

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Looks like money trumps kids' safety

You have to wear a seatbelt to drive your car. The law doesn't allow you to make that choice anymore. Your kids had better be belted in, or you'll get a ticket. Heaven help you if you have a baby bouncing around in that buggy.

Airline passengers have to wear a seatbelt. They want you to keep it on even when the "fasten-seatbelt" light is out, go figure.

You need a seatbelt to drive a go-cart. Dale Earnhardt Jr. has to wear one to drive his car, or he'll get fined.

They're even starting to put the things on ski lifts, and next, who knows, maybe Amtrak will have them in its coaches.

So why, in God's name, don't school buses have seatbelts? It's easy to say that school buses are safe, and they are one of the safest modes of transportation, no doubt. But on average, 9,500 kids are hurt in 23,000 school bus crashes each year. Ten die.

School buses have to stop before crossing a railroad track. School buses have a stop sign to flag drivers and stop them from whizzing by while they're loading and unloading. School buses have to let kids out on the right these days; no crossing the highway after the bus is gone.

School buses have to be clearly marked for safety. So why the heck don't school buses have seatbelts? You can't tell us that kids aren't bright enough to buckle them. Or our schools are worse off than even Congress suspects. You can't tell us that kids wouldn't be safer belted in than bouncing around the bus in a wreck.

That just defies logic.

You can't tell us the drivers and teachers are too busy to make the kids strap in.

They'd be a lot easier to manage tied down that they are loose and squirming.

No, it's not that, is it? It's the money.

It'd cost some bucks to put 40-50 three-point harnesses in all those school busses.

It'd be hard to rig the aisle seats, too.

A couple grand per bus, anyway. More to retrofit old equipment. And there are thousands of buses across the country. Schools probably don't have the money. It's scarce these days.

But these are our children and our grandchildren. Shouldn't we do it anyway?

Steve Haynes  
Nor'West Newspapers

#### 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. 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.

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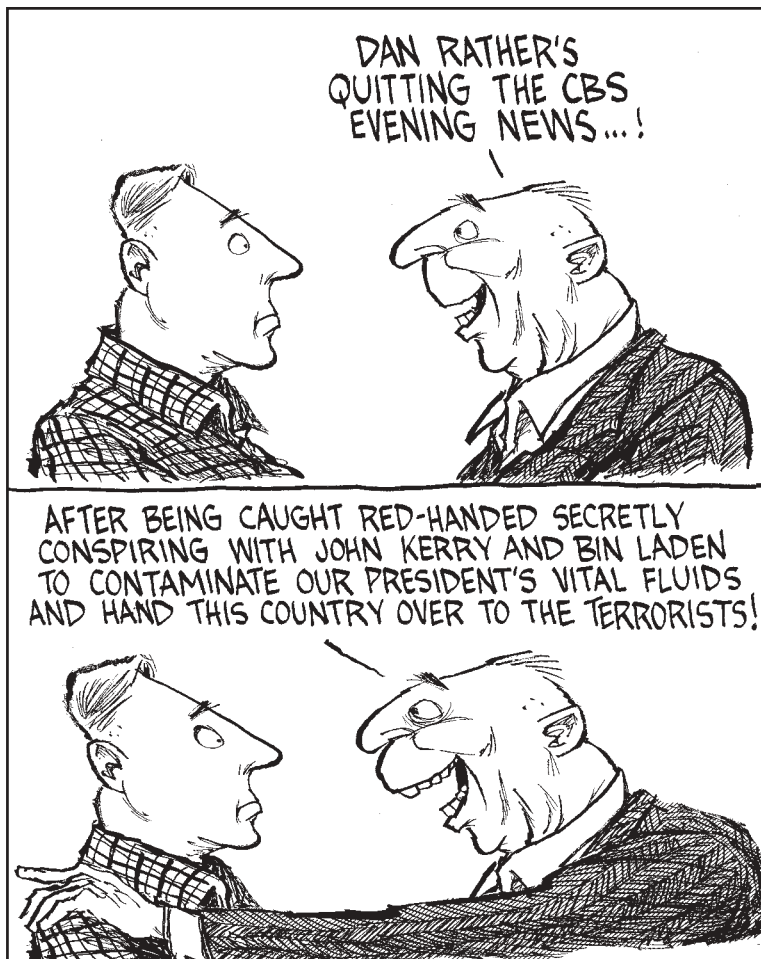
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**Nor'West Newspapers**  
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## Theft spoils unique display

I'm angry. You will be, too, after you read this. I won't go any further...just read on:

To Colby Free Press  
Tom Dreiling (publisher)  
Having received so many positive comments regarding last year's holiday yard display of flamingos and palm trees, we went to a great deal of effort and expense to enhance our theme with additional unique items.

A special attraction was the 200 light animated flamingo that arrived from New Orleans as a surprise from my sister Diana Chiro. Other fun items were the palm trees, sunflowers and flamingos from our friends Jo and Larry Booth. Jo also went to the trouble of tracking down a huge three-palm lighted tree extravaganza, and following Jack's special trip to Colorado to purchase it, it too graced our version of "The Oasis On The Plains!"

During the night of Nov. 27, all of Jack's assembly, wiring and display was ruined when several items, including the animated flamingo, were stolen and others knocked over.

Isn't it a shame when such senseless action can spoil the pleasure of so many and shake the unerring trust that comes from living in a small town? We were especially pleased that, given our proximity to the schools, the children, teachers and parents had expressed such delight with our tropical expanse.

We are offering a reward for the recovery of our missing items. If you have information, please call the police at 462-4460 or us at 462-6142.

Thank you for your assistance and Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,  
**Dixie Thompson and Jack Johnson**  
Colby  
(Letter #112)

Now, did that angry you like it did me? Who are these worthless blobs of humanity that delight



**Tom Dreiling**

• My Turn

in destroying and stealing things that belong to others?

OKAY, folks, no one as of today has come up with the correct answer to my second in a series of questions about Colby. In last Friday's column I asked, "What does Colby, Kansas and Salina, Kansas have in common?" Lots of guesses so far, but none of them are correct. Call me at 462-3963, e-mail me at td@nwkansans.com, fax me at 462-7749 or drop by the office at 155 W. 5th. Regular mail may not get your answer to me in time for Friday's answer. The winner gets a movie pass to either of the two Colby theaters. If there is more than one winner, the names are tossed into a hat and a winner drawn. Get in on the fun — give me your answer. And the answer to the first question in the series should give you a clue as to the off-the-wall simplicity involved. My initial question was, "What does Colby, Kansas and Denver, Colorado have in common?" The answer was, if you recall, "Interstate-70 passes through both towns."

I'm waiting to hear from you!

**MORE country wisdom (Fred style):**  
Trouble with a milk cow is she won't stay milked.  
Two can live as cheap as one...if one don't eat.  
Don't corner something meaner than you.  
You can catch more flies with honey than vin-

egar. That's assuming you want to catch flies. Man is the only critter who feels the need to label things as flowers or weeds.

A bumble bee is faster than a John Deere tractor.

**JEFF** down in Wichita thought this was worth passing on.

It is with the saddest heart that I must pass on the following news. Please join me in remembering a great icon of the entertainment community. The Pillsbury Doughboy died yesterday of a yeast infection and complications from repeated pokes in the belly. He was 71.

Doughboy was buried in a lightly greased coffin. Dozen of celebrities turned out to pay their respects, including Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, the California Raisins, Betty Crocker, the Hostess Twinkies, Little Debbie and Captain Crunch. The grave site was piled high with flour.

Aunt Jemima delivered the eulogy and lovingly described Doughboy as a man who never knew how much he was kneaded. Doughboy rose quickly in show business. But his later life was filled with turnovers. He was not considered a very 'smart' cookie, wasting much of his dough on half-baked schemes. Despite being a little flaky at times, he still, as a crusty old man, was considered a roll model for millions.

Doughboy is survived by his wife, Play Dough, two children, John Dough and Jane Dough, plus another one in the oven. He is also survived by his elderly father, Pop Tart.

The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes.

**HAVE** a good evening!  
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## Are you a good person?

**Christopher Shubert**

• Straight from the Heart

Richard and his wife were having a hard time. I ran into them at the Ampride outside of Mingo. They were making their way out to the East Coast, and they were running into one difficulty after another. I stopped to see if they needed help, and drove them around for the next half hour until someone came out to help them with their rental truck. I really felt for the pair. Richard had a military background, as I do, and I sympathized with Richard and his wife's search for a better life and their desire to be close to family. Richard's wife was having a particularly hard time, facing not only the troubles of the trip, but suffering a series of emotional setbacks as well.

In the course of our conversations, I commented to Richard the idea that God could be a help in times of trouble. Richard responded in the typical way: Silence, at first, and then he offered a few hesitant, nervous, and noncommittal remarks — as though he were trying to express himself in a foreign language. And indeed, this "God talk" really is a foreign language to many people. Richard, like many (most?) people, found the idea of walking with God, living in the sight of God, pursuing a relationship with God, to be foreign ideas with no real connection to the realities of his life. And so, he stumbled to express himself and his reaction to my suggestion of seeking God in the midst of trial.

Richard finally found his voice as we were parting. He thanked me for my help, and as I waved goodbye, he called out something like, "We know that we're all right with the man upstairs, because we're both good people!" Of course, being "all right" with God was never part of our conversation, but Richard still seemed to think it important to tell me that he thought he was right with God. Frankly, as far as I was concerned, that particular question was between Richard and God. But apparently, when I was telling Richard, "You know, God can help in situations like this," Richard was hearing, "You know, you need to be more religious or you might not get to heaven," or something like that. Funny how our little mental filters work, sometimes.

More importantly, Richard used a phrase which I have heard so many times that it has become a trite truism to me: "I'm a good per-

son." Often, when I have wanted to talk to someone about "religion" (for want of a better term), I have gotten that sort of response: People have often wanted to assure me that they are "good with God" because they are "a good person." Ironically, I have heard these words said by some of the most corrupt, treacherous, dishonest, violent people I have ever met. Solomon observes, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." It deserves some thinking about, this idea of being "a good person." In my experience, people carry two definitions of this phrase: The definition of "a good person" that they use for themselves, and the definition that they use for everyone else. Needless to say, the first version is a lot more permissive than the second. In my experience, the vast majority of people are quite content to describe themselves as "good people." Only a tiny minority are willing to say, "Well, maybe I'm not so good. In fact, there are times when I am downright selfish — or worse!" Ironically, the people who are not willing to award themselves the status of "good person" seem usually to be better behaved than the ones who are willing to call themselves "good people."

So the second definition of "a good person" — the one we use when we evaluate other people — is probably the more useful of the two. And let's not be cynical. We all do know a few good people. But how do we define a good person? The Bible illustrates an important distinction in this investigation: "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Here, we see that there is a difference between a "just" man and a "good" man.

A just person is one who minds their own business, does little or no wrong, dots the i's, and crosses the t's. You can count on them to keep their word, pay their bills, and obey the law. They may not go out of their way to help anyone, and they may tend to be a little self-righteous, but you know that a just person will stay between the lines, and won't break your arm or pick your pocket. We may all know a few just people.

(By the way, before we look down our nose at the "just man," just remember that this is the person we would all prefer to do business with — someone we know we can trust to give us a fair shake.)

A good person, on the other hand, goes out of their way to be helpful, useful, cheerful, positive, merciful, and/or kind. Not only will a good person do you no harm, they will make the effort to do you positive good. You can count on a good person not only to mind their own business, but to help you mind yours. Sometimes, a good person can seem a little intrusive — especially if we are just getting to know them. But over time, we learn that we can rely on a good person to brighten our day, to give us a helping hand, and to be there when we need them. And they do this for everyone they meet.

A cynic might just want to just throw out the phrase "good person," seeing how it has been watered down by the multitude of people who are over-willing to apply it to themselves. But an optimist would say, "No, we all know a good person when we are dealing with one. We know what the definition of a good person is when we see it in others. So, let's use that standard of definition instead."

I prefer to be an optimist, and to assume that everyone who is willing to call him- or herself a good person is actually willing to live up to the highest standard of that term. So let us define the term "good person" in the terms we use when thinking of others, and let us all endeavor to rise up to that ideal. Are you a good person? Am I? Let's examine ourselves the same way we examine others — and let's be willing to change.

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