

from our viewpoint...

One size does not fit all in the lunch line

Parents and students are astir about cutbacks in school lunches intended by our nanny government to fight teenage obesity: no more seconds on meat, no oil in the salad dressing, more fruits and vegetables, less of the carbs and meat kids sometimes crave.

Especially put out are the parents of kids in sports, who might need two to three times the calories each day that the average child could get by on. The new rules strike at the heart of this bunch: the football and volleyball players, runners and others who practice every day.

The no-seconds rule is the biggest visible change, but ever-tighter limits on salt and carbs, and increased servings of fruits and vegetables, may have more impact.

So, if the football players are still hungry? "They can always go back for another helping at the salad bar," one school official sniffed.

Or, they might, probably will, go load up on candy, chips and other unhealthy snacks between school and practice, then down a huge supper when a big lunch would have been better for them.

The reaction of administrators is something like, "Well, it's a federal decision, and we have to go along."

Which is both disingenuous and not exactly true. What's true is this is a decision by the Obama administration, and while they don't have to go along with it, they will—because they don't want to lose their federal lunch money.

Always the strings with that federal money. Our schools are addicted to federal money, which can make up a big chunk of a district's budget, depending on what programs it's heavy into.

Obesity is an epidemic, no doubt. The only debate should be about whether it's something the federal government should try to fix, or whether it's best left to states, school districts and families.

Administrators should be much more concerned about the damage done by No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and all these redundant and sometimes harmful tests our kids are taking.

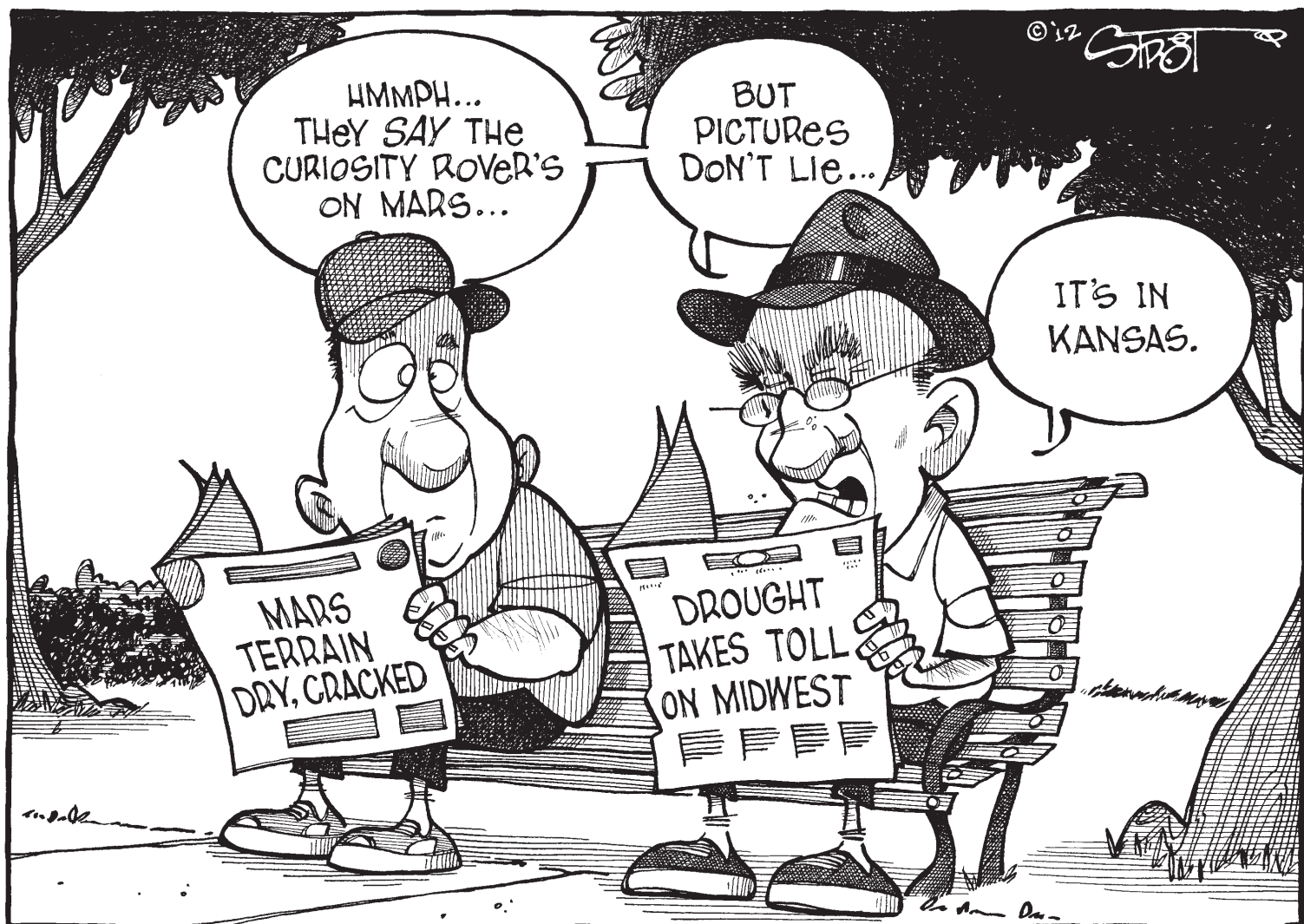
But the lunch issue strikes to the heart of the matter when kids come home and say that they're hungry because of Obama's rules, or that they won't eat the salads because the oil-free dressing "tastes icky."

As John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau points out, kids don't come in one size, and one size of meal doesn't necessarily fit every one. It's also true that in small, rural schools, where most kids take part in some sports activity, obesity may not be the problem it is in the city.

However, the lunch ladies don't want to have to look at the kids and decide who's fat and who can have a second helping, either. One size is a lot easier to deal with.

As long as there's federal money involved, the do-gooders are going to win. Nanny knows best, and if we know what's good for our federal money, we'll go along.

There's an alternative, but no one wants to hear about it.—*Steve Haynes*



Overseas violence hits close to home

Wednesday's violence in Libya hit a little close to home for me. While I didn't know him personally, one of the men killed was Sean Smith.

Smith was an information technology specialist. In other words, he kept the consulate's computers up and running. Smith was a 10-year veteran of the Foreign Service. He was also a gamer, like me.

Smith played a game called EVE Online, a game in which many thousands of players exist together in a persistent universe, in this case a science fiction universe. I haven't played this game, personally, but I feel a kindred spirit to Smith, since I play several of the hundreds of games in what is known as the Massively Multiplayer Online genre.

There are millions of gamers like Smith and myself out there. World of Warcraft alone had 11 million subscribers worldwide at its peak, but you'd likely never know who they were unless they told you. Our group encompasses all ages, races, genders and all walks of life. We are your next-door neighbors.

That anonymity is a large part of online life. For the most part, when gaming we all use pseudonyms. I go by the name Drogyn, which I took from a minor character on the long-since-cancelled television show "Angel." Even my closest gamer friends don't know my real name or where I live. Most of the time, that's the way we like it.

However, when something happens to a gamer, his or her closest friends might not know. One day, they simply no longer log into the game. People come and go all the time. They switch games, they take breaks or they stop gaming all together. In this case Smith had at least one online friend whom he had met personally who let everyone else know that he



kevin bottrell

• simple tricks and nonsense

had been killed in the consulate attack.

There are conflicting reports about why the protests happened. The initial stories said the protest that turned violent was centered on a trailer for an American film—which almost no one had ever heard of—which appeared only online and had what some feel is a disrespectful depiction of the Prophet Muhammad. In many Muslim cultures, any depiction of the Prophet is forbidden, but this trailer went above and beyond, depicting Muhammad as a child molester, womanizer and a killer.

There's no excuse for that kind of hate speech, though in our country, it is the unfortunate byproduct of the principle of free speech. There is also no excuse for violence in protesting it.

Rev. Martin Luther King said "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars...Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." He was absolutely right.

But the violence may not have even been about the video at all. There's speculation among many experts that the video was just an excuse used by terrorist organizations to incite a mob to violence. The speculation is that Ambassador Chris Stevens was specifically targeted because of his work in North Africa and the Middle East. U.S. officials said Thursday they are not ready to identify a particular

group.

So, it's possible those behind the violence—probably just a few people in the crowd—did not have religious reasons, but were using it to their own ends. Religion is something that can be very powerful. It can be a force for good, especially on the local level, where churches, synagogues, mosques and others help bring people together for the good of the community.

But beliefs can be twisted. The powerful can manipulate people's beliefs and incite them to do things that are against what most believe to be the tenets of that religion. We must all be vigilant against this.

Many have said that the War on Terror is not a war on Islam. I would have to agree with that statement. It is a war on the kind of people who would twist Islamic beliefs in order to suit their own purposes.

We need only look at some of Thursday's news to see that. True, there are more protests at American embassies abroad, but there are also some telling images of Muslim protesters supporting America.

Despite the growing unrest, we cannot allow the inciters of this violence to escape justice, but we must also take King's words to heart. We must not visit violence in reprisal, but rather hunt them down and bring them to trial.

In the end, though, what made the protests happen, and what made them turn to violence would have made little difference to Sean Smith. The end result was the same. He was doing no harm to the people of Libya. He was an innocent bystander, in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In a way Smith was part of my community, and my thoughts are with his family.

Suitcase has a long, strange trip

Friends from New Jersey showed up on Labor Day. They were driving from their vacation in Jackson Hole, Wyo., back home.

Yeah, they're crazy, but we love 'em. Two years ago when they came our way, Steve took them out storm spotting, and we had a good one for them. They also enjoyed watching the buzzards on the Oberlin water tower up the street.

They were a little disappointed this year. The buzzards have moved on to a grain elevator south of town, and you can't chase what isn't there. The storms have definitely been avoiding us this year.

On the other hand, no large branches hit the house in front of their bedroom window like the one two years ago.

They didn't make it last year because just as they were ready to leave home, they looked around. There were their children—all teenagers, all drivers, all at home. They decided that a two-week road trip to the other side of the country was probably not a good idea with four almost, but not quite, adults in the house. It just seemed like a recipe for disaster.

But this year, the kids were scattered. Some had headed off to college, some to jobs and one to overseas.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Now this is the same family to whom we delivered a kachina doll in March in Washington.

One of their sons bought the artifact in Albuquerque and found out it didn't fit in his suitcase. So, the kachina went to Colorado for a few months, Kansas for a few more and finally went into one of our old suitcases on a trip to Washington, where we met up with its owner and made the transfer.

The kachina then went home to New Jersey by train, still in the oversized suitcase, and on to New York, where the young man goes to college, wearing it's seat belt.

We asked after the much-traveled doll and

were told that he was safely in New York for the fall semester.

The suitcase, however, was another story. I really had hoped I'd never see it again. It was old, some of the zippers were broken and we never used it anymore, which is why I designated it as a packing case.

However, our New Jersey friends were bound and determined to return it and had put it safely away with their "stuff to go west." There it had sat since March.

Then when they started loading up the car for their outward trip, it was gone.

They eventually determined that their daughter, who left the week previous for Jordan (as in the Middle East) had used it to pack her stuff.

Well, I'm jealous. That suitcase is having a better time than I am, but it'll probably have some really good stories when it returns from overseas.

Or, if I'm really lucky, maybe it'll stay in Jordan!

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address — <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=EmailPat>

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address — <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20515-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address — <https://>

huelskamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov.

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Kevin Bottrell, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor
Advertising Department
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Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager
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Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight, Sheri Arroyo.



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nbetz49@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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