

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint

Small business is big in Kansas

From The Ottawa Herald

More than 100 small businesses were recognized as part of 2006 National Small Business Week in Washington, D.C.

These outstanding entrepreneurs include one Kansas business owner — Joseph Bogner, president of Western Beverage, a beer distributor in Dodge City.

Small businesses are essential to the financial well-being of the state's economy since they make up almost all employer firms in the state.

There were an estimated 229,776 small businesses in Kansas in 2004, according to the Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy report. Of the 69,241 firms with employees nearly 97 percent were small firms. Those are the same ones who had job growth in contrast with firms employing more than 500 employees who lost more than 14,000 jobs in the state between 2001 and 2002.

Small businesses are a diverse group that run the gamut from liquor stores to doughnut shops to CPA firms and more. Those small businesses are the backbone for local events that wouldn't exist without the generosity of local merchants.

We all need to understand the hypocrisy of asking the local furniture store or other merchant for a donation to support the local fair, PTO or after-prom event and then going out of town to a metropolitan area furniture store that has made no contribution and is not likely to.

Outstanding small businesses — those employing fewer than 100 employees — work hard to build their own businesses as well as their communities. Communities and organizations need to do their part to strengthen small businesses for the community's mutual benefit.

The state's economy and financial well-being depend on nothing less.

Correction

Max Pickerill's name was misspelled in an editorial in Monday's Free Press.

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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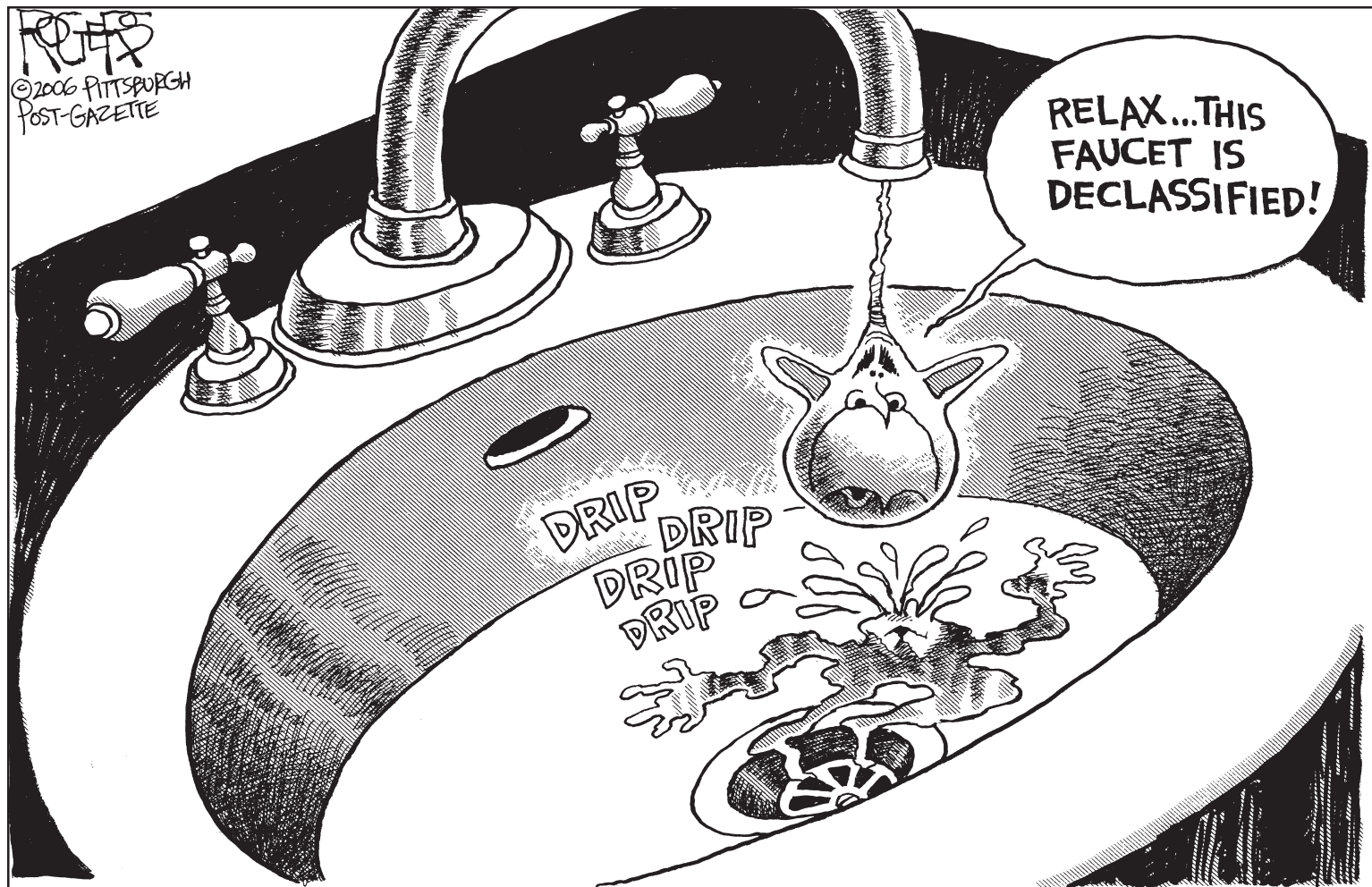
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The layer of film covers the emotions

A few weeks ago, a friend suggested I watch the movie "Capote." It is about Truman Capote's research of and novel "In Cold Blood." The book is about the murder of four members of the Clutter family in Holcomb in 1959.

Some Kansas people know that story like the back of their hand. Others don't want anything to do with it.

I was only vaguely familiar with Holcomb and the murder. I drove through Holcomb about 10 years ago, blind to its history, until various reading materials years later referred to Capote's novel.

Last fall, in recognition of "In Cold Blood's" 40th anniversary, the University of Nebraska sent us a copy of their research of the murders and what the people who were involved are up to today. The photos are compelling. The writing is superb.

But best of all, there is a level of respect throughout all the pages.

A story about the person who saw the Clutter family members alive for the last time is moving. He didn't hide his emotions over initially being considered a suspect, how he transferred to Garden City's school to avoid the troubles and how he has lived a honorable life since.

Another story was about the family who currently lives in the Clutter house. They were bothered by the constant flow of visitors thinking the house is a tourist spot. The family considered charging a few bucks to make the frustration easier to live with, but realized they shouldn't be profiting off the deaths of others. Posting no trespassing signs along the driveway has helped.



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

According to Nebraska's research, others related to the case have refused to talk to any form of the media about their involvement. It just shows that some pains will never go away, no matter how old they are.

Nebraska's work is a sharp contrast to the film. Watching "Capote" and believing it was accurate, I was angered by Capote's desire for attention and notoriety. Capote's personality upset several people around Holcomb.

The film had a dramatic entertainment flair to it. The pages of Nebraska's work was purely educational and informative.

Holcomb is not alone with how a town reacts to a horrific moment in its history.

About a year ago, I watched the documentary "Living with a Mystery." A California-film company produced a documentary about the murders of eight people in still tiny town Villisca, Iowa, in 1912.

Villisca's reaction to their murder is not 100 percent like Holcomb's.

Like in Holcomb, the house in Villisca still stands. It is a tourist stop. There are tours of the home and Villisca has its occasional group of people who attempt to do seances to paranor-

mally contact the ones who were killed. There is nothing formal for visitors of Finney County about the murders in Holcomb.

Villisca's murder is still unsolved. A suspect was never found, although the film producers included who could have been suspects.

Villisca has advantage over Holcomb. The only people today who were alive in 1912, were so young they don't remember it, compared to Holcomb. The producers could be more aggressive. The documentary had footage of peoples' interviews from 20 years prior.

But even today, some Villisca people think the town should be left alone — again it just shows that some pains will never go away, no matter how old they are.

Those kind of films continue. Next week is the release of the film "Flight 93." It is about the hijacked plane on Sept. 11 that crashed in western Pennsylvania. Some victims families are critical of how the movie was done. Others, after watching a private-screening, said it was appropriate.

Despite the vast differences between Villisca and Holcomb and New York City, there are similarities. Ground Zero has become a new spot for New York City tourists. A man who lost his wife in Sept. 11, can't be in the same room with her sister because she was her identical twin.

Some pains will never go away no matter how old they are — or how they are depicted on the big screen.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Kansas better notice before it's too late

Walter Hein Grainfield

I am writing in regard to the idiotic idea of paying irrigators to stop irrigating crops. These irrigators are using up a natural resource that belongs to everyone, not just the irrigators.

The people that put down irrigation systems did this of their own choosing. No one told them they had to do this irrigating crops. They did this out of greed to raise more grain to make more money. And to raise a commodity that we already have an excess of, that holds the price down now, without raising more from irrigation. This depresses the price further.

If we had plenty of water underground it would be different, but the Ogallala Aquifer is in part of the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Colorado. States that depend on this aquifer for their water supply have been dropping very drastically for quite a number of years.

Some farmers' household water supply that has been coming from the aquifer has gone dry in some places and some have had to drill new wells, because of the continuous fall of the water level. And many cities are having trouble with their potable water supply.

This doesn't seem right to let irrigators continue to pump out of the aquifer while this shortage of water is occurring, and piles of grain stored on the ground all over the state. It seems to me this irrigation should stop immediately. Human and animal consumption should have first priority to this natural resource and irrigation should be stopped immediately. Irrigators should not be paid to stop pumping water for irrigation.

To be paid to stop irrigating is about the biggest load of (expletive) I've ever heard.

Why does the governor of the state of Kansas think they should be paid to stop irrigating?

They made an investment in irrigation to make more money. There's nothing wrong with that at all, as long as there is plenty of water available.

How about paying other businesses in town for not being able to sell as much merchandise as normal because of the drought? That's just as big a load of (expletive) as it is to pay the irrigators to stop pumping water to irrigate crops.

The people of Kansas and other states better sit up and take notice before it's too late and we're out of water or have nothing left but contaminated water. And that's not so far away right now. The last article I read noted that only six tenths of one percent of the water left in the U.S.A. was not contaminated. Let your senators and representatives know how critical our water supply is.

The Ogallala Aquifer dropped 12.5 feet in 2003.

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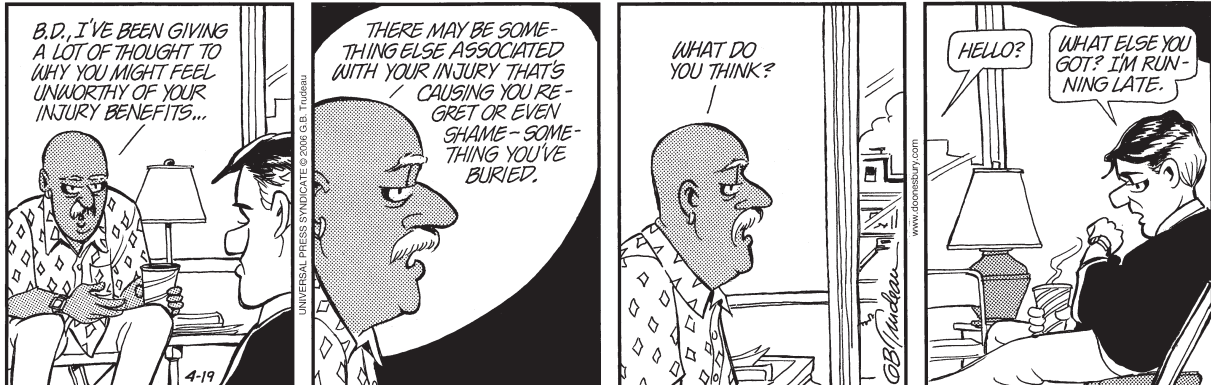
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