

# Opinion

## Letters



### Staying in tune

The following was written by Laura Krejci and Jennifer Koel, music specialists at Colby Grade School, and submitted by the Colby Music Boosters whose mission is, "Striving to Advance Music Education."

To the Colby Free Press:

With the end of the school year rapidly approaching, a number of events are taking place at our schools. We invite you to attend all of them and, of course, hope that you enjoy them, too. As a member of the audience, you mean a lot to our students who have worked hard to prepare their performances. Your conscientiousness goes a long way to helping to make a concert a success.

While attending a hockey game recently, we were impressed with the etiquette enforced by event staff. Ushers were stationed at every entrance into the arena. Their job was to only admit people into the arena while there was no play. The audience was trained so that if someone got up during the play, they would be "booed."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the etiquette at concerts and programs was taken as seriously as a hockey event?! People wouldn't be getting up while performers were on stage. People wouldn't try to enter while performers were singing. Our children may not be professionals, yet they are FAR more valuable to us than a star athlete.

It is generally appropriate to use a cell phone or pager, enter and exit at will, or visit at our local sporting events. It is not appropriate, however, during a program or concert. Athletes will perform many times during a season, but usually there is only one or two performances in a year for an Arts-related event. Let's show our kids that these few performances are as important as an entire sports season.

We need to set a good example for the children of Colby, so that when they attend events outside of Colby, they will know how to behave appropriately.

**Laura Krejci and Jennifer Koel**  
**Music Specialists**  
**Colby Grade School**  
**(Letter #35)**

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](mailto:td@nwkansas.com).

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Haynes Publishing Company



## I'll always remember the number '262'

262. That's a number that will remain with me until I cease to exist. 262.

It dates back to my grade school days. 262. Kids today would be surprised to learn that "262" was the telephone number of my dad's office in the Ellis County Courthouse where he toiled as county clerk for several terms.

Why that number stays with me is a mystery. Some family members had expressed surprise that I would remember that number — a number they had all but forgotten.

Stranger than remembering that number is the fact I cannot for the life of me remember what our telephone number was at our house. I want to say "986" but I struggle as to whether that was it or if that belonged to someone else.

Telephone numbers were simple back then. Homes had one telephone — many had none. It wasn't unusual for a neighbor to come over to use our phone. That's just the way it was.

I can remember the phone hanging on the wall in the farm home of Uncle Ambrose and Aunt Adelia Brungardt at Emmeram — just north of Victoria. It included a crank for getting the attention of the operator. It also involved raising your voice to get your message across. It also was a party line whereby half dozen other phone owners shared your line. You had your very own ring for calls to your place. Aunt Adelia's house was like four short rings. The neighbors down the road would have maybe two long rings and one short ring. Another might have three short rings.

It was interesting because even when the call wasn't directed to you, you still heard all the other rings. Some people would even listen in on the calls. Heaven forbid! But it was fun!

Our phone in Hays wasn't like that. We were more modern, the benefit of living in town. All we had to do was pick up the receiver and wait for the operator to say, "Number please." Then you'd tell her (262 again comes to mind). Then the operator would ring it.

Some years later we graduated to a dial phone.



### Tom Dreiling

#### ● My Turn

Wow! That was really uptown! Just like they have in New York and in Chicago and in Los Angeles. Pick up the receiver and use the rotary dial to connect you to whomever you were placing a call. Our country cousins were in awe at that contraption. They were graduating from the less noisy hand crank phone to a more silent model that still needed operator assistance. And the number of others on the party line was reduced, to pretty much a two-party system.

Now it's just a matter of touching your phone — or phones as most homes have more than can be counted. There's cell phones. Phones that allow you to see the people you are talking with. Phones literally all over the place. Phones answer themselves when the owners are out. Some even take names and numbers and place them on a Caller ID mini-screen. You don't need operators, just pick the thing up and place your own call — to anywhere in the world.

It's awesome. And despite the advances in communications that we couldn't even imagine when I was a kid, the number "262" still sticks with me.

"Hello, Dad — that you?"

Would be nice, but even Dad is a memory of times gone by.

LAST Saturday evening I drove out to the high school to watch all those beautiful young ladies and handsome young men make their way from their vehicles into the school for the 2004 junior/senior prom. What a sight! They looked

so grown up, not like the teen-age kids you normally see going in and out of that building. It's been quite a few years since I've seen my own kids going to their proms, so I thought I'd make my way out to the high school just to sort of get a feel for what the proud parents of these young men and women were going through. You've done well, Mom and Dad, you've done very well.

ONE of our readers is right on target. Pat Embree sent me a clipping from *The Hutchinson News* Opinion Page of a cartoon depicting television talking heads barking their heads off. Included was a very brief note: "The bare facts are enough! Quit watching all those political jousts (& excess talk shows)! Anyway, Cheers! — Pat E." The advice is free and good advice it is. Do yourself a favor — read, or watch things that stimulate, not pollute.

AS I understand the story, a young man was standing in front of a downtown Colby store a few mornings ago snapping his fingers. Apparently not a worry in the world. Just standing there and snapping away. A couple of coffee drinkers noticed him as they left the Daylight Donut Shop and stood there for a few minutes watching him. They finally walked over and asked him what he was doing. "I'm keeping tigers away from this building," he said. The two guys chuckled, and one said, "Hey, kid. Look around. You won't see any tigers." The kid just smiled and said, "See... it works."

ADAM told Eve he could sure go for a barbecued rib.

HAVE a good evening!

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Tom Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. [td@nwkansas.com](mailto:td@nwkansas.com).

## He assigned, and I delivered

There I was, buying past issues of the *Colby Free Press* and minding my own business on my annual spring visit to Colby recently, when Tom (TD) Dreiling spotted me in the office. The next thing I knew, I had an assignment.

And if there's one thing I've learned in 38 years as a journalist, it's that you don't refuse an assignment when your editor gives you one, even when it's during a friendly conversation. And for one day, Tom wanted to be my editor.

"Write about your trip to Colby," he said in his best can't-be-resisted voice. "Don't worry, Ray won't be embarrassed. He'll probably like it."

Ray, of course, is my son Ray Nolan, assistant baseball coach and physical education instructor at Colby Community College and the reason I make my spring pilgrimages to Colby. I watched him play more than 1,200 games year-round in four sports, and I've never been able to shake the habit of wanting to see his teams. He is in his sixth year of coaching after his playing career ended in 1998, as a university senior and then a semipro player-manager.

Ray also writes a weekly college baseball column for Tom and the *Free Press*, giving me another reason to follow through on the editor's assignment.

Colby is a 1,700-mile drive from my home in the Far Northwest corner of Washington state, but I'm an old hand at driving long distances. As an avid book and magazine collector, I've driven all over the United States many times to attend book shows. In fact, scouting rare books pretty much paid for my 33 round trips of 1,000 miles each to see the last two years of Ray's university baseball career. But the poor kid grew up living in a home looking more like a library.

A conversation with Tom — even when it comes with an assignment — is a real treat for another "old-timer" in the newspaper game. It isn't often these days that you get to talk with a genuine community journalist who knows what "hot metal" is. Tom gave me a big laugh when he spun a story about how some youngsters thought he must be a pretty hip member of the older generation to have worked with "hot metal." That, for all you folks under 50, was a

### Michelle Nolan

#### ● Guest Commentary

printing technique, not a rock band!

A highlight of my trip was the wonderful dinners I was treated to by Ray's girlfriend, Nikol Scheuerman. She is not only smart, personable and beautiful, but she can cook!

I drove 6,370 miles on this trip, attending book shows in Chicago and Kansas City while the baseball team was playing at a tournament in Arizona. I also searched through more than 60 used book stores and antique malls, finding several rare books at bargain prices. It's always a thrill to find a \$200 book for \$5! Especially when I surely couldn't afford to spend \$200 no matter how much I wanted the book. My 1993 Taurus averaged 30 miles per gallon, but the gas still cost \$355, even though I kept an eye out for the cheapest stations and averaged \$1.69.9 per gallon, well below the national average during this year of record gas prices. I can't imagine how folks in those SUVs manage.

I can definitely attest that people don't come much friendlier than they do in Colby. It's always nice to see people at the college like Carl Adams, Max Pickerill and Rock Carter's wife, Krista, who kindly showed me the video of their lovely wedding last December. (Carter is the head baseball coach at Colby College, for those who might not know.)

And no visit to Colby would be complete without chatting with college boosters Lyle and Nancy Saddler and Nancy's sister Sally Smith (a.k.a. "Baseball Princess"). I was thrilled to hear that the Saddlers' oldest son, former Colby Community College pitcher Michael, is on the pitching staff at Kansas University and had enjoyed several good outings. But it was sobering to learn that their middle son, Jeff, is serv-

ing in hot spots in Iraq with the Marines. I have said a prayer for him every day since.

I also had the unexpected pleasure of having my own personal used book sale at the Pioneer Memorial Library. I was researching book stores in the Denver phone book when one of the library volunteers, Glovine, recalled how I attended a previous sale and asked if I'd like to see the books downstairs. I happily spent \$21 on a box of books. Thanks!

It was also a big kick to again visit my lifelong friend Russell Ciochon, a world-famed paleoanthropologist who teaches at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and his wife Noriko. He inscribed his 10th book, "Dragon Bone Hill," a riveting account co-written with Noel Boaz about their scientific diggings in China. Russ is one of the world's most active globe-trotters and always has great stories to tell.

I'll also vividly remember the chance to meet former astronaut Richard Gordon at the book show in Kansas City. Gordon, a real gentleman, had some great stories to tell along with autographs to sign. He was a member of the Apollo XII flight, the second mission to the moon during the period of Apollo expeditions in 1969-72. Ten years ago, I met the late Pete Conrad, who became the third man to walk on the moon as Gordon remained overhead in the ship that would take them back to Earth.

Since I went to Florida to see the first manned launch to the moon on July 16, 1969, it was especially exciting to talk with another Apollo astronaut. Thirty-five years ago, I sure never dreamed I would get that chance!

Well, that completes the assignment, Tom. Bet you didn't realize what my editors have always known about me — that when I get wound up, I rarely run out of words!

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Michelle Nolan of Bellingham, Wash. makes her living writing. She passed the assignment with flying colors. We look forward to another visit in the spring of next year — and perhaps another assignment. Or perhaps an occasional note. We now know where son Ray gets his writing skills. - td