

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Make sure it's good to the last drop

Even though recent rains have come and gone, that does not mean we still should be taking our water for granted.

City of Colby officials are concerned how much water has been used so far this year. If increased usage continues this summer, the city could raise the water rates to curb water usage. Colby residents threw a fit two years ago when other utility rates increased. If that happens to water rates, it's likely the same outrage will surface.

So what do we do?

For starters, we all like to have our lawns green and pretty and that happens when we water the lawn. Don't water during the middle of the day. That is the best time for evaporation. Water the lawn during the early morning or late evening hours when evaporation is at a bare minimum.

Another thing to keep in mind when watering the lawn is making sure the spray of water does not hit the sidewalk or street. It is a waste of water. Some towns, that have been in a tougher drought than we are in, patrol the neighborhoods and fine those who do that.

We all still need to eat, do laundry and jump in the tub. Wash full loads of clothes, unless your clothes washer has a water level setting. Take fast showers using efficient plumbing devices. Don't let the water run when you brush your teeth or shave. Newer models of toilets utilize less water.

If you don't have a dishwasher and have a garden, consider washing the dishes in a bucket in the sink. After the dishes are done, you may be able to use the dishwasher to water the garden. Some dishwashing soaps won't harm plants. (But it is a good idea to check if your garden plants can be watered with such water.)

Businesses that utilize water are doing their part. Several hotel chains inform their guests who stay consecutive nights they won't change the sheets unless asked. Some restaurants have only given the complementary glass of water to those customers who ask for it.

Summer is coming and our Great Plains have had some dry years lately. If we still want to be an attraction to others across the country, we all need to do our part and conserve and respect our greatest commodity.

— 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 jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nw.kansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tcov@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansas.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales

jasminec@nwkansas.com

John Altman - Advertising Sales

jaltman@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building

japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

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A woman's mind is a terrible thing to waste

I was thumbing through television channels the other day and caught a glimpse of an Oprah Winfrey rerun which captured my attention.

I wondered what the topic of the day was that allowed Winfrey to lure Queen Rania of Jordan to her stage.

The topic was how women can, and have, changed the world. Ever since that show I've been thinking about one of the queen's comments.

She said when you educate the women you educate the family and when you educate the girls you educate the future.

This statement in no way implies that men are any less intelligent than women, but builds on the fact when women bear children they bear the future.

I'm not saying young boys shouldn't receive the same quality of education as that of young girls, but I believe, like the queen said, if we make sure to educate girls, future generations will be more informed and more productive. Seems like the queen might have things figured out that some of us Americans don't.

My biggest pet peeve is that we allow what seems to be a generational abuse of our social service system and the rest of us end up paying for it. I'm only 51 and have known handfuls of people who abuse the system. I'm thinking this is a topic I must one day research and find answers for.

Hear me out now, because I do believe there is a nucleus of people who truly need our help, but help needs to come after all efforts on the person's part have been exhausted.

But when I hear a young, perfectly healthy person say he or she "can't work" and they "must have their medical card," my blood pressure



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

tends to increase.

I personally know several disabled people who don't take one cent of government money and they lead very productive lives. In fact, many disabled persevere in life without complaining. Now that takes guts and those are the type of people I want heading up our nation's future.

Earlier this week I heard from a friend who has been shopping for a dress for her son's wedding which will take place later this year.

That's a case of been-there-done-that! Laughing as I read my friend's letter, I remembered the one and only piece of advice I was given when my son and daughter-in-law were planning their wedding.

"Wear beige and keep your mouth shut," I was told.

That little gem is something I'll always cherish, but one has to remember it's not just the bride's day, because without the groom she wouldn't be a bride. And without the guy's mom, there wouldn't be a groom. But I couldn't keep from laughing as I read about my friend's shopping trip.

"According to the bridal catalogs you have an option, either be a size six or less or look awesome in something strapless," she said.

Calling her shopping experience very frustrating she wondered what other mothers do when buying clothes for the big day.

"The rack they point you to looks like bridesmaid's dresses," she said. "All the dresses are strapless, satiny, or very, very fitted bodices. Then the kicker is the price. What the heck do other mothers do or where do they shop?"

After shopping at several bridal shops in the Wichita area, my friend said she finally resorted to a round of online shopping she called very interesting.

"They are skintight or cutup to the hind end in the back or are floor length," she said. "I wouldn't wear some of those rags to a dog race if we had one around here to go to."

I wish she would tell me what she really thinks.

Having finally purchased a dress, my friend came up with one of those, "Why didn't I think of that?" suggestions.

She said we should start a business which gives mothers-of-the-groom a place to sell their slightly used dresses to mothers-of-the-groom-to-be who are shopping for a dress.

That brought to mind the soft blue dress with matching fabric and lace jacket which has hung in my closet in plastic since September 2000.

While her idea is a good idea, I think I'll stick to the job I have. It's got to be easier than putting up with frustrated mothers-of-the-grooms-to-be.

And I can't wait to see the dress she bought, but I didn't have the guts to write her back and ask if it's beige.

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

Faith in the system may be restored

From The Manhattan Mercury

One has to believe May 25 was a pretty good day for thousands of former Enron employees.

We're thinking of the people who lost their jobs when the company they worked for — in some cases for decades — collapsed in 2001. And we're thinking of the retirees who naively put their faith and all their money into company stock, and who at one time not so long ago thought they had it made and who now are living on what Social Security provides.

These people didn't get any wealthier, but they got something that had eluded them since they were betrayed by former Enron chief executives Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling — a semblance

of justice.

Lay was convicted of six counts of conspiracy and four counts of bank fraud.

Mr. Skilling was convicted of 18 counts of fraud and conspiracy and one count of insider trading; he was acquitted of nine other counts of insider trading. Sentencing is scheduled for September; the two could get prison terms in the decades, possibly long enough to ensure that they die in prison.

If that seems harsh for white collar crimes, it isn't. These men ruined lives; they broke hearts and spirits and stole dreams.

Much is being said about the lesson this case offers to other corporate bigwigs who are

tempted to lie, cheat and steal for money or power or fame.

One hopes the lesson takes hold. A worthwhile if imperfect law passed after the Enron collapse, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which mandates greater disclosure of information by companies, at least makes the dishonesty Lay and Skilling exhibited more difficult to conceal.

If justice continues to prevail in this case, the two will spend a long time in prison. That won't make life any easier for the people they've defrauded, but the satisfaction that Enron's chiefs are paying for the harm they've done might at least restore some of the victims' faith in the system.

About those letters . . .

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

