatory and food monitoring system. They are willing to work with others to maintain safe food, but this industry must avoid policy changes that are based on fear, emotion and manipulation of public opinion.

Decisions affecting the course of agricultural production are critical, and will have far-reaching implications on our quality of life. We must be careful when determining long-term policies.

To feed an ever-growing world population, farmers and ranchers must continue to maximize their production capacity with an ever-watchful eye on food safety, quality and the environment.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Mallard  
Fillmore

• Bruce  
Tinsley

