

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Community and college go together

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees did its part. Now, it's time for Colby, the town, to continue its part. Last week, the board of trustees approved Dr. Lynn Kreider as the next president of the college. Kreider brings years of experience in administration from colleges in Louisiana, Tennessee and Delaware. During Kreider's public forum, he spoke very highly of how Colby and the area responded to the college. Kreider's comments may relate to what some people say about the college — as the college goes, so does Colby.

No matter if it's a small-town community college, like Colby, or major four-year universities like what's in Lawrence and Manhattan, a college impacts the town.

For starters, it's a major employer and large contributor to the town's economy. A college can attract and retain a level of intellect for the town it's in. (How many people went to college in Colby and stayed afterward?) A college provides entertainment from the performing arts to a variety of sports, let alone the services the public can utilize.

What makes all of that click is the community the college is in. The more interaction the college has with the town, the better. Colby Community College should be proud of what it has. People loved the Valentine's Day massages offered by the physical therapy department. The Max Pickrel series of speakers are provocative.

Colby people don't always need to go to the big theaters in Denver or Kansas City to watch plays — because our college directors and students do a fine job. Lady Trojan basketball players could hear the cheers from the large crowd during the national tournament in Salina.

People are paying attention to the proposal of the Wellness Center. People also paid attention to the selection process of the new president. The board's explanation of the process in Friday's paper was appreciated.

The Colby community needs to continue whatever it is doing to continue Kreider's optimistic view of the college and the town. He apparently felt a positive vibe during his interview process.

The community needs to continue that positive vibe.
— John Van Nostrand, publisher

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 jvanostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

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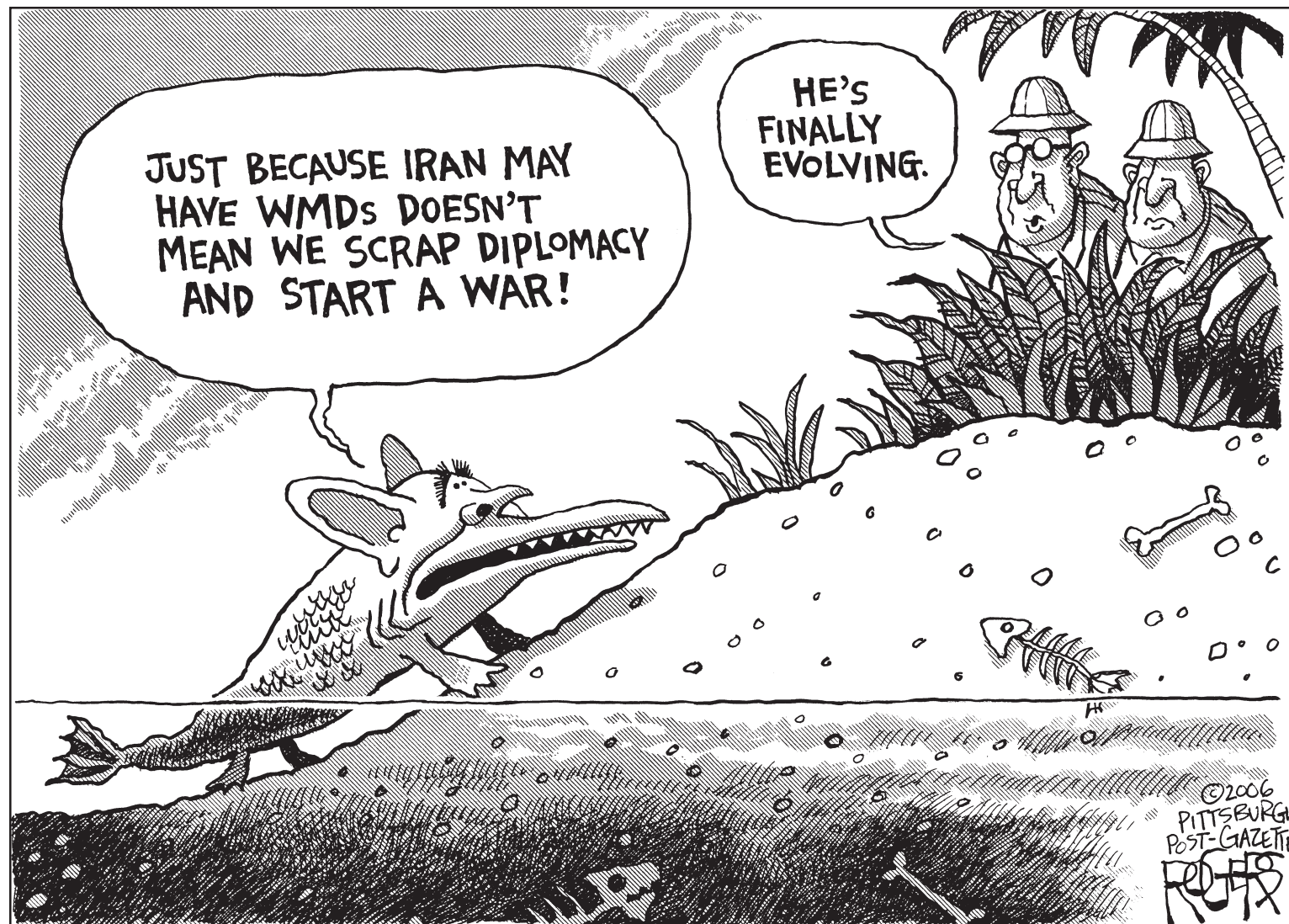
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Messing with the message

Spring is an important time of year for many faiths, and of course, Easter this past weekend was no exception.

My beliefs are my own, and I won't bore anyone here with them. However, there is a recent trend that has bothered me.

And that would be people like Fred Phelps, of Westboro, who call themselves "Christian" but aren't.

Instead, they hide behind the word, and twist words and ideas that are not their own for their own beliefs.

I was brought up to believe that a person should respect others and their beliefs, regardless of what they may be. I try. I'm not perfect, but I have learned to accept other points of view, and tolerance.

It isn't easy. It never is. But without the diversity of belief and personalities on this planet, it would be a dull, boring place.

Otherwise, why would God have created it that way, if he didn't want it to be like this?

Jesus embraced the outcasts, the downtrodden, the unfavorable.

And I think that people like Phelps and his bunch are so far away from what Jesus taught, and the message of the Bible, that they don't deserve to be called "Christian."

What kind of person uses another's moment of personal, private suffering to further their own agenda that is nothing more than a hate crime?

Phelps is using his position as a pastor (I use the title loosely in reference to him) to further an agenda that is doing nothing to foster love, peace or understanding.



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

However, his protests at the funerals of fallen soldiers killed in the Iraq war have caused solidarity and unity among many groups.

Many Harley enthusiasts, some former soldiers themselves, are putting themselves between Phelps' protests and the funerals.

Phelps' ideology is that God is punishing the United States for its acceptance of homosexuality by allowing soldiers to die in the war.

It's a war. Soldiers die in war. So does anyone who happens to get in the way.

He's cheapening the sacrifice of individuals who made the decision to serve their country, and their acceptance of that duty to serve.

They died for what they believed in. Which is more than I can say for someone like Phelps.

I know he's entitled to his beliefs, which are, of course, protected by the Constitution. And in turn, our freedom is protected by the sacrifice of the people at whose funerals he protests.

Ironic, isn't it? Like the saying goes, "I may not agree with what you say, but I'll die for your right to say it."

Easter traditions...
I know it's the day after Easter, but many cul-

tures and countries celebrate the rites of spring all the way from the equinox in March to May Day, which was Beltane to the ancient Celts.

Here in the U.S., many celebrate Easter with egg hunts and all of the trappings.

Other countries, I've found, have quite a different way of celebrating the day.

In the Czech Republic, they have an interesting tradition of whipping people on Easter Monday. It's not as bad as it sounds, I guess. The men whip the women with willow rods decorated with ribbon.

It's supposed to show a man's attraction to a woman, and in thanks, the woman gives the man a colored egg.

Bulgaria has some Easter traditions that were more tame, and traditionally symbolic. Take for example on Good Friday, families used to buy a new pottery dish.

And to get really off the beaten path, a little digging reveals one possible origin of the word "Easter" comes from the Lesser Wiccan Sabbat Ostara, which is celebrated on the first day of spring.

And according to <http://www.thepaganweb.com>, the date Easter is celebrated is decided upon in a "pagan" manner — "the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox."

Parts of this column came from <http://en.wikipedia.org/> and <http://www.b-info.com/places/Bulgaria/Easter/>.

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Some customs shouldn't die

Apparently, China is entering the realm of world leadership in more than just economic and military power. It seems they are beginning to struggle with adult children who are no longer willing to care for their parents.

One might think that, social ramifications aside, such a problem would not be difficult to handle in a socialist society. In China, however, only a very small minority of those over 80 are in care homes.

In addition, most rural dwellers apparently have little or no pension and are still dependent upon the age-old tradition of children caring for their elderly parents. Because of that, there is no safety net for the growing number of elderly being abandoned by their parents.

The Chinese government is using a peculiar set of carrots and sticks. There is still a long-standing stigma in oriental society concerning those who do not care for family members and the communist government is encouraging it.

Kind of odd considering earlier attempts to destroy the old societal norms.

There are also awards for children who go above and beyond the call, such as caring for infirm parents and in-laws or other special circumstances.

Finally, there is the big-stick jail for the worst offenders. Elderly parents have the right to sue under Chinese law and there is the possibility of spending several years in prison for neglect.

Of course, some think the answer is putting care for the elderly under government control, but not everyone.



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

Oddly enough, especially considering more than a half-century of communist rule, some don't seem to want more governmental regulations. Nor do they want the government to take over the care for the elderly.

There are many who think parents caring for their young children and children caring for their elderly parents should not need to be legislated or taken over by the authorities.

Instead, they believe stronger peer pressure and enforcement of cultural laws already in place are the answer.

Perhaps, but as people live longer and the strains of a growing industrial economy more products, more consumerism and more money, all leading to less community caring for elderly parents is going to become a more difficult proposition.

The bottom line is caring for the oldest citizens is a combined responsibility. The family is primarily accountable for the welfare of elder members. They are a tremendous resource of knowledge, experience and shared history of the family.

Society is not without a duty of their own to the elderly for many of the same reasons. Only the most pagan and corrupt societies treat their elderly with contempt, for they are the glue which holds a society together.

When the oldest members of a society are marginalized, the shared knowledge and history of that society disappear. Lessons learned from cataclysmic historical events can be minimized or spun according to the whims of anyone trying to influence the culture unless there is a shared bond between those who experienced it and their descendants. Of course, some will try to do so anyway, but when the cultural bond exists between old and young, it becomes much more difficult.

What about us? Have we allowed and even used socialized care to move them aside? As early retirements become more common, are we seeking to move the oldest members of our workforce out the door regardless of their contribution?

Have we used the availability of nursing homes to soothe our consciences, allowing our parents and grandparents along with their hard won experience to wither away with only token visits at best?

I know this isn't everyone. That isn't the point. We live in a society where it could happen and that is the point.

Maybe we should change our society.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelly@st-tel.net.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

