

Opinion

Monday's Salute

Thumbs to...

✓ **Sean Nudson, Amber Dempewolf, Crystal Herschberger** — on your first-place medals in the Lodging Management Program competition in Topeka. All there are Colby High students. Good luck at nationals!

✓ **Nick Wells** — and all others involved in the April 3 Colby Community College Endowment Association's annual dinner/auction.

✓ **Friends of the Library** — on your successful benefit auction. And to **Bert Maxfield** of T&T Auction for volunteering your services.

✓ **Matt Murray** — best of luck at the NCAA Wrestling Championships at St. Louis.

✓ **Thomas County Democrats** — good caucus hosts.

✓ **Rob Aiken** — for the timely update on the emerging wheat crop.

✓ **Mary Lahman** — your friends at Fairview are pulling for a full recovery.

✓ **Nate Horinek** — you'll make a fine mayor!

✓ **Anne Pinkelman** — of Brewster, on winning the 2003 Thomas County Masonic Lodge essay contest. Best wishes at state.

✓ **Sgt. Jesse C. Doze** — not many people receive birthday greetings from the President — in person.

This column is prepared each Monday by TD, the newspaper's publisher. Comments, questions or submissions can be directed to him at td@nwkansas.com, (785) 462-3963, fax (785) 462-7749 or mail to 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com.

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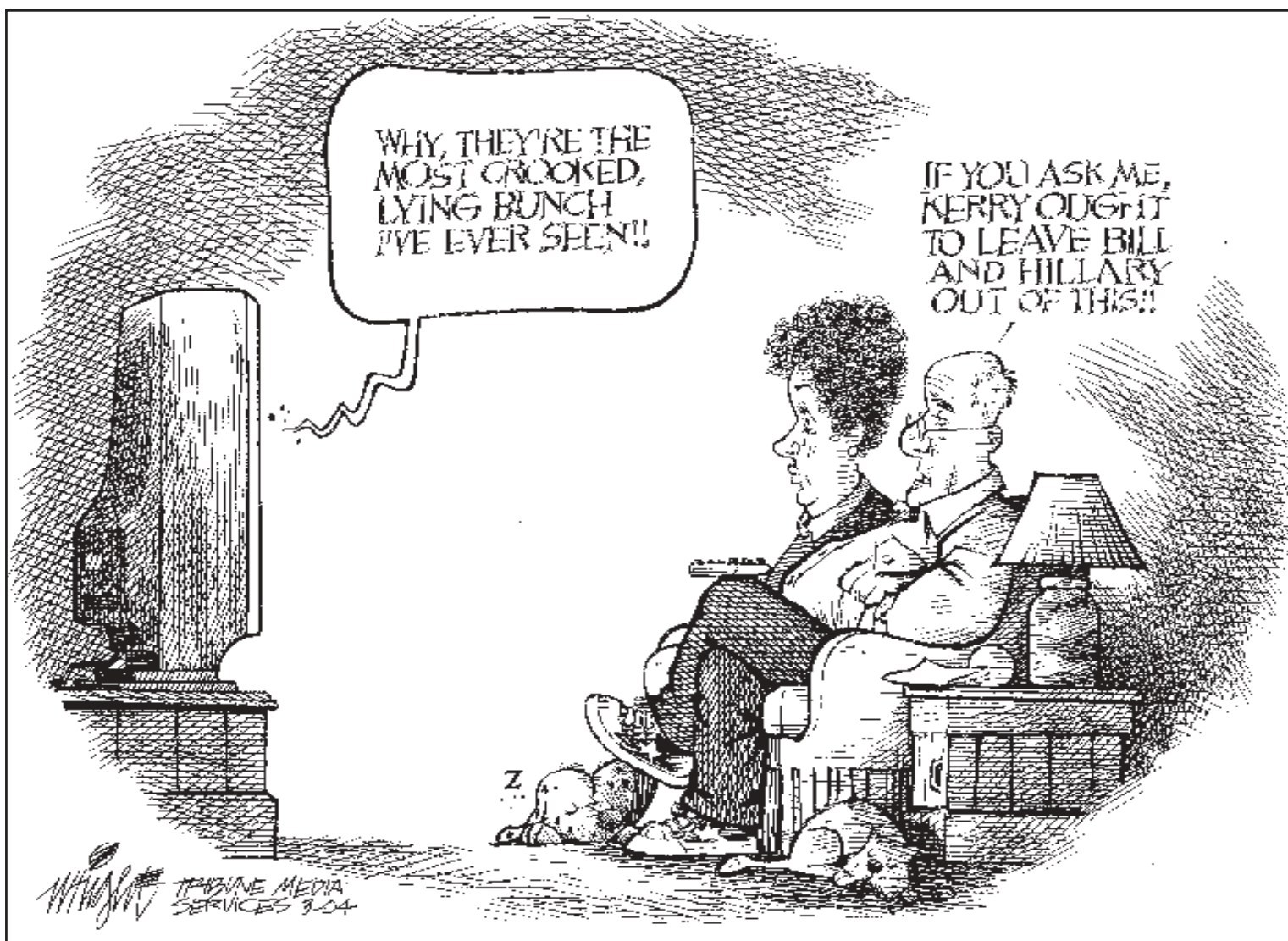
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He was being stupid

The Colorado Avalanche lost a promising young player for the rest of the season Monday night.

It might not sound like a big deal, but if anyone had seen the hit that resulted in his injuries, they would be wondering just how a game could get so out of hand.

Steve Moore, 25, is a rookie with the Avs this season. He only has 12 points on the year but for a rookie third- or fourth-line player, that's pretty good.

In hockey, character counts for something. It's what keeps guys who don't score 50 goals a year on the roster.

But Vancouver's Todd Bertuzzi showed just how little he had Monday night.

Bertuzzi got on the ice, shadowed Moore from behind, trying to keep a grip on his jersey. The refs should've nailed him then and there for holding but didn't do anything until Bertuzzi sucker punched the kid in the back of the head.

Moore fell to the ice face first and Bertuzzi landed on top of him, rubbing his face into the ice. Moore's teammates rushed to his defense and the refs and linesmen waded into the fray to pull the other players off Moore.

Moore was knocked unconscious and taken from the ice on a stretcher. Tuesday morning, it was released that Moore has a broken neck, concussion and facial lacerations. He'll be in a Vancouver hospital indefinitely and when he's able, he'll be moved to Craig Hospital in Colorado.

The player in question, Todd Bertuzzi, has a history of vicious incidents in his past. The latest was in "retaliation" for a hit Moore put on Canucks captain Marcus Naslund three weeks ago, putting him in the hospital with a concussion.



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

It was an accident. Hockey is a physical game where players sometimes get hurt. However, there is no place in the game for a player who intentionally inflicts harm on another.

Payback is one thing — the Colorado/Detroit rivalry hasn't been without its share of bloodshed but that can be traced back to two separate incidents back in 1996.

Standing up for yourself and protecting your teammates is one thing, brutality and stupidity is another. It's a problem that gets shoved aside because league commissioner Gary Bettman doesn't want anything tarnishing the game's reputation, but anyone who watches knows that too many players in the league rely on their fists instead of their play to stay on a roster.

Players that normally wouldn't have a place on an NHL team do now because recent expansion has lessened the pool of talent teams have to choose from and no one wants to hurry the development of good, young players who will have long, successful careers in the NHL.

I love hockey. Fighting is part of the sport and it does have a time and a place. But outright brutality or stupidity don't, like a cheap elbow to the head or a knee-on-knee hit.

If players are supposed to be worth so much, then why isn't the league protecting them?

Simply put, Bertuzzi is what is commonly

referred to as a "goon." A goon is a player whose main purpose is to agitate and instigate. Some players gain a reputation for being feisty — causing a penalty or other gaffe to gain their team a slight advantage. Bertuzzi takes this to another level.

He was suspended for the remainder of the season on Thursday, March 11. As of that date, his team had 12 regular season games left. NHL players are paid per game and as it stands, he will lose about \$500,000, or roughly \$41,600 a game. His team was fined \$250,000 American. For a Canadian team, that is a hefty sum to pay.

Bertuzzi will also be re-evaluated before training camp in September before he's ruled eligible to return to the team.

It's been thrown out that the coach should be penalized also but what could Vancouver coach Marc Crawford have done differently? In hockey, unlike other sports, there is an understanding that the players are grown men responsible for their own actions.

They're not babies and they're not babied. Hockey is a man's sport and they need to act like it. I've never met Todd Bertuzzi but I have seen him play. He's someone you don't want your team to face and if fans don't like him, you can imagine what it's like for the players.

The hit's also been all over the news, discussed by talking heads that don't know what they're talking about. It's nearly impossible to explain how hockey works to people who aren't familiar with the game but the brutality of Bertuzzi's actions speaks volumes. He's getting what he deserves but it's not nearly enough.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcox@nwkansas.com.

A little chat about wheelchairs

Medicare bought my husband a power wheelchair about a year ago, and I have inherited it. Actually, the doctor said we were probably both eligible for chairs, but we don't have room in the house for two, so we settled for one for him. I figured I could use it sometimes, and he could use it sometimes, and we never went anyplace together anyway.

We got a power wheelchair with a joy stick, as opposed to a scooter with steering in front like they have in Dillons, because Dr. Bruno, foremost polio specialist, said it was easier for someone with weak arms not to have to reach so far.

So far, I haven't used the chair much, and I'm not yet comfortable with it. I'm glad to have it, and know I will be using it more and more as time goes by. But I don't like to use it as long as I can still get around without it. It will be wonderful when I go to the nursing home, or Fairview Estates, or wherever, to get to meals and places.

We don't have sidewalks where I live, and I really don't want to go tooling down the street or public highway in it. Some people do — but they are braver than I am. Eventually, I hope to use it to go to public events, such as in the high school which is accessible as far as steps are concerned, but a long walk if you are on crutches.

My husband didn't use the chair much either, especially after I nicked a couple of chunks out of the woodwork, and demolished the hydraulic catch on the screen door. It takes practice to learn to drive that thing! And it is really difficult to drive it down the hall and make the turn into



Maxine Nelson

• Random Thoughts

the bedrooms and bathroom. He did go out in the yard a few times, and seemed to enjoy getting out in the fresh air. I wish he could have had it sooner, when he was able to get around more. By the time he got it, he was pretty well house confined, except to go to the doctor.

There are several places on TV that advertise power wheelchairs, and even promise if they pre-qualify you and Medicare doesn't pay, you can still keep the chair for free. Sounded good to me, especially after I called a few places in Kansas who told me they didn't want to bother with such things. They made it sound like you had to be almost dead to qualify.

I suppose it is much more cost-efficient for a company to specialize than to just handle a few cases a year. There are lot more such companies advertising now than there were then, and from some of the commercials on TV, you'd think you didn't need very much wrong with you to qualify. (I've heard the government is investigating fraud from some of those companies.)

There are also less expensive scooters to drive

to your destination and then get off and do your thing. I think they would be more feasible in a less windy climate, but if the price of gas keeps going up, there may be more sold.

When getting a power chair or scooter, consider where you are going to use it. Is your house big enough? Do you need sidewalks, or will it go on grass, gravel or sand? How will you transport it? (Throw it in the back of the pickup, and away you go?)

Anyone who is thinking a scooter or power chair would be helpful, would probably benefit from one. My advice is to do your homework and get it as soon as possible — so you can enjoy it (and so Medicare won't run out of money.)

—mm—

I searched and searched trying to find a list of hints for wheelchair users which I had seen earlier. As I remember a few of them were:

✓ Don't follow the person in front of you too closely. They take a dim view of being clipped on the ankles.

✓ A power wheel chair is capable of moving a sofa for several feet, if you panic.

✓ Try not to run over the cat; road kill in the living room is not pleasant.

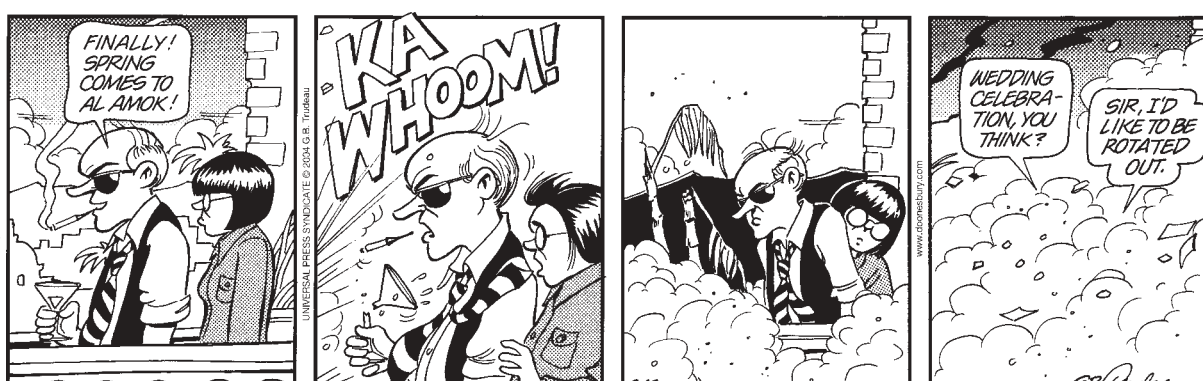
—mm—

If you want some action in your life, sit down on your cat's tail, and tell her to scoot over.

Maxine Nelson is a retired reporter and lifestyle editor for the Colby Free Press. She writes as the mood strikes her.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau



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