

# Opinion



## Guest Viewpoint

# Americans depend on our rural folks

There has always been something special about the men and women who till the soil. Call it tenacity, perseverance, guts or plain hard work. Whatever it is, the American farmer has managed to feed us in good times and bad, while protecting the land.

Few businesses are as open to public scrutiny as a Kansas farm. While farming practices occur in the open where anyone can see, the only picture many have of agriculture is what they read in newspapers or see on television. Even fewer people have set foot on a modern farm.

The fondest wish of most farmers is to pass their land on to their children. They work years to leave a legacy of good stewardship. Most farmers learned about conservation and respect for the land from their parents.

Talk to farmers and ranchers and they will tell you that if they thought for one minute they were ruining their land, they'd give up farming and walk away. They also will tell you that when you farm the same land year after year, it becomes part of you — who you are. You want to treat it right, just like you want to treat yourself right.

As the demand for food increases, farmers produce more, not only for people in this country, but around the world. World population could double in the next 50 years.

To add to the farmer's challenge, the 21st century will be a period of continued environmental awareness. People are concerned about food safety and the protection of natural resources, as they should be.

Supermarkets cannot be adequately supplied with the high-quality, low-cost foods consumers expect without a production-oriented agriculture. Today's consumer must also understand that the methods used to grow our food are safe, but nothing is ever risk free.

Today farmers are doing their part to protect and improve the environment. We use agricultural practices such as early planting, pest control, good soil fertility, conservation tillage and many other innovations that help us grow more food while protecting our land and the environment where we live.

Farmers across Kansas adjust accepted farming practices to meet individual cropping needs. These can vary from farm to farm — even from field to field.

Like compost in a garden, conservation tillage, which ensures ground cover by leaving stalk residues on the surface, provides stored fertility for future crops while protecting the soil against erosion and loss of nutrients. This cultivation practice sustains and improves the soil's productive capacity.

From planting through harvest, farmers do their best to provide nutritious, safe food. They also battle weather, weeds, insects and disease. Their own efficiency is their best defense against unstable world markets, political barriers and fringe groups who attack their farming methods, yet often know little about this profession.

As in any other business, farmers must manage their operations on a timely basis and use all the technology available to improve quality and productivity. Farmers work closely with crop consultants when applying herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. They've cut their uses significantly in recent years.

Kansas farmers sow more than seeds in the ground, they establish the roots that anchor our communities. They also supply many other items from their farms that are used in our nation's industry.

While many urban folks tend to believe that farmers only care about their land and their profession, they also care about communities like Ashland, Colby, Hesston and Troy — the towns where they live and call home. Farmers not only work to grow crops and care for livestock, but to make their communities a better place to live.

Kansas farmers and ranchers continue to build on a long and proud heritage of self-help and self-responsibility by investing in our farms, ranches, businesses, communities and those they employ. They believe their communities and their way of life can continue to be a part of a livable frontier — a community and state of mind where there is always room to grow and prosper. —by John Schlageck, managing editor, "Kansas Living."

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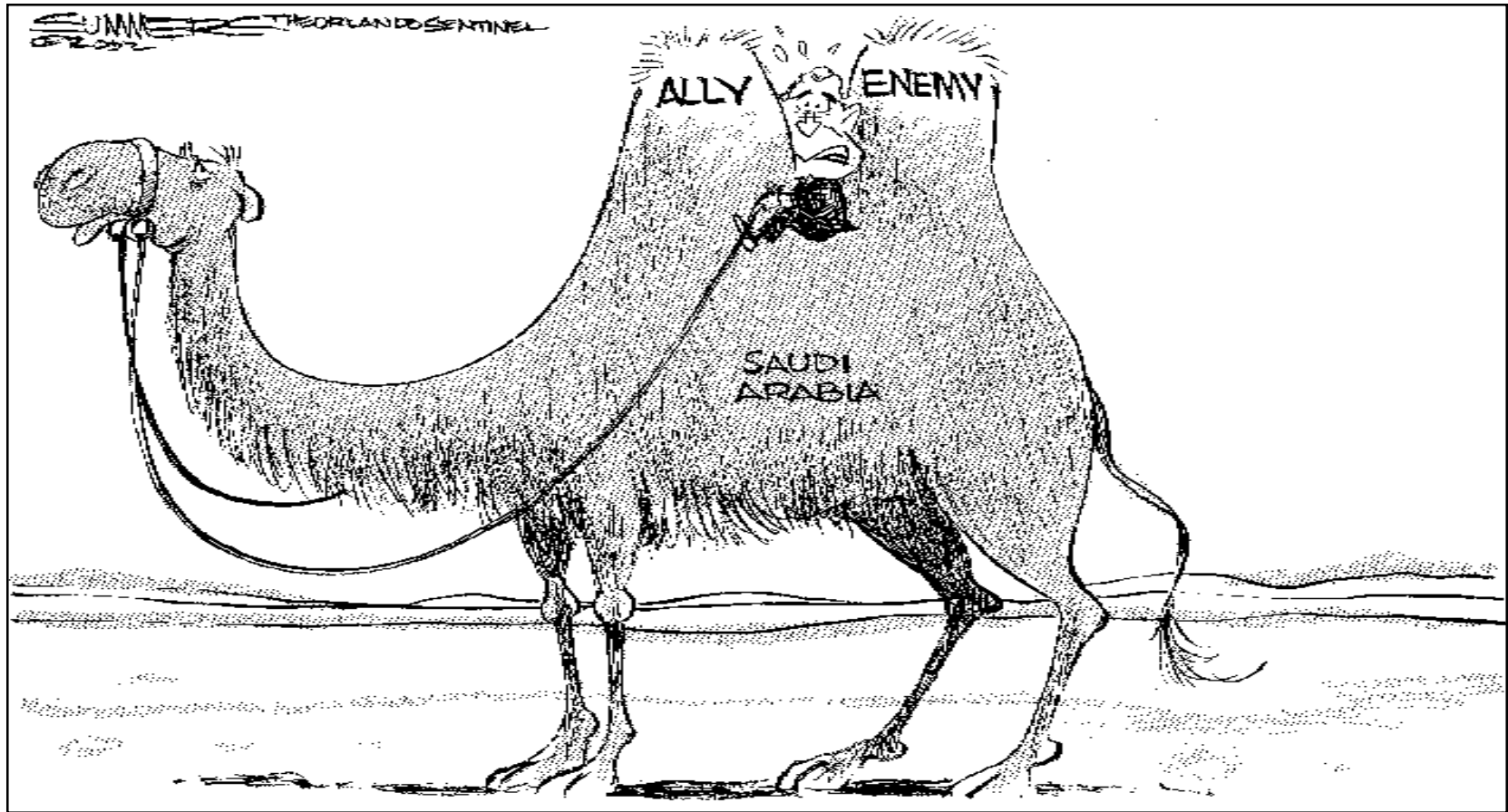
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# AT&T couldn't match my current provider

**WHAT** a pleasant surprise. An early evening telephone call from AT&T ended not like I had expected it would end. In fact, I am glad they called. Being hooked up with SBC I learned I did have a bargain plan. Reason for the call was to ascertain my long distance provider, what I was paying and if I might be interested in perhaps an even better bargain. Well, I laid out my SBC phone bill and gave the caller all the information she sought. When all was said and done — it took 10 minutes or so, she told me they could not better what I was always receiving from SBC. She thanked me for cooperating. I did comment that I had thought at the outset she would eventually convince me to switch over to AT&T. "No," she said, "we cannot improve on what you are already getting." There's still honesty out there, even in those telemarketing calls. SBC is doing everything it told me it would do...and the phone call from a competitor underscored that fact. Indeed, it was a good evening.

**THE KING**, although dead, lives on. Elvis Presley, come Friday, Aug. 16, will have been dead for 25 years, but the revolution he spearheaded in the music industry is still as fresh in the minds of his millions of fans as it was the day he unveiled the rock and roll fever that continues today. I still have some of his old albums, featuring "Hound Dog" and "Don't be Cruel" — my two favorites — and bunches of other songs that swept across the land like a tidal wave. This week is Elvis Week all over the country and will conclude this coming weekend with a giant candle vigil at Graceland in Memphis where untold numbers of adoring fans tour his home every day of every year since his death. I saw Graceland when I was in Memphis on a business trip in 1989. Quite a place. It also conjured up thoughts of my mother's admonishment when Elvis arrived on the scene, "That's evil music." She took exception with the bump and hump movements that accompanied his music. Next to what we see and hear today, Elvis was tame.

**YEP**, only in our country do we have answering machines to screen calls and then have call waiting so we won't miss a call from someone we didn't want to talk to in the first place...We also buy hot dogs in packages of 10 and buns in packages of 8.

## HAPPY Birthday to...

I never expected to see my name up in lights, but Saturday afternoon as I was on my way to the library from Pioneer Day at the VFW, I happened to glance up at the bank to see what the temperature was, and there was MY NAME. Omygosh! I was so shocked! It was an announcement of my retirement reception Sunday afternoon.

It was a lovely reception, held at the Fairview Estates Retirement Home, and I thank the *Colby Free Press* and all involved in it. I've got the biggest floral arrangement I've ever seen outside of a funeral home. It must be close to three feet tall, and I got a Paradise Plant (?) from the south bank, as well as balloons and cards from lots of people.

We had a nice crowd and they came in slowly enough to give me a chance to visit with almost every one of them. Thanks to everyone involved.

Oh, and my granddaughter from Derby, who is majoring in drama at Wichita State University, said she was envious that I was the first one in the family to get my name up in lights.

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Now that I am retired, I have time to do more reading. I have always liked to read, and I want to share with you about a wonderful new author I have discovered. If you like Tony Hillerman, you will love James D. Doss, who writes about Hillerman country, and is even funnier. (I would say he writes a 'Hillerman cozy' if there is such a thing. There is even a cat.)

His books feature Charlie Moon, an amiable, out-sized Ute tribal policeman, and his irascible shaman aunt Daisy Perika. The books start out with Na-



## Tom Dreiling

### ● It's Monday!

**Aug. 12** — Phil Knox of Brewster, Brent Luedke, Grace Corbett

**Aug. 13** — Jason Schwindt, Don Heinrich

**HAPPY Anniversary to...**

**Aug. 13** — George & Judy Collins.

Congratulations!

Call us at 462-3963 or e-mail [td@nwkansas.com](mailto:td@nwkansas.com) to have your special date mentioned as our gift to you. And please keep us advised of any and all changes. Thanks!

**I LISTEN** to Rush Limbaugh whenever I am out on the road. He makes time fleet by and can turn a boring drive into an enlightening experience. I usually pick him up on 850 AM (KOA out of Denver). Some months back, he gave an opinion on a subject near and dear to many of us. Some alert readers found that topic on the Internet and forwarded it to me. In case you didn't catch it, here it is:

### What's a Military Family Worth?

by Rush Limbaugh, March 11, 2002

I think the vast differences in compensation between the victims of the September 11th casualty, and those who die serving the country in uniform, are profound.

No one is really talking about it either because you just don't criticize anything having to do with September 11th.

Well, I just can't let the numbers pass by because it says something really disturbing about the entitlement mentality of this country.

If you lost a family member in the September 11th attack, you're going to get an average of \$1,185,000. The range is a minimum guarantee of \$250,000, all the way up to \$4.7 million.

If you are a surviving family member of an American soldier killed in action, the first check you get is a \$6,000 direct death benefit, half of which is taxable. Next, you get \$1,750 for burial costs.

# My name was in lights



## Maxine Nelson

### ● Random Thoughts

Native American mysticism. Aunt Daisy does her thing, which Charlie, being a modern Indian, tolerates, but does not believe, and there is a perfectly natural (if somewhat reaching) explanation for everything. But it keeps you on your toes (me, anyway) trying to figure it out. But it is a different culture, and I can't understand until it is explained to me.

The latest one I read, and funniest so far, is *Grandmother Spider*. Pioneer Memorial Library doesn't have any books by this author, so I have had to order them on interlibrary loan. But I'll bet JoAnne will get some, if she reads the book I just returned to the library.

Doss is originally from Kentucky, and was on the staff of the University of California's Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. He published his first novel, *The Shaman Sings*, in 1994 and seems to be putting one out every year since.

Aimee and David Thurlow also write on a southwestern theme. Following the formula set by J.A. Jance, their books feature a single mother, police officer, who through brilliant detective work, saves the day. Going a step farther, their officer, Ella Clah, is a

If you are the surviving spouse, you get \$833 a month until you remarry. And there's a payment of \$211 per month for each child under 18. When the child hits 18, those payments come to a screeching halt.

Keep in mind that some of the people that are getting an average of \$1.185 million up to \$4.7 million are complaining that it's not enough.

We also learned over the weekend that some of the victims from the Oklahoma City bombing have started an organization asking for the same deal that the September 11th families are getting.

In addition to that, some of the families of those bombed in the embassies are now asking for compensation as well.

You see where this is going, don't you?

Folks, this is part and parcel of over fifty years of entitlement politics in this country.

It's just really sad.

"Patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." —Adlai E. Stevenson, Jr.

Every time when a pay raise comes up for the military they usually receive next to nothing of a raise.

Now the green machine is in combat in the Middle East while their families have to survive on food stamps and live in low rent housing.

However our own U.S. Congress just voted themselves a raise, and many of you don't know that they only have to be in Congress one-time to receive a pension that is more than \$15,000 per month and most are now equal to be millionaires plus.

They also do not receive Social Security on retirement because they didn't have to pay into the system.

If some of the military people stay in for 20 years and get out as an E-7 you may receive a pension of \$1,000 per month, and the very people who placed you in harms way receive a pension of \$15,000 per month.

I would like to see our elected officials pick up a weapon and join ranks before they start cutting out benefits and lowering pay for our sons and daughters who are now fighting.

"When do we finally do something about this ???"

**AMEN, Rush!**

**YEP, It's Monday!**

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*Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press.*

Native American police chief. *Changing Woman* is available on interlibrary loan, and will give a list of other books if you want to read more by the Thurlows.

David Cole writes about a part-Hopi woman investigator, but I haven't read his books yet. *Stalking Moon* by Cole should be available on interlibrary loan. The library just loves to get books on interlibrary loan, or at least have so far, unless changing economic conditions cause a change in policy.

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A rosy breasted finch was perched on the top of the maple tree in front of our house the other night. Before we built our ramp in front, we had a dead limb which was the highest point of that tree. A bird used to sit there and sing every night just before sunset. We had the dead limb removed because I thought it was a threat to the deck, and the bird didn't return. It was a similar (the same?) bird on the tree the other night, and he was sitting on a newly dead limb at the top of the tree. Fortunately for me, the limb is on the side of the tree away from the deck. I guess my misfortune is the bird's good fortune.

If you watch at 'bird bedtime,' you will see that usually one bird stays awake on a wire, post or other unprotected spot, while the rest of the birds go to bed. Then they call goodnight to each other like bedtime at the Waltons. You can hear them drowsily saying 'goodnight' while the sentinel keeps guard.

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*Maxine Nelson served the Free Press for many years as Family and Religion Page editor. She is now retired, but provides periodic columns so we can all keep track of what she's up to.*

## About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.