

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



The right people decide who carries

From The Winfield Daily Courier
 Before we get comfortable with Kansas' new concealed carry law, let's look at it.

Any citizen not convicted of a felony, under a court order or mentally ill can qualify for a permit. Who grants those permits? The attorney general, of course.

So far as anyone knows, the attorney general is not an expert in mental health. Yet the AG is expected to decide who is, and who is not, mentally sound enough to carry a concealed weapon.

God save us.

Those who work with the mentally troubled know there are dozens of shades of mental illness. Not all are formally diagnosed, by any means.

Mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia have episodes. Sorting out just who actually has these or other mental diseases is a tough, tough job. Ask any mental health professional.

Nor are many individuals with deep anger diagnosed as mentally ill.

Attorney General Phill Kline can do this state and his successors a big favor by calling for an advisory panel of mental health professionals to share these decisions.

If the law needs to be amended, the Legislative Coordinating Council can do it this summer.

We dare not leave recommendations on those decisions to the young lawyers in the AG's office, bless their ambitious hearts. If we do, everybody involved will be sorry.

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.

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

- Where to write, call**
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 - 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

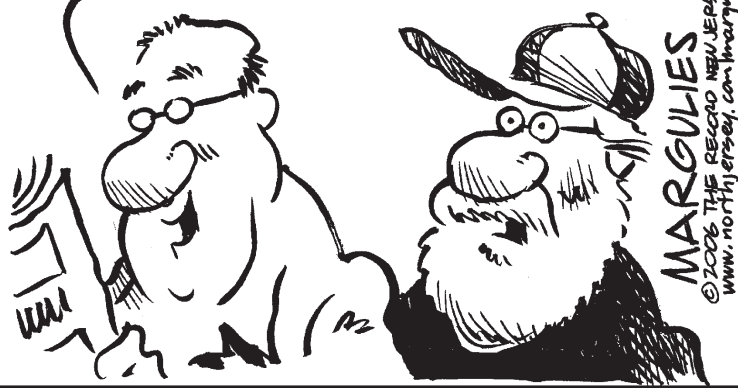
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Just another day of the week

I wish someone would explain to me the phrase, "It's Monday."

I don't understand why so many people put a negative twist on a day of the week.

For instance, I walked into an office on Monday and said hello to those seated at their desks and asked, "How's it going?"

I heard an almost unanimous reply of, "It's Monday."

I already knew it was Monday, and that wasn't what I'd asked.

Something struck me that I should test out my question in another office.

"Hi, how's your day going?" I asked in the next office where an individual sat behind a computer.

"Oh, it's Monday," was the reply without even eye contact from the individual.

Monday. From where I stand it's the day after Sunday and the one before Tuesday.

Monday is a day which can be seen as a blessing that the Good Lord provided breath in one's body to haul himself or herself out of bed and go to the job He has provided.

Monday is a day for some people who get to stay at home because they've worked a weekend shift and it's a day off.

Monday can also be a day of holiday as part of a vacation, or a day for a funeral or a wedding or any other activity which may take place in a person's life.

But Monday certainly isn't one to be isolated out as a bad day of the week.

For instance, how many times would my test question be replied to with, "It's Tuesday," or "Oh, it's Thursday."

But then there's Wednesday.

"It's Wednesday," which is usually followed by, "Thankfully only two days to go," from those waiting for the weekend.



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

Speaking of weekend, "It's Friday," usually has a more upbeat sound in the respondent's voice in eager anticipation of the weekend.

I think the reason I don't understand the "It's Monday" issue is I spent my growing up years as the daughter of a self-employed parent who was a contract mail carrier.

For many years my dad's job was a seven day a week haul from the originating post office to three other post offices.

It's true, neither rain nor sleet nor however that saying goes, nothing but an absolute blizzard keeps the mail from being delivered.

When my dad retired from his mail route I took it over and for eight years it was my turn to buck snow and be out in the heat of summer.

Even today when people ask me what I think about the weather I have to stop and get my thoughts together in order to reply because weather isn't something I spend time thinking about.

As a reporter it really doesn't matter what the weather is outside, sun, rain, sleet or snow, if you want the story you just go.

Same goes for the day of the week.

Right now my Mondays are spent covering the Thomas County Commissioner meeting, checking on things at the courthouse and law enforcement center and returning to my office to type.

Never once does the phrase "It's Monday," run through my mind in a negative way. I love Mondays. It's time away from my office and being out and about. It's time spent with neat people in Thomas County and a chance to view what's going on in the fields I drive by.

Monday. It's a great day. It's the day after Sunday, which is a great day.

And it's the day before Tuesday, which is also a great day.

Turning Monday into a positive day only takes the action of one person to not let the day be given a negative connotation. That positive action will be contagious if an entire office, community, etc. grabs hold of it and changes their voice fluctuation.

Instead of saying the word Monday in a sad, depressed or sullen way, try uplifting your voice fluctuation and see what happens. People will wonder why you are happy and excited about Monday.

It's like my answer to people who ask me how I'm doing. My usual answer is "I'm awesome."

Talk about throwing someone a curve.

Well, for several months of answering a particular woman's question of me how I was, she stopped in her tracks at the post office and asked just what made me awesome.

What an opportunity.

I asked her if she truly wanted to know why I believed I was awesome. She did.

Two hours and a few prayers later over coffee the woman accepted Jesus Christ into her life as her Lord and Savior.

Isn't life great?

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

Changing the face of Kansas politics

By Steve Haynes

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius seems intent on re-making the political landscape of Kansas.

The governor returns again and again to the liberal side of the Republican party for recruits.

First, she named John Moore, a respected Wichita Republican and Cessna Aircraft executive, as her lieutenant governor.

She had Mike Hayden, the Atwood native and former Republican governor, continue as secretary of wildlife and parks. She held over Secretary Janet Schalansky at Social and Rehabilitation Services.

More lately, Sebelius and her Democratic party minions persuaded Paul Morrison, a Johnson County Republican and veteran district attorney, to switch parties and run against the conservative Phill Kline for attorney general.

Now she has named Mark Parkinson of Johnson County as her new running mate. Parkinson is a former Republican legislator and a former state Republican party chairman under Gov. Bill Graves.

What the governor aims at is nothing less that a realignment of Kansas politics, a return to the two party system. She might be doing us all a favor.

For decades now, Kansas has been dominated by an odd political system, more or less a three-party setup with the Democrats only occasionally a player.

The Legislature has been controlled by nomi-

nal Republicans for years. Most governors have been Republican. Only when the GOP could not produce decent candidates has the Democrat had a chance.

And then, only exceptional Democrats — the Dockings, father and son; the maverick Joan Finney; the able and appealing Ms. Sebelius — have made the grade.

Because you had to be a Republican to play the game, many young politicians joined the GOP who in other states would have been Democrats. Mark Parkinson and Mike Hayden might just fall into that crowd, but they are legion.

The result was to reinforce the political paradigm: If everyone, liberal or conservative, became a Republican, then there was no future for the Democrats. There were so few of them in Topeka that no one paid any attention, save political reporters seeking to balance a story with a quote or two.

The liberal Republicans — euphemistically referred to as "moderates" in most news stories — have fought with conservatives in the way Republicans and Democrats fight in other states. Both groups allied with the minority Democrats when it suited their purposes. Each has had some success controlling the Legislature, but the liberals have produced more governors.

All that may be about to change.

No one should underestimate Kathleen Sebelius. This woman grew up in the Ohio

governor's mansion. She has an outstanding political mind. Popular and virtually assured of a second term, she has moved to seize the high ground and, perhaps, change the Kansas political landscape for all time.

If she succeeds in drawing off even part of the liberal Republican voters, making them Democrats or even independents, she might just restore the two-party system. And in doing so, she might restore a more "normal" look to Kansas politics.

Freed of its left wing, the Republican party could represent its core constituency, people who believe in economic freedom, smaller government, lower taxes and traditional values.

Both parties would have to play to the middle to win, of course, and it's not likely there would be a clear-cut victory for liberals or conservatives. Extremists on either side would stand little chance of becoming governor.

But Kansas would have a clear choice between parties, rather than dealing with a bloated, but divided, GOP.

It's the liberal Republican vote that elected Kathleen Sebelius last time, and the same voters will return her to office. The question is, can she and her party make the transition from one-time success to a permanent change?

The betting is, she'll have four more years to work on it.

Steve Haynes owns Nor' West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press

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